PH/HS 1050 History of Philosophy: Ancient

Fall, 2014
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This course meets on Tuesday and Friday, 9:40-11:00 DSPT 1

This syllabus and related documents are posted at http://moodle.gtu.edu

A course in the history of philosophy is not a crash course in the thought of each of the figures we will look at. While we deal with their ideas, we will also deal with the historical elements: who these philosophers were, why they engaged in philosophy, how philosophy related to such things as religion, politics, science, etc.

Goals of the Course

1. To learn what philosophy meant to the people who coined the term; what it meant to be a philosopher; how philosophers fit into their social and intellectual world; and how they transmitted philosophical knowledge.
2. To gain critical skills in reading and discussing ancient philosophical texts
3. To see Greek and Roman philosophy’s impact on theology
4. To learn to use the available secondary sources for the study of the philosophers of this period.

Class Outline

Sept. 2

Topic: Introduction to the Course and to the Period. Recurring themes: cosmology, human well being (soteriology), social and political life, freedom and responsibility.

Sept. 5

Topic: Education and Philosophy in the Hellenic Period

Preparation: Baird and Kaufmann, Ancient Philosophy: Perikles, Funeral Oration, pp. 52-56; Plutarch, Lives (Aspasia) pp. 61-64; Plato, Letter 7 (excerpts) on Moodle.

Discussion: What does the Funeral Oration tell us about the Athenians’ social values and vision of themselves? How does “philosophy” as Plato uses that term in the Seventh Letter either support or challenge these values?
I. Philosophers Who Had Day Jobs

Sept. 9

**Topic:** The philosophers of Ionia and their explanations of identity and change in “physical” rather than “theological” categories. Suppositions about how we investigate the world and ourselves. The significance of cosmology: how do we locate ourselves in the world?

- Anaximander of Miletus
- Anaximenes of Miletus
- Xenophon of Colophon
- Heraclitus of Ephesus

**Preparation:** Baird and Kaufmann, *Ancient Philosophy:* pp. 1-21

Sept. 12

**Topic:** The philosophers of Southern Italy and Sicily. Four element theories. Greek atomism. The relationship between appearance and reality.

- Pythagoras
- Parmenides of Elea
- Zeno of Elea
- Empedocles of Agrigentum
- Anaxagoras of Clazomene
- Leucippus and Democritus

**Preparation:** Baird and Kaufmann, *Ancient Philosophy:* pp. 22-42

Sept. 16

**Topic:** Purveyors and peddlers of culture and wisdom: The Sophists and their opponents

- Protagoras of Abdera
- Gorgias of Leontini
- Isocrates

**Preparation:** Baird and Kaufmann, *Ancient Philosophy:* Protagoras, pp. 43-44; Gorgias, pp. 44-46; Critias, pp. 46-48; Isocrates, Speech 13, Against the Sophists, [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/); (look in the Classics section)
II. Philosophers Who Engaged in Practical, i.e. Political Life

Sep. 19

**Topic:** The Socratic alternative view of human society, discourse and ethical activity. The significance of the political question: what is our social identity?


**Discussion:** Compare the presentations of Socrates in Plato’s *Letter 7*, the Platonic dialogues about his trial and Xenophon’s description in the *Memorabilia*.

Sep. 23

**Topic:** Virtue and Knowledge. Plato’s soteriology

**Preparation:** Baird and Kaufmann, *Ancient Philosophy*: *Meno*, pp. 151-175

**Discussion:** What do you think Plato is trying to accomplish in this dialogue? Particularly, how does the treatment of “right opinion” fit into it?

Sep. 26

**Topic:** 1. Sources and problems for the interpretation of Plato  
2. Plato’s metaphysics for the sake of political action. Cosmology and moving beyond cosmology.

**Preparation:** [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-myths/](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-myths/);  

**Discussion:** Read *Phædo* nos. 94-99 carefully. How does Plato, speaking through Socrates, see himself in relation to the “philosophers” we have already looked at? How does he express his difference from the position of Isocrates?

