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PHIL 250-02, Aesthetics, Spring 2007

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Rhodes College
Aesthetics
PHIL 250-02: TR 9:30 – 10:45
Buckman 330

Prof. Stephen Faison
Clough 402
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Office Hours: MW 3:00 – 4:30

In *The Republic*, Socrates all but banishes the poets from his ideal state, and eliminates poetic imagery and literary presentation as proper vehicles for philosophical expression. According to Plato, literary and poetic expression does not appeal to reason, and cannot be a source of knowledge and virtue as it presents false images thrice removed from the truth of the forms. Nevertheless it certainly seems possible that literature can perform the work of philosophy, especially if philosophy is broadly defined as love and pursuit of wisdom as guidance in the art of living. Plato's hostility towards the poets expresses conflict about narrative and concrete versus systematic and abstract presentations of philosophical ideas, and is indicative of the differing conceptions of the world and humanity presented in Greek drama and Greek philosophy. In this course we will consider Plato's quarrel with the poets, and examine works by several Greek and Roman writers that provide poetic and dramatic alternatives to Plato's argumentative approach.

COURSE TEXTS

Aeschylus I: *Oresteia*
0226307786 Univ. of Chicago

Sophocles I: *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Antigone*
0226307921 Univ. of Chicago

Euripides V: *Electra*, *Bacchae*
0226307840 Univ. of Chicago

Aristophanes: *Lysistrata and Other Plays*
0140448144 Penguin

Lucretius: *The Way Things Are*
025320125X Indiana Univ.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Gain factual knowledge
Learn fundamental principles
Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view
Develop skill in expressing oneself orally and in writing
Gain a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity*

GRADING

- 20%: Quizzes, homework
- 20%: Attendance, participation
- 30%: Mid-term exam
- 30%: Final exam (includes one cumulative question)

QUIZZES AND HOMEWORK

There will be a quiz each week. Quizzes are intended to motivate students to keep current with reading assignments. If the class demonstrates superior knowledge of the material through class discussion, this measure may be reduced or eliminated.

Homework will mainly consist of provocative questions intended to stimulate thought about ideas and arguments raised by our thinkers.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

You *are* required to attend class. Rhodes administration does not make a distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Excessive absence will adversely affect your grade. Each absence in excess of three (3) will result in a one-step grade reduction.

Missed quizzes can be made up before the next class period. Missed exams cannot be made up unless special circumstances warrant such considerations.

Discussion and exchange of ideas are essential components of learning, particularly in philosophy courses, so these factors are deemed important to your grade for the course. You are cordially invited to participate in the great intellectual conversation. In other words, you are expected to attend class prepared to intelligently discuss assigned reading and class topics. If you are unusually shy about speaking in class, please see me and some reasonable accommodation can be made.

CLASS RULES for writing and class discussion

- 1 Always answer the question you are asked.
- 2 Do not evade the spirit or letter of the question.
- 3 Do not assert or deny premises insincerely, unless you acknowledge that you are doing so. Avoid engaging in sophistry.
- 4 Avoid using "I believe," or "In my opinion."
- 5 Do not emote; offer reasons for your position.
- 6 All written assignments are due in class on the required date, and are to be delivered in hard copy, unless specific permission is granted to do otherwise.