

## First Paper Topics

Write a paper no longer than 1800 words, about 5-6 pages, on one of the topics below. Please turn your paper in to my box in 208 Pearsons by 10 am on Thursday, February 18. Good luck!

1. All of the characters in *The Republic* agree that Glaucon's account of justice in Book II (358e-359b) is essentially an extension of Thrasymachus's remarks on the subject in Book I. It is not obvious to me that they should have done so. Justice, as Thrasymachus describes it, is exploitative, while Glaucon describes justice as a sensible deal. What are the most significant differences between the accounts of justice? What are the most important similarities? Taking both the differences and similarities into account, are the characters right to have regarded the two accounts of justice as essentially the same?
2. I said Plato's analogy between the city and the soul faces a dilemma and that he has to choose between an attractive picture of the city and a plausible picture of the soul. Roughly, a city whose "reasoning" part regulated its "desiring" part in the way that the reasoning part of the soul regulates the desiring part would be harshly repressive. Rob, a student in this class a few years ago, disagreed with my criticism. According to Rob, Plato saw the desires of a good, well-ordered soul as moderate. To put it another way, the good person doesn't want things so indiscriminately and violently that the reasoning part has to constantly repress it. If so, the analogy doesn't look as bad as I said it was. I think there is a lot to be said for both interpretations. So I would like you to settle it. Which one of us is right? To do so, you should characterize our differing interpretations of Plato, give your reasons for preferring one, and respond to what you regard as a compelling objection.
3. The analogy of the cave in Book VII raises a question: why would the Guardians go back to rule the city? Explain why this question arises and

how Plato tried to answer it. Give what you regard as a compelling objection to Plato's answer. Then give your own assessment: has Plato explained why the philosophers would be willing to serve as kings?

4. According to Thrasymachus, unjust people always come out ahead in their partnerships, they pay fewer taxes, and they favor their friends and family while performing public service (333d-e). Glaucon said something similar. He claimed that an unjust person comes out the winner "in any contest" and thus gains the ability to benefit his friends and harm his enemies (362b-c). Explain why they say those things. Describe the best reason in the *Republic* for thinking that the unjust person is in fact worse off than the just one. Finally, evaluate that reason. Does it show that Thrasymachus and Glaucon were mistaken?