Sep. 30

**Topic:** Plato’s interpretation of human knowledge and human society

**Preparation:** *Republic*, Book I You can find an electronic copy at: [http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.2.i.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.2.i.html), or in any collection of Plato’s works. Baird and Kaufmann omit an important section about the encounter between Socrates and Cephalus.  
Oct. 3
Reading Day
Since the reading for the next session is very heavy we will not meet today.

Oct. 7
Topic: Plato’s psychology: the dynamic of Eros. The philosopher and the value of philosophy.

*Phaedrus*, [http://plato.evansville.edu](http://plato.evansville.edu) *Phaedrus* is also available in any collection of Plato’s works.

Oct. 10
Topic: Criticism from within: Aristotle’s metaphysics for the sake of scientific investigation.

Preparation: *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “Aristotle”
[http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/a/aristotl.htm](http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/a/aristotl.htm) Read through #2
Baird and Kaufmann, *Ancient Philosophy: Categories* 1-5. pp. 313-318; *On Interpretation* 1-9. pp. 318-322; *Poetics*, 1-5; *Rhetoric* I.1-6 (on class website)

Discussion: Before you start to read the *Rhetoric*, consider what you expect to find in a work with that title. Did Aristotle bring anything unexpected into his treatment?

Oct. 14
Topic: Aristotle’s alternative to Plato’s theory of causality: Cosmology meets metaphysics.


Oct. 17
Topic: Aristotle’s psychology and epistemology and their relation to his theory of act and potency


Oct. 21 and 24 Reading Week
Oct. 28

**Topic:** 1. Aristotle’s ethical and political theory. Aristotle’s soteriology
2. The Aristotelian Tradition: Andronicus of Rhodes and Alexander of Aphrodisias

**Preparation:** The material of previous classes will be relevant to the discussion, especially the treatment of the *Rhetoric* and the *Metaphysics*. Along with this read Baird and Kaufmann, *Ancient Philosophy: Nichomachean Ethics* (selections) pp. 368-442; (Pay special attention to Book III which discusses questions of freedom and responsibility.) *Politics* (selections) pp. 442-453

**Discussion:** Come prepared to discuss the question: what is the motivation for being a “good” person?

**III. Philosophers Who Were Critics of Practical Life**

Oct. 31

**Topic:** 1. The Cynic alternative: political life as unnatural. We don’t have or need a social identity.
2. Introduction to the Hellenistic Age
   - Euclid of Megara
   - Antisthenes
   - Diogenes of Sinope
   - Crates


Nov. 4

**Topic:** The Epicurean re-interpretation of the classical political virtues. An alternative cosmology—uncaused motion

Nov. 8

**Topic:** The Stoic re-interpretation of the classical political virtues. The ethical question: for what are we responsible?

- The Ancient Stoa
  - Zeno of Citium
  - Cleanthes of Assos
- The Middle Stoa
  - Panaetius of Rhodes
  - Possidonius of Apamea
- The Roman Stoa
  - Seneca
  - Musonius Rufus
  - Epictetus
  - Marcus Aurelius


Nov. 11

**Topic:** The skeptical reaction to philosophic dogmatism

**Preparation:** Sextus Empiricus, *Outline of Pyrrhonism*, Baird and Kaufmann, *Ancient Philosophy*: pp. 532-539

**IV. Philosophers Who Taught an Inner Quest**

Nov. 15

**Topic:** Middle Platonic interpretations and revisions of Plato. Middle and Neo-Platonic soteriology. Platonism meets Stoic ethics.

**Preparation:** *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “Middleplatonism”

[http://www.iep.utm.edu/midplato/](http://www.iep.utm.edu/midplato/)

*Septuagint*, Wisdom 8:1-8 (on Moodle)

Selections from Philo of Alexandria (on Moodle)

Discussion: Read Genesis 1-3. What is the *literal* meaning of Gn. 1:1-2:3? What is the *literal* meaning of Gn. 2:4-24? What is the *literal* meaning of Gn. 1-3? What is the cosmology and ethics of it?
Nov. 19
Topic: Neo-Platonic interpretations and revision of Plato. Plato depoliticized.

