

Emnerapport for Fil-4560 Høst 18 (MA seminar)

Course title: *Plato on Pleasure and the Human Good*.

The course was offered in English and was text based. The syllabus comprised passages from Plato's dialogues *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Republic*, *Philebus* and *Laws*. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* were also consulted, especially on the problem of the weakness of the will.

The objective of the course was twofold: (1) examine Plato's account of pleasure and ask whether he considers it importance for the good life, and if so how. Central to this question, is how Plato conceives of the good life, and we naturally spent a good deal of time during the course reflecting on this question too. (2) The course was text-focused in the sense that close reading of Plato's texts and extracting their philosophical import was a priority. One of the main purposes was to train the students to ask questions of the text and consider the possible answers it may be said to be offering.

14 students enrolled, 12 completed the course by handing in a final paper. Four received A, five B, and 3 C.

The class activity typically comprised presentations offered by me on the various texts and issues, followed by questions and discussion. After a few sessions the students started giving presentations. These were followed by questions by me first, and then by the other students. All students who participated gave a presentation. Most of them presented on the theme of their final paper. In addition, several students handed in drafts of their final paper for comments.

It is fair to say that the course was rather successful. The students gave positive comments; indeed, some of the comments were raving. They said they were at first somewhat apprehensive of the fact that they were to offer presentations but they found it helpful. In my view, the presentations facilitated participation and the students did say they enjoyed the discussions in class. As importantly, they found the overall theme of the course rewarding and the readings very engaging. One thing that some students commented was that the syllabus did not contain any secondary literature. As a matter of fact, the idea was to concentrate on Plato's texts without preconceived notions of their content and that the students would consult secondary literature after having a view of their own regarding the text's content. Ans they could discuss with me the secondary literature that pertained to their presentation/paper after having engaged the text. For the most part that went well, but I consider next time to include in the reading list a limited number of influential pieces of secondary literature.

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