

St. Athanasius Academy  
Western Philosophy  
Syllabus

Welcome to Western Philosophy! This class is designed for thoughtful, Orthodox high school seniors who are willing to discuss fundamental questions about the meaning of life.

Introduction:

My name is Dallas Shipp, and I am your teacher for this course. I am a teacher of humanities in classical Christian schools, and I have used my love of philosophy to inform and enrich several of my classes over the years. I have planned regular symposiums for assessments that I think you will enjoy.

First off, order your textbooks. You may find these books most easily on Amazon both new and used, and you can also find them on Abebooks and other websites for used books. I advise that you find the editions described below in order to have the right translations and so that the entire class can follow along on the correct pages as we work together.

Required Books:

Plato. *Great Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. W. H. D. Rouse, New York: Signet Classics, 2015.

Aurelius, Marcus. *Meditations*. Trans. George Long, Mineola, NY: Dover, 2012.

Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Trans. Scott Goins and Barbara H. Wyman, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012.

Lewis, C. S. *The Abolition of Man*. Harper: New York, 2001.

I will also send selections from modern western philosophers as we have time for them.

What to Expect:

- We will have regular reading assignments, and students are expected to come to class prepared to engage with the text.

- Students are required to have weekly conversations about philosophy with family or peers. These symposia, or “dinner conversations,” are designed around practical and theoretical questions, and are intended to connect families with classwork. Obviously, these discussions need not happen over a meal or with family, but require the participation of a small group. Students will be provided with questions to create these discussions and to take notes of the conversation for assessment.
- We will regularly compare the content of our readings and discussion with the dogmatic teaching of the Orthodox Church and have a special focus, in the second half of our class, on conflicts between Orthodox Christian dogma and practice and modern philosophy.
- Our class will meet every week on Friday. We will divide the class time into lecture and exposition, instruction for the weekly symposium, and review of the reading assignment for the previous week. Bring a notebook to each class and be prepared to write.

#### Schedule:

- We will begin with a deep reading of Plato: the fountainhead and founder of western philosophy. We will read and discuss *Ion*, *The Apology*, and *The Republic*. We will encounter the philosophical implications in religion, education, ethics, and politics, and use Plato as a contrast for the remainder of the class.
- We will continue working with ancient philosophy with the great Stoic Marcus Aurelius. We will be especially interested in the religious and ethical attitudes of Aurelius and to what degree his philosophy can and cannot be reconciled with the Christian life.
- We will continue with the medieval Christian Boethius and concern ourselves with the great difficulty of the pain and suffering of the innocent and virtuous.
- We will next encounter several philosophers of the Protestant Enlightenment and Romantic Era, and the eruption of modern philosophy. For the first time since Plato, we will re-engage with a tradition of radical skepticism, alienation from culture, and the innovative spirit of modernity. We will end our investigation with the revolutionary spirit of Marx and encounter the Roman Catholic reaction to revolution in the tradition of Thomas Aquinas.

- Our last work for discussion will be C. S. Lewis' *Abolition of Man*, in which we will digest the major themes of the year in light of the challenge of modern skepticism and revolution. Our final meditations will be on what can be known about the moral nature of human beings and the implications of philosophy in politics.

#### Schedule:

September 3:	Introduction to Philosophy Overview of Syllabus and Assignments Introduction to Plato
September 10:	<i>Republic</i> Books 1 + 2 Symposium #1 on <i>Ion</i> due.
September 17:	<i>Republic</i> Books 3 + 4 Symposium #2 on <i>Republic</i> due.
September 24:	<i>Republic</i> Books 5 + 6 Symposium #3 on <i>Republic</i> due.
October 1:	<i>Republic</i> Books 7 + 8 Symposium #4 on <i>Republic</i> due.
October 8:	<i>Republic</i> Books 9 + 10 Symposium #5 on <i>Republic</i> due.
October 15:	<i>Apology</i> and <i>Crito</i> Symposium #6 on <i>Republic</i> due.
October 22:	<i>Meditations</i> pages 1-18 Symposium #7 on <i>Apology</i> and <i>Crito</i> due.
October 29:	<i>Meditations</i> pages 19-46 Essay #1 on Plato due.
November 5:	<i>Consolation</i> Books 1 + 2 Symposium #8 on <i>Meditations</i> due.
November 12:	<i>Consolation</i> Books 3 + 4 Symposium #9 on <i>Consolation</i> due.
November 19:	<i>Consolation</i> Book 5 Symposium #10 on <i>Consolation</i> due.
November 26:	THANKSGIVING BREAK

December 3:     *Abolition of Man* Book 1  
                    Introduction to Modern Philosophy

December 10:    *Abolition of Man* Book 2  
                    Symposium # 11 on *Abolition* due.

December 17:    *Abolition of Man* Book 3  
                    Essay #2 on Medieval and Modern Philosophy due.