Plato Course Objectives

A complement to Foundations of American Thought, this course explores in depth one of the most important authors of the Western canon of great philosophy and literature. The purpose of this class is to introduce students to the founder of Western philosophy, to deepen students’ understanding of ideas such as justice, beauty, virtue, and wisdom, and to complete students’ practice of rhetoric and dialect. The reading list consists of nine of Plato’s greatest dialogues. Students will focus on the philosophical themes highlighted in each text, as well as examine the characters of each drama. They will explore the nature of dialogue as a literary genre, and will practice critical thinking and rhetorical skills through discussion. This course fulfills ten credits of high school philosophy and supplements the world literature studied in other Torrey Academy classes.

Specific Course Objectives:

Students will analyze and interpret texts of Platonic dialogue in collaboration with others. They will

- identify the organizing elements of a Platonic dialogue
- identify, explicate, and respond to key themes in Platonic dialogue
- cross-analyze key Platonic themes in other Torrey Academy texts

Students will develop rhetorical and dialectic skills. They will

- do careful dialectic on a variety of subjects
- interpret a written dialogue and choose how to verbally present the characters and content
- identify and implement various methods of elocution and rhetoric

Students will apply knowledge gained from a synthesis of multiple texts and discussions. They will

- evaluate ideas based on the Bible as the ultimate authority on Truth
- exhibit discernment in moral and ethical issues
- demonstrate a willingness to change beliefs and behaviors due to the insight of others

Students will contribute in intellectual discussion confidently, critically, and charitably. They will

- Ask relevant, critical questions about texts and ideas
- Distinguish between good and bad arguments
- Recognize, imitate, and produce sound, compelling, and logical arguments
- Assess multiple perspectives with fairness and precision in reading, discussion, and writing
- Assert opinions and beliefs with courteous and reasonable arguments
- Respond to opposition to opinions and beliefs with courteous and reasonable rebuttals

Course objectives will be realized through intensive reading, writing, discussion, and performed dialogue of the students. The discussion and writing assignments (in the form of reflection questions modeled after the Torrey Honors Institute’s format) will serve as the evaluative tools to assess the students’ progress toward the set objectives. Student notebooks serve as a catalog of the student’s progress though the course of the academic year, and the dialogue is equivalent to a final exam.