

PHIL 210: Plato On Self-Knowledge: *Charmides*, *Alcibiades*, And *Apology*

Dr. Patricia Marechal
Monday 11am-1:50pm, RWAC 0472
O.H. by appointment

Course Description

Plato's *Apology*, *Alcibiades*, and *Charmides* are unified by a concern with self-knowledge, including knowledge of what we know (and don't know), of who we are, and of our own moral character. In different ways, all these dialogues ask what practical value such knowledge might have: whether and how it will matter to live a good life. In this class we will do a close reading of these three dialogues, supplemented with relevant secondary literature.

Course Objectives

This class focuses on developing skills that are central to humanities classes. These include: skills in *reading a text closely and critically*, skills in *writing clearly* and in *constructing a well-defended argument*, and skills in *productive group discussion*. And since this class is designed to be a course in the history of philosophy, there will be both historical and philosophical objectives.

Historical objectives: Ancient texts are often hard to read and interpret. The style, organization, and context of production of these texts are quite different from contemporary readings. Our goals as historians will be to read these texts closely and interpret them charitably, taking into account the historical context in which they were produced, and to understand what these authors are saying, why they are saying these things, and who their interlocutors are.

Philosophical objectives: The philosophers we will read make sophisticated distinctions, analyze concepts, offer arguments and counter-arguments, present evidence, and attempt to refute their opponents' views. Our goals as philosophers will be to discover the main problems and questions that occupied philosophers in this period in the domains of physics, metaphysics, and ethics. We will learn to identify, analyze, map, and reconstruct the arguments and views advanced in these texts, with a view to understanding these author's positions, and their motivations for proposing them. Finally, we will learn to assess these proposals and arguments, and evaluate whether they are plausible and coherent.

By the end of this course, you will have developed and refined the following general skills: (i) how to read difficult philosophical material; (ii) how to identify and reconstruct arguments; and (iii) how to produce and clearly articulate your own arguments, both in writing and orally in class.

Required texts

1. Christopher Moore, Christopher Raymond, *Plato. Charmides*. Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2019.
2. D. S. Hutchinson, *Alcibiades I*, in J. M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (eds.), *Plato: Complete Works*. Hackett Publishing, 1997. ****We will also look at a draft translation I will make available****
3. G. M. A. Grube, *Apology*, in J. M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (eds.), *Plato: Complete Works*. Hackett Publishing, 1997.

Course requirements

- Attendance is mandatory.
- You will have to post **weekly questions/comments** about the readings in Canvas.
- You will be in charge of **presenting one piece of secondary literature** of your choice.
- You will **submit a paper topic and outline at the end of week 7**, which you will develop into a final, **seminar paper of approximately 5000-6000 words**.

Course schedule

Readings	Secondary Sources
<p>Week 1 - Plato, <i>Charmides</i> 153a-160c</p> <p>Week 2 - Plato, <i>Charmides</i> 160d-167c</p> <p>Week 3 - Plato, <i>Charmides</i> 167d-171c</p> <p>Week 4 - Plato, <i>Charmides</i> 171d-176d</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · McCabe, “It goes deep with me: Plato’s <i>Charmides</i> on knowledge, self-knowledge, and integrity.” · Raymond, “Αἰδώς in Plato’s <i>Charmides</i>.” · Carone, “Socrates’ Human Wisdom and Sophrosune in <i>Charmides</i> 164c ff.” · Benson, “A Note on Socratic Self-Knowledge in the <i>Charmides</i>.” · Tuozzo, “What’s Wrong with These Cities? The Social Dimension of <i>sophrosune</i> in Plato’s <i>Charmides</i>.” <p><u>Two (new!) books on the <i>Charmides</i>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tsouna V. <i>Plato’s Charmides: An Interpretative Commentary</i>. Cambridge University Press; 2022. • Woolf R. <i>Plato’s Charmides</i>. Cambridge University Press; 2023. <p><u>And a not so new, but also great book on the <i>Charmides</i>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuozzo, T. <i>Plato’s Charmides: Positive Elenchus in a “Socratic” Dialogue</i>, Cambridge University Press; 2011.

<p>Week 5 - Plato, <i>Alcibiades</i> 103a-110d</p> <p>Week 6 - Plato, <i>Alcibiades</i> 110d-116e</p> <p>Week 7 - Plato, <i>Alcibiades</i> 116e-127d</p> <p>Week 8 - Plato, <i>Alcibiades</i> 127d-135e</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ferguson, “Self-Knowledge in the Eye-Soul Analogy of the <i>Alcibiades</i>.” · Leigh, “Self-Knowledge, Elenchus and Authority in Early Plato.” · Remes, “Reason to Care: The Object and Structure of Self- Knowledge in the <i>Alcibiades I</i>” · Wilburn, “The Problem of Alcibiades: Plato on the Moral Education of the Many”
<p>Week 9 - Plato, <i>Apology</i> 17a-28b</p> <p>Week 10 - Plato, <i>Apology</i> 28b-42a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · McCoy, “Why Is Knowledge of Ignorance Good?” (in Ambury and German, eds.) · Moore, “Self-Knowledge” · Moore, <i>Socrates and Self-Knowledge</i> (ch. 1) · Rappe, “Socrates and Self-Knowledge”