Preparation: The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Neoplatonism”

Nov. 22
Topic: Neo-Platonism after Plotinus

Nov. 25
Topic: Christianity and Greek Philosophy

Preparation: Selections from Origen (on Moodle)
Tertullian: The Prescription against Heretics; Chaps. 7-15; (on Moodle)
Clement of Alexandria: Stromata; Bk. I. cc. 2,5,7; Bk. II. cc. 2,3,4; Bk. VI cc. 7,10; Bk. VII., cc. 2,10;(on Moodle). A complete electronic text is available at:
http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0210.htm
Basil of Caesarea, Letter 2 To Gregory Nazianzus http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202.htm

Discussion: In the texts we have read from Philo through today’s texts, how do the elements of philosophy, theology, religion and mysticism interact with one another?

Nov. 28 Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 2
Topic: Christian Greek Neoplatonism

Preparation: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pseudo-dionysius-areopagite/;
Selections from Pseudo-Dionysius (on Moodle)

Dec. 5
Topic: Trinity, Christology and Greek Philosophy. The cosmology, soteriology and ethics of the Nicene Creed
Preparation: Selected Patristic readings on class website
Required Text:

Course Requirements

1. Attend class and do the preparation assigned.

2. When there is a discussion called for, come to class prepared to read a two-page (maximum) interpretation of the assigned reading. I will call on one or two students read his or her paper. All students must be prepared to question and/or discuss the assigned readings.

3. Prepare a class portfolio which will contain the following items. I prefer to receive a hard coopy.

   Essay 1: What is Greek philosophy? Is there any good reason to put all these figures into one category apart from the fact that they all wrote in Greek and lived a long time ago? (3-5 Pages)

   Essay 2: The relationship between philosophy, theology and religion in the Greek philosophical tradition and the varied Christian attitudes toward it. I expect you to cite relevant readings from the class to demonstrate your point. (3-5 Pages)

   Essay 3: Compare the pedagogical strategies of Plato and Aristotle. What are they like as teachers? How does understanding their medium help you to understand their message? (3-5 Pages)

   Essay 4: Prepare a mini research paper. What is Late Antiquity? Who writes about it and what are they saying? (Hint: Start with Peter Brown’s The World of Late Antiquity.) How does a broader understanding of Late Antique culture help you understand Late Antique philosophers? (5-7 Pages)

Inclusive language in written work is an academic standard. I expect you to use it.
Grading Criteria

Grading in this class is based on three criteria. Work should be:

1. Complete
2. Correct
3. Clearly and effectively presented

A  Work is complete. Errors or miscomprehensions, if any, are few and minor. Clear and effective presentation. Work shows a significant depth and breadth of critical understanding.

A-  Slightly less than the above

B+  Work is complete. Errors or miscomprehensions, if any, are few and minor. Clear and effective presentation.

B  Work is complete or nearly so and with some minor errors or miscomprehensions. Minor lapses in clear and effective presentation.

B-  Some gaps in completeness. Errors or miscomprehensions are few but significant. Lapses in clear and effective presentation. (Marginally acceptable as graduate/professional quality work.)

C+  Work is incomplete. Errors or miscomprehensions are numerous and/or significant. Presentation lacks clarity and effectiveness.

C  Work is significantly incomplete. Errors or miscomprehensions are numerous and/or substantial. Presentation lacks clarity and effectiveness.

C-  Work is significantly incomplete. Quantity and quality of errors or miscomprehensions suggest a serious lack of understanding. Presentation lacks clarity and effectiveness.

D  Work is minimal and indicates little understanding of the material. Presentation is sloppy and ineffective.

F  Less than minimal work done.