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, September 27. 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. What are the most significant differences between their 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. Rob, a student in this class a few years ago, disagreed with my criticism. As he saw it, Plato thought the desires of a good, well-ordered soul are moderate, so the reasoning part does not have to constantly repress them. 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? 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. Can the productive classes in the city be just? Plato himself seems to have been pulled in two different directions on this question. Explain why this is so. Then offer your assessment. Is one position the most consistent one for Plato to have adopted or is he stuck between the two?

4. 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?