

Knowledge about Everything: Plato and the Science of Philosophy  
Uppsala University, Fall 2019

Philosophy is sometimes considered to be a science. As a science it is taken to have a distinct method and this method, in turn, is taken to correspond to a distinct subject matter. But what is the subject matter of philosophy and is there a method? In this course we will read and assess Plato's suggestion in the *Sophist*. In this dialogue Plato considers the idea that philosophy is like the art of grammar and thus structurally pertinent to all subject matters. It corresponds to a generic structure of discrete kinds and philosophical inquiry is taken to be the systematic study of this structure. In the secondary literature, this suggestion is either understood as an expression of a mature and authentic platonic metaphysics, or as a sophisticated illusion staged to illustrate the seductive lure of sophistic deception, epistemic power and scientific complacency. In this course we will together assess the dialogue's arguments and their dramatic and socio-political framework. The classes will be in seminar form and the course will be examined by an essay.