



PHI 235-800:
History of Ancient
Philosophy
Spring 2018

Instructor: Mark Zelcer

@markzelcer

Email: mark.zelcer@oswego.edu

Office: 212 Marano

Office Hours: Tue 3:45-4:45, Thu 12:30-1:30, and by appointment. Students are also invited to join me for lunch on Wednesdays.

Course Text: [*Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle*](#). Fifth Edition. Edited by Cohen, Curd, and Reeve. Hackett Pub. Co, 2017. Additional material will be posted on Blackboard.

Class Meetings: Tue, Thu 11:10-12:30; Marano Campus Center, room 223.

Requirements: 1) Participation: 8%. You will only get points for participating in class if the class hears you participate throughout the semester. You will not get these points otherwise. Attendance is not the same as participation; 2) You will be assigned eight very short (1 page) written assignments directly related to the reading: 32%; 3) Midterm exam: 30%; 4) Final exam: 30%.

You are responsible for keeping track of your papers and knowing the exam schedule. Your paper should contain your student number, not your name.

Class policies:

- Attend all classes
- Possess a copy of the assigned text.
- Read the assigned material.
- Do not use electronic devices in class.

Course Description: This course is an introduction to and survey of the philosophy of the ancient Greeks. We will explore Greek philosophical thought from around the mid-6th Century BCE up until the end of the classical period. Though the works of Plato and Aristotle will fill the bulk of the semester, we will also look at some of the Pre-Socratics as well. Our goals will be to examine the main ideas of Greek philosophical thought at that time, including questions about ethics, politics, science, mathematics, the soul, knowledge, love, free will, happiness, women, paradox, substance, cosmology, and God.

Schedule (approximate)

Week 1: Introduction to the course and to ancient Greek thought, ancient texts and their histories, and general methodology. We first discuss Hesiod and the origins of cosmology in ancient myth. Reading is from the Introduction of your text (pp 1-5).

Weeks 2, 3: We will discuss the presocratics: Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides and, Zeno. We will be introduced to the earliest speculation on the building blocks of the universe, mathematical mysticism, and paradox. Read the relevant sections from the text (pp 7-11).

Weeks 4,5: We will observe philosophy move from taking a primary interest in the nature of the universe to a focus on how one ought to live. We will be introduced to Socrates, Plato and the sophists. We will talk about Plato's problems with the written word and his particular literary style. We will begin reading actual works of Plato regarding the trial and death of Socrates. Read *Euthyphro* (pp 80-90), *Crito*, *Apology*.

Week 6: Socrates asks what can be taught? What knowledge is innate? Read Plato's *Meno* from the main text. What problem is Plato trying to solve? Was the boy really born knowing geometry?

Week 7: Pericles' funeral oration from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian war*, and Socrates' funeral oration in the *Menexenus* (on Blackboard). We will explore praise, rhetoric and philosophical disagreement in ancient Greece. Pay attention to the differences in the two speeches. Plato on public rhetoric and the nature of war.

MIDTERM EXAM

Week 8, 9: Read the brief speeches recorded in Herodotus' *History* (on Blackboard) as a bit of background to ancient political thought. What is Justice? Where do we find it? What are the different views? The *Republic* is the most famous book in Plato's corpus, we will look at it carefully. Book I- Definitions of justice; Socrates vs Thrasymachus; II- The City/Soul analogy; III- Censorship, medical ethics; IV- Justice in the city and soul; V- Feminism, who is the philosopher?; VI- The ship of state, the idea of the Good, the divided line; VII- the allegory of the cave, the education of the Guardians; VIII- Failure of just city, critique of democracy;

Week 10: Introduction to Aristotle as a systematic philosopher. We will look at *Categories* and Aristotle's distinction between subject and predicate, substance and qualities. What is Aristotle saying about ontology?

Do we have free will? The argument from *On Interpretation*. Chapter 9. What are "future contingent propositions" and what does it say about the inevitability of the sea-battle tomorrow? How does Aristotle's theory of language impact his metaphysics?

Week 11: What is Aristotle's approach to science? Read the excerpt from *Posterior Analytics* and *Physics* (Book III). Ask yourself how differently we think about science today.

Week 12: What are Aristotle's views on metaphysics? We will explore what he thought of universals, substance, matter, form, being, teleology and God. Read the excerpt from the *Physics* VII and *Metaphysics* I.1-4, 6 in the main text. Did Aristotle believe in God? What kind of God? What is the unmoved mover?

Week 13: What is Aristotle's view on psychology, learning, the soul, and the mind-body problem? Read *De Anima*. Book II, III in the main text.

Week 14: Aristotle's ethics: Read *Nicomachean Ethics*. I, VI in the main text. We will explore the nature of virtue ethics and Aristotle's response to Platonic ethics.

Final exam: Tuesday, 8 May 2018, 10:30 AM.

Grades:

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	65-66
F	0-64

Students with disabilities: The Office of Disability Services is available to assist students who have a legally documented disability or students who suspect that they may have a disability. If you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to successfully complete this course, please contact the Office of Disability Services. (Alternative testing for students with learning disabilities is available through Disability Services.)

Intellectual Integrity: Intellectual integrity on the part of all students is basic to individual growth and development through college coursework. When academic dishonesty occurs, the teaching/learning climate is seriously undermined and student growth and development are impeded. For these reasons, any form of intellectual dishonesty is a serious concern and is therefore prohibited. For more information see: www.oswego.edu/integrity. Should you commit any form of academic dishonesty, you may fail the course.