

Hum 110/L. Leibman
Plato's Shorter Dialogues

Reading Questions

1. Literary Criticism #1: construct a character sketch of Socrates using Plato's dialogues. Compare this portrait to that of Aristophanes in the *Clouds*. How do they differ? How do Socrates' beliefs in each differ?
2. Politics: In earlier dialogues (e.g. the *Gorgias*), Socrates was bitterly critical of Athens. What is Socrates critical about in each of these dialogues? Is he pro-Athens? Is he pro-democracy? Compare his vision of Athens and Democracy to that of Thucydides and Aristophanes.
3. Law: In the *Crito* (50b-c) Socrates imagines the following objection: "the state wronged me and did not judge the case correctly." Do you agree or disagree?
4. Ethics: Read the attached dialogue by C.D.C. Reeve. Did Socrates corrupt the youth? Write down five pieces of proof for both the pro and con positions.
5. Political Science: can someone live in a state, accept its benefits, serve its offices and still not imply an agreement to obey its laws? Consider a modern example that is parallel to Socrates.
6. Education: What is the relationship between Socrates' political activity and his educational philosophy? Compare this presentation of his educational philosophy to that in the *Clouds*.
7. Historical context: What is the social context of Socrates' trial? How does this help explain the outcome?
8. Lit. Crit. #2: Where does Plato end and Socrates begin? How can you differentiate the positions and beliefs of the author and those of his main character (both in general and in this particular case).
9. Religion: is Socrates an atheist? What is his religious position?