

Plato's *Phaedrus*: Philosophy and Poetics

Convenors: Prof Marion Durand, Dr Cynthia Liu, Flora Nelson

In the *Phaedrus*, Plato operates at the border of poetry and philosophy, setting the philosophical dialogue in a cicada-serenaded, Nymph-haunted *locus amoenus*. Over the course of the conversation, the philosopher breaks out in dithyrambs and hexameters as he discusses how the soul loves and remembers and ponders what role words, especially written words, play in memory. That the *Phaedrus*' concerns overlap significantly with those of poetry did not escape ancient authors. The pervasive influence of the *Phaedrus* in antiquity is attested by one of Plutarch's characters in the late 1st century CE, who comments that he wished authors would cease writing about 'meadows and shades, the twining of ivy and oak, and whatever other similar things poets seize onto in imitation of Plato's Ilissus, that divine place with its gently sloping grassy hill' (*Amatorius*, 749a). This seminar series invites readings of the *Phaedrus* that combine philosophic and poetic approaches to Plato's texts.

We will analyse one section of the dialogue in detail each week, led by a speaker who will present for 20–25 minutes on the passage at hand, followed by discussion.

Schedule of speakers

Week 1 (14 October): Outside the Walls (227a–230e) [Flora Nelson, Oxford]

Week 2 (21 October): Lysias on Non-Lover and Lover (230e–234c) [Brady Thomson, St Andrews]

Week 3 (28 October): Socrates on the Lover (234c–241d) [Samuel Woodward, Oxford]

Week 4 (4 November): Socrates' Palinode (241–257b) [Fritz-Gregor Herrmann, Swansea]

Week 5 (11 November): From Love to Rhetoric (257b–264e) [Glenn Most, Pisa]

Week 6 (18 November): Collection and Division (264e–274b) [Colton Duncan, Oxford]

Week 7 (25 November): The Myth of Theuth (274b–278b) [Kieran Vernon, Oxford]

Week 8 (2 December): The Final Prayer (278b–279c) [Adam Rosengarten, Oxford]