The Philosophic Dialogue
The Gallatin School, NYU
IDSEM-UG 1425, Spring 2015
Professor Stacy Pies
Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-4:45 p.m.
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Course Description
In this course, we will read philosophical dialogues and their modern successors, a novel and a play whose subjects are art and rhetoric. Ancient to modern writers have been fascinated with the power of art, and for each, ideas about art are connected to those about language and society. In our reading of Ion and Gorgias we will look at Plato's ideas on art, rhetoric (oratory), and power before his Republic. Phaedrus, written later, complements the discussion in earlier texts, developing Plato's ideas about the relation of the intellect, the emotions, and the appetites. We may also read Plato's Symposium to consider, as Tina Turner says, what love has to do with it. We will then discuss Diderot's Rameau's Nephew, which revisits some of Plato's themes from the perspective of the eighteenth century and the changing world of the Enlightenment. Finally, we will explore the dialogue form in the twentieth century through one modern novel, Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts and Tom Stoppard's play Arcadia. In our dialogue, we will explore not only at what these writers say, but how they say it, and speculate on how and why conversation, rather than monologue, can give rise to knowledge. Among the questions I hope we consider are the following: How are ideas born from conversation (and, I hope, our conversations)? What is the importance of human relationship in intellectual inquiry? How does the dialogue imply, and necessitate, our participation as readers?

Texts
Course Requirements
The work for the course combines class participation, reading, and various types of writing. There will be four 500-750 word short essays, for which I will give you specific questions (you will have the option of exploring your own topic, too, of course). These are called "Response essays" in the syllabus to distinguish them from the longer essays. There is also one 1500-word analytical essay and one 1500- to 2000-word analytical essay or a philosophical dialogue with a 750- to 1000-word critical and analytical component.

Ground rules
Attendance is required, and more than two unexcused absences may adversely affect your grade in the course. You are expected to have completed the readings before the class for which they are assigned. Papers are due on deadline. Please no laptops, cell phones, etc. in class. Just bring your books, brain, heart and imagination.

Papers
READ THIS CAREFULLY!

Required Format for Papers: All essays must have a title. Every essay should be typed, double-spaced, and carefully proofread, with pages numbered. Please use 12-point font such as Times or Times Roman. When you quote from and cite your sources, you are expected to use the MLA citation format, preferably parenthetical documentation. All essays must include a list of Works Cited following the MLA format. See MLA Handbook or you can find MLA format on line! Excellent site: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/. To save paper, please put your Works Cited at the end of your paper; you do not need a separate page. Paper format, grammar and proofreading count as part of the grade. Please be attentive!

For this class, what is a "response essay"?
A response is a 500-word essay in which you explore a passage or idea in the text; depending on how your mind works and how you connect with texts, you might start conceptually and look closely at the text to articulate and find evidence for this intuition or idea, or, you might do the opposite and start close to the text and move outward to arrive at your conclusions or ideas. Or you might develop an observation or intuition you have about the design--formal, emotional, narrative--of the text. If you are a reader who starts with your feelings and intuitions about a text (I often do!), your job is not to write about what you feel, but to go back to the book and try to trace and articulate how this text produced those feelings. Try to read as a writer as well as a reader. I want to see you thinking aloud on the page, testing and pushing your ideas. Responses are for figuring out what you think and for taking intellectual risks. The tone should be "business casual," not completely formal, but not completely informal. A response is an essay, not a blog. I am also open as the term progresses to your undertaking experiments in your own prose that respond formally or stylistically to the form and styles we are reading. You can write as a writer, too. Please note: I will give specific instructions for the first response and will give you questions for other responses to spur your thinking.

Academic Integrity
As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website for a full description of the academic integrity policy: www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html

**Preliminary Syllabus**

1/29  Introductions
     In class writing: Tell me about a dialogue that changed you.

2/3  Plato and Art: Inspiration
     Ion
     What is the dialogue saying about inspiration? about art and knowledge?

2/5  Ion

2/10  *Gorgias*. We will discuss the beginning of *Gorgias*, pp. 1-32.
     What questions do you have (refer to page numbers) so far? What is *Gorgias* saying about oratory (rhetoric) and knowledge? oratory and justice? Why isn’t oratory a craft? How is Socrates criticizing the power of orators? What are the points of view about happiness and justness, and what is your response? What is the argument about medicine and justness?

2/12  *Gorgias*, pp. 32-69. Response essay #1 due.

2/17  *Gorgias*, pp. 69-113

2/19  *Gorgias*. Start reading *Phaedrus*, too. Please read through 241d. Please read the poems at the end, too. You may enjoy them.

2/24  *Phaedrus*, 241e-257b.

2/26  *Phaedrus*, 257b-end. Response essay #2 due.

3/3  *Phaedrus*, last thoughts, conclusion to Plato, or maybe *Symposium* (we will see how much love you have for Plato).

3/5  *Symposium*


3/12  Introduction to Diderot and Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew*, pp. 33-82 (top)

3/17 & 3/19  NO CLASS--SPRING BREAK
To think about as we begin:

Socrates on elenchus (refutation) and conversation (discussion/dialogue)

from Sophist 230B

. . . [W]hen any one believes himself to be saying something worthwhile on a certain subject, ask questions about it. As men wander without consistency in their beliefs, they do not find the examination difficult: they gather these beliefs together in conversation and place them side by side. And they show that these beliefs contradict each other on the same aspect of the same subject. The pupils, realizing it, are angry with themselves, but gentler to others, and in this manner they get rid of proud and fixed beliefs about themselves. This kind of deliverance is very pleasant for the hearers and lasting for the victim. Just as doctors think that the body cannot profit from the nurture provided for it until the inner obstacles are removed, so in the case of the soul those who bring the process of purification about think that no benefit can be got from any knowledge that is brought forward until the man who tests the opinions of another has led him to feel a sense of shame and removed the beliefs that stood in the way of knowledge. In this way a
man is made pure and no longer thinks he knows more than he actually does.

--That is a very excellent state to be in.

--For these reasons, Theaetetus, we must say that this test, the elenchus, is the greatest and most powerful of all purifications. The man who has not undergone it, be he the Great King of Persia himself, is corrupt (impure) in the way that matters most. He is uneducated and ugly in the things in which any one who is to be really happy should be most beautiful and pure.