

PHHS 1050: Ancient Philosophy

Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

Fall 2018

Monday/Thursday, 11:10 AM–12:30 PM

DSPT 3

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Course Description and Objectives:

This course is an introductory survey of ancient philosophy, extending from the most ancient Greek sources to Hellenistic and Roman thinkers. The focus of the course will be a close, critical study of texts from this philosophical period, with particular attention to the dialogues of Plato and the treatises of Aristotle. In addition to Plato and Aristotle, students will encounter the thought of various Presocratic schools and thinkers; philosophers and movements of the Hellenistic period, including Epicurus, Stoicism, Cynicism, and Academic and Pyrrhonian Skepticism; Roman appropriations of Greek thought, including the works of Lucretius, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius; and the various transpositions of Platonic philosophy (Middle Platonism, Neo-Platonism, and Christian Platonism). This course partially fulfills the historical philosophy area requirement for the Philosophy or Concurrent M.A. program. It also satisfies in part the plan of study in philosophy required by the Western Dominican Province's *Ratio Studiorum*.

By the end of the semester, students should be able to contrast philosophical explanation of the world and human existence, as exemplified in the ancient Greek thinkers explored in the course, with mythic accounts of the same phenomena. They should also be able to identify central concepts and problems in Greek thought, tracing the changing forms of key philosophical ideas like nature (*phusis*), cosmos (*kosmos*), principle or cause (*arche*), being (*ousia*),

matter (*hyle*), law (*nomos*), knowledge (*episteme*) and art (*techne*) from the Presocratics, through Plato and Aristotle, to Hellenistic and Roman philosophy. While students will concentrate on understanding various Greek philosophers in their historical context, they will also be encouraged to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of various philosophical approaches in order to allow these ancient ideas and arguments to inform their own critical thinking about perennial human questions and contemporary issues.

Course Requirements:

Each class session will consist of both lecture and discussion. Students will be expected to carefully prepare assigned readings in order to actively participate in the conversation and raise thoughtful questions in class. These activities will foster student capacities for reading and analyzing philosophical texts, as well as for self-direction and collaborative learning (DSPT Institutional Goals A3 and B1). *Unannounced* short in-class quizzes will occasionally be given.

Students are expected to be present for class sessions, following the policies set forth in the DSPT *Student Handbook*. Absences will affect the student's final grade. Students should plan, in particular, to be present for the **final exam on December 10**, since a make-up exam will be given only in the event of a serious illness (with a doctor's note) or an equally grave reason. Students with disabilities or whose first language is not English are encouraged to speak with the instructor about any special needs they might have.

Students will be evaluated according to the quality of their class participation and their understanding of class material as demonstrated by two short (6-8 page) analytic papers and a final exam. These assignments are designed to help students develop their own critical thinking on fundamental philosophical questions, and articulate their understanding of these both orally and in writing (DSPT Institutional Goals A1 and A2). Topics for the two short papers will be made available to students several weeks ahead of time. While these papers are not research papers, all sources should be cited using proper "Turabian" format, carefully citing in footnotes all sources used (see Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Eighth Edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Students are asked to consult the DSPT *Student Handbook* and follow the DSPT's policies regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. The papers are due **November 1 (Paper #1) and December 6 (Paper #2)**. Late papers will be accepted, but will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late (e.g., an "A" paper turned in one day late will receive an "A-.")

Grading: Class Participation/Quizzes: 30%

Papers (2): 15% each

Final Exam: 40%

Assigned Texts:

S. Marc Cohen, Patricia Curd, and C.D.C. Reeve, eds. *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle*. Fifth Edition. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2016. ISBN-13: 978-1624665325. Paperback. \$54.00 [used from around \$29].

(N.B.: While students are free to use older editions (third or fourth) of the above, the fifth edition is highly recommended, since pagination will be used to specify class assignments and references to texts in class discussions.)

Weekly reading assignments will be taken from the assigned text, as well as from additional readings posted on Moodle (<http://moodle.gtu.edu>).

Course Schedule:

9/6: Course Introduction

Selections from Hesiod, *Theogony*

Pericles, *Funeral Oration* (from Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*)

Plato, *Letter VII*

- 9/10: The Problem of the One and the Many I: The Ionians and Pythagoreans
 Presocratic Fragments (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 1-19)
 Selections from Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*
- 9/13: The Problem of the One and the Many II: Heraclitus and Parmenides
 Presocratic Fragments (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 19-33)
- 9/17: The Problem of the One and the Many III: The Pluralists and Atomists
 Philosophical Counterfeits: The Sophists
 Presocratic Fragments (Cohen, Curd and Reeve, pp. 33-73)
- 9/20: Socrates and the Early Platonic Dialogues
 Plato, *Euthyphro* (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 80-90)
 Plato, *Apology* (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 90-106)
 Optional: Gregory Vlastos, "Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge"
 Optional: T.H. Irwin, "The Platonic Corpus"
- 9/24: Plato on Love
 Plato, *Symposium* (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 202-34)
 Selections from Plato, *Phaedrus* (243c-257b, 270a-272c)
 Optional: C.D.C. Reeve, "Plato on *Eros* and Friendship"
- 9/27: Plato on Virtue, Knowledge and the Soul
 Plato, *Meno* (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 145-66)
 Plato, *Phaedo*, 57a-107a (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 166-196)
 Optional: Dominic Scott, "Platonic Recollection"
- 10/1: Plato on the Soul and Justice
 Plato, *Phaedo*, 107a-118a (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 196-201)
 Plato, *Republic* I and II (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 234-71)
 Optional: Roslyn Weiss, "Wise Guys and Smart Alocs in Plato's *Republic* 1 and 2"

