Dear Plato students & families

Welcome to Plato class (written) orientation. This document is intended to help you orient to the new and exciting Plato class you’ve signed up for, our inaugural class.

Your first assignment is to read *Alcibiades I* from the red Hacket Edition of *The Complete Works of Plato*.

Plato is designed as the perfect complement to Foundations of American Thought. Hence, there is a high degree of overlap in the themes. Plato students are invited to make these connections, but to avoiding estranging themselves from fellow Foundations students by talking excessively, without explaining yourself, about books that are not common to all.

The Plato class requirements are very similar to the Inklings class most of you are familiar with, with two exceptions.

**New Assignments**

1. **Pull Questions**

In lieu of class summaries or reflection essays, Plato (and Shakespeare) students answer one “Pull Question” every class period.

The pull question is a variable-length essay answering the tutor’s specific question at the end of that class discussion. Thinking about the question and writing a 1-2 page answer will help students synthesize the information they’ve read and the analysis they’ve conducted in class into a coherent hypothesis. Pull questions are not merely “reflection” nor are they merely “summary” of the class discussion; they go further in developing and solidifying thoughts about the topic discussed.

Pull questions may be hand-written in a journal set aside for that purpose, they may be typed. Either way, students should aim to do each pull question assignment the same day (or very near) as the class discussion. After waiting a day or more, the goal of possible success of the essay begins to erode. Set aside time that day, that afternoon, or that night, each day you have a Plato class discussion.

2. **Dialogue Project**

In lieu of a term paper, students will engage in writing their own platonic-style dialogue. The details for this assignment will be made clear as the time comes. Students write one dialogue in the Fall semester, and then produce it in the Spring semester. “Production” may be either a live performance, as in a short play, or a recorded performance, a short film. This project is designed to give students a three-dimensional involvement with the dramatic form of dialogue, which combines elements of theater and debate to stimulate the hearts and minds of viewers.
The other class requirements are similar to other Torrey Academy classes, but here is a refresher.

**Class Requirements**

Students will become competent in analysis of Platonic dialogue. They will identify themes and analyze characters and arguments contained therein.

Students will read approximately 8 Platonic dialogues, carefully and deeply. We read less but we read with increased attention and focus.

**Parental Involvement**

Please continue to oversee time management and electronic involvement (email and chat). As a supplemental Torrey class, Plato is worth one class. This means less reading and writing (compared to a core class) but some help still might be required.

Continue the discussion at home. Plato writes and thinks about just about every important topic you can think of. He is writing from a pre-Christian perspective (he lived about 300 years before Jesus was born) but from a pious and very thoughtful perspective. Students will enjoy (and you may enjoy too!) trying to figure out if he is right—and how his thinking compares to right Christian thinking.

Guide the “heart and the hand.” We engage the “head” in class, but our aim is to be whole souls. But we cannot be with students all day, every day of the week. Part of your job as primary educators is to encourage and facilitate their applying what they learn in their everyday lives, by relating better to the family, by being a better son or daughter, a better student, a better friend.

Communicate with us! Email, phone call, or chat in person if you have any questions or comments about this new class.

**Course Requirements**

Finish each dialogue before the class for that class. We’ll be going at a slow pace, but you still need to read ahead. You might find it necessary (or helpful) to read each dialogue twice. Once quickly, the second time more carefully, taking more notes, and asking questions. Read intelligently, focusing on key ideas.

Respect your classmates, as in Core classes, use the Mr. and Ms. when referring to fellow students and to your tutor. Attack ideas and not people.

Make sure you have your Google groups and Google apps running, and check email regularly.

**Thanks!**

You are part of a small group of intrepid families willing to take on this new and exciting challenge—please communicate your thoughts on with us to help improve the content and form of our latest supplemental class. Happy reading!