For Plato, as with the rest of the Greeks, ethics and politics were inseparable. This courses seeks to explore Plato’s ethics and politics from its origins in ‘Socratic’ philosophy, through the Republic, and culminating (or taking a different turn?) in the Statesman. Political philosophy as a discipline was invented by Plato. The Platonic corpus as a whole contains reflections on the origins of political institutions, the concepts used to interpret and organize political life (e.g. virtue, power, happiness), the meaning and value of justice, the relation between the aims of ethics and politics, and the merits of political expertise as an antidote to the power of rhetoric (“the art of persuasion”). This course does not assume a background in ancient philosophy and will be accessible to all graduate students from all fields of philosophy. The readings will be focused primarily on Plato’s original texts (read in translation), including the Apology, Crito, Protagoras, Euthydemus, Gorgias (a particularly relevant dialogue in light of Trumpism), Republic, and Statesman.

The seminar meets Mondays 2:30-5:30 in StH 1145.