10/4: Plato on the Soul and Justice II

Plato, *Republic* III-IV (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 271-311)

Optional: Leslie Brown, "How Totalitarian is Plato's Republic?"

10/8: Plato on the Forms

Plato, *Republic* V-VII (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 311-68)

Plato, *Parmenides*, 127a-135d (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 419-24)

Optional: Julia Annas, "Understanding and the Good: Sun, Line, and Cave"

10/11: Plato's Cosmology

Plato, *Republic* IX-X (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 386-418)

Plato, *Timaeus*, 28a-58c (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 425-45)

Optional: Andrew S. Mason, "Plato's Cosmology"

10/15: Aristotle's Methodology and Philosophy of Science

Aristotle, *Categories* 1-5 (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 452-56)

Selections from Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 464-75)

Optional: Michael Pakaluk "Reading Aristotle"

10/18: Aristotle's Cosmology

Selections from Aristotle, *Physics* I-III (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 475-95)

Selections from Aristotle, *De Caelo* (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 505-10)

Selections from Aristotle, *De Generatione et Corruptione* (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 496-504)

10/22 & 10/25: Reading Week (No Class)

10/29: Aristotle on Being

Selections from Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, IV, VI-IX (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 536-72)

11/1: Aristotle's Biology

Selections from Aristotle, *De Anima* (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 512-29)

Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* I, 1-5 (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp 530-35)

Optional: James G. Lennox, "Form, Essence, and Explanation in Aristotle's Biology"
First Paper Due

11/5: Aristotle on God

Selections from Aristotle, *Physics* VIII (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 595-96)

Selections from Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII-XIII (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 572-77)

George, "Would Aristotle Agree with St. John that 'God is Love?'"

11/8: No Class

11/12: Aristotle on the Good Life

Selections from Aristotle, *Politics* (Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, pp. 623-53)

Optional: C.D.C. Reeve, "The Naturalness of the Polis in Aristotle"

11/15: Hellenistic Philosophy I: Epicureanism and Cynicism

Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus*, *Letter to Menoceus*, and *Principal Doctrines*

11/19: Hellenistic Philosophy II: Stoicism

Epictetus, *The Handbook*

11/22: Thanksgiving (No Class)

11/26: Roman Philosophy

Selections from Lucretius, *De Rerum Naturum*, Books II-III

Selections from Seneca, *Letters*

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Book IV

Optional: Tobias Reinhardt, "Philosophy Comes to Rome"

11/29: Plato's Heirs I: Skepticism and Middle Platonism

from Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*

Optional: Svavar Hrafn Svavarsson, "Sextus Empiricus"

12/3: Plato's Heirs II: Neo-Platonism

from Plotinus, the *Enneads*

Optional: Lloyd P. Gerson, "Plotinus as Interpreter of Plato"

12/6: Plato's Heirs III: Christian Neo-Platonism

from Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*

Optional: Denys Turner, "The Cataphatic and Apophatic in Denys the Areopagite"
Second Paper Due

12/10: Final Exam

N.B.: The instructor reserves the right to revise the course syllabus as the need arises.

General Criteria for Grading of Papers

A: The student's essay not only reflects a correct understanding of the subject matter, but also a depth of comprehension which sees the wider implications of ethical principles and theories. The writing is fluent, well-organized, without grammatical or syntactical errors, following the standards articulated in Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (Eighth Edition).

A-: For work which, although still excellent, falls short of the above.

B+: The student has produced a paper demonstrating a correct grasp of the subject matter, and has expressed this articulately. The paper itself is free of grammatical and syntactical errors.

B: The student has correctly grasped the essence of the subject matter, although with a few errors, and has presented his or her understanding in an organized, articulate way.

B-: Although the work shows a fair understanding of the subject matter, there are multiple errors in content, or the student's understanding has not been well expressed.

C+: Although the student's work shows evidence of effort and some genuine understanding of the topic, there are more significant errors or omissions, or the expression results in difficulty determining the extent of the student's understanding.

C: Serious errors or omissions show that the student has failed to grasp important aspects of the subject matter or make a fully coherent argument, or has expressed their argument in such a way as to leave serious difficulties in determining the paper's position and the student's understanding.

C-: The student's paper exhibits very little understanding of the topic and is poorly expressed.

D: The work exhibits a lack of understanding of the topic and is poorly expressed.

F: The work fails to meet even the minimum standards of understanding and expression, or has not been turned in.