PHI 235: History of Ancient Philosophy

Spring 2017

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Office: 232 Marano

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

Course Text: *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle*. Fourth Edition. Edited by Cohen, Curd, and Reeve. Hackett Pub. Co, 2011. Additional material will be posted on Blackboard.

Class Meetings: Tue, Thu 11:10-12:30; Marano Campus Center, room 232.

Requirements: 1) Participation: 10%. 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 ten very short (1 page) written assignments directly related to the reading: 30%; 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.
- There is no need to email in advance if you will miss one 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.

Perspectives: 1) We will look at the ancient writings from the perspective of a scholar of texts. We will closely look at the authors and examine their writings for style, nuance, and "personality". 2) We will attempt to understand the arguments that a straight-forward reading of the text will provide. The argument is the heart of the philosophical text, and one of the great innovations of the Ancient Greek philosophers. We will focus on this. 3) Finally, we will look at the texts historically. We will explore the context in which the texts were written and the impact that the writing had on the history of philosophy.

Schedule (approximate)

Week 1: Introduction to the course and to ancient Greek thought, ancient texts and their histories, and general methodology. We first discuss the origins of cosmology in ancient myth and then the Milesians and their quest to understand the ultimate building blocks of the universe. Readings will be from the section on the Milesians in the main text (pp. 10-17). What does each philosopher think the universe is made of?

Week 2: We will discuss Zeno, motion, and the paradoxes. We will also look at Pythagoreanism, mathematics, mysticism, and Parmenides. Read the sections on Pythagoras (pp. 18-23), Heraclitus (pp. 29-39), Parmenides (pp. 40-47), and Zeno (pp. 47-51) from the text. Be prepared to discuss Zeno's paradoxes. What is their point?

Week 3: We will watch philosophy move from 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. We will learn about Plato's Forms. Read *Euthyphro* (pp. 135-152).

Week 4: Socrates defends the philosophical life and argues for a particular relationship between the citizen and the state. Read Plato's *Apology* (pp. 153-178) and *Crito* (pp. 179-191). Would you convict? Would you escape jail?

Week 5: What can be taught? What knowledge is innate? Read Plato's *Meno* (pp. 241-266) from the main text. What problem is Plato trying to solve? Was the boy really born knowing geometry?

Week 6: 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.

Weeks 7 and 8: 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 (371-381); Socrates vs Thrasymachus; II- The City/Soul analogy (398-401, 407-413, 413-423); 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; IX- Critique of tyranny; X - Philosophy versus poetry, the myth of Er. What kind of government does Plato ultimately endorse? What is Plato's idea of justice?

Midterm Exam:

Week 9: Introduction to Aristotle as a systematic philosopher. Subject/predicate, substance qualities, Aristotle's logic. Read the excerpt from the *Categories* (694-700). Try to imagine how Aristotle would categorize different objects and approach different subjects given what we know about how he thinks about logic. Do we have free will? The argument from *On Interpretation*. Chapter 9 (pp. 703-708). What are "future contingent propositions" and what does it say about the inevitability of the sea-battle tomorrow?

Week 10: What is Aristotle's approach to science? Read the excerpt from *Posterior Analytics*. *Physics*. (Book III) (pp. 745-749) Ask yourself how differently we think about science today.

Week 11: 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 (763-4) and *Metaphysics* I.1-4, 6 (pp. 800-808) in the main text. Did Aristotle believe in God? What kind of God? What is the unmoved mover?

Week 12: 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. (pp. 847-855, 865-867)

Week 13: Aristotle's ethics: Read *Nicomachean Ethics*. I, VI (pp. 870-883, 905-913) in the main text. We will explore the nature of virtue ethics and Aristotle's response to Platonic ethics.

Final week (time permitting): Epictetus' *Enchiridion* (on Blackboard).
What is Roman philosophy? Specifically how did the Stoics see Man in the world?

Final exam: 5/9/17, 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM.

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.