

Philosophy 310: Second Assignment

Plato's Republic

Hand in your paper on or before **Thursday, December 4th**.

Please make use of my office hours for planning, drafting and/or reviewing your paper. Besides my regular hours (Tu/Th 1.30-3.30pm) I am often in on Wednesdays. Otherwise, arrange for a time by email.

Answer one of the following in at least **6 pages**:

1. The character of Thrasymachus is in effect an attack by Plato on people who think there can be a natural (godless) basis for ethics. Discuss. [See 336b-344e, and perhaps use 357-360 as well]
2. The ring of Gyges story is probably meant to show (a) that the social contract theory of morality is inadequate, and (b) that ordinary people have no real, deep commitment to morality. Explain, and consider whether it succeeds at showing (a) or (b). [See 357a-365a]
3. What is Plato's rationale for objecting to so much of the writings of Homer and the tragedians? (Be sure to consider both his *stated* reasons, and his *real* reasons, if those are different.) [See 376e-392c]
4. Compare Plato's attack on Homer and the tragedians with Tolstoy's attack on Shakespeare. [See 376e-392c, and read this: http://orwell.ru/library/essays/lear/english/e_ltf]
5. In Plato's ideal state everyone has to "do their own thing." Assess this proposal as a theory of political justice. [See 368e-376c, and 427e-435a; note that Waterfield uses the term 'morality' in these contexts, where 'justice' or 'fairness' would be a much better translation.]
6. Explain and evaluate Plato's analogy between the city and the individual's soul. [See 427e-435a and 441c-444a] Consider the political *and* the psychological claims implied by the analogy.
7. What are the main criticisms that a believer in democracy would make of Plato's utopia? [Use all the passages listed for questions 3, 4 and 5 and be sure to use Karl Popper.]
8. Answer question 7 by considering simply whether philosopher-kings are a good idea. [Use the same material]

The bracketed references tell you which parts of the *Republic* you *must* use to answer the questions.

If there is any other idea you would rather write about connected with the *Republic*, please

suggest it to me and I will consider it. Also, I will be sending and posting further written material that will be useful for some of these questions. Keep an eye on the website.