

# ***Ancient Philosophy***

80-250, Summer I, 2006

## **Course Information**

*Time:* Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday 12:00–1:20 PM

*Room:* Baker Hall 150

## **Instructor**

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*Office Hours:* By Appointment

## **Course Description**

It is difficult to overstate the importance of Ancient Greek philosophy. Not only do these ancient thinkers delineate the topics that dominate western philosophy, but they also lay the groundwork for contemporary approaches to political theory, psychology, and all the physical and natural sciences.

The ancients' questions and concerns are virtually identical to those of most people today: Did the universe have a beginning? If so, how did it begin? What, in the most general terms, are its nature, basic constituents, and unity? Why does it move and develop as it does? What can we hope to learn about it? What is knowledge in general? Can we know what it means to be a person? How should a person live? How should people organize their societies? Understanding how the ancients pose and attempt to answer these questions provides a strong foundation in the history of philosophy, and the history of western moral, political, metaphysical, epistemological, and psychological thought more generally.

We will begin the course with a brief introduction to Ancient Greek society and culture by reading from the works of Homer. Then we will study the fragments of the Presocratic philosophers who attempt, for the first time in known human history, to understand the world in naturalistic, as opposed to solely theological, terms. After that, we will study the life and death of Socrates, and the philosophy he embodied, as represented in Plato's early dialogues. Following this, we will then examine Plato's approach to philosophy by doing in-depth readings of Plato's *Phaedo*, *Meno*, and extensive sections of the *Republic*. We will then explore Aristotle's systematization of philosophy through selections from the *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*, and the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

## Course Objectives

By the end of this term, I expect that you will be able to

- Describe key figures in ancient philosophy along with their basic ideas,
- Clearly articulate the arguments that attempt to justify these ideas,
- Critically evaluate these arguments, and
- Communicate all the above through both verbal and written discourse.

Each course requirement and assignment is designed with these objectives in mind.

## Requirements

Quizzes	= 20%
Papers	= 50% (2@25% each)
Final Exam	= 30%

Philosophy is a full-contact sport. However, we will wrestle with arguments and not attack those advocating them. In order that you seriously digest the material, **attendance is required** and I will encourage class participation. You are allowed two absences, no questions asked. Please note, however, these are not vacation days, they are for illness and emergencies. Each additional absence results in 2 points deducted from your final grade. If you have any questions, please ask; do not assume.

## Explanation of Assignments

Reading: Philosophy texts are not textbooks or novels. Unlike these, they present sophisticated arguments that attempt to justify a particular position or point-of-view. Hence, you need to do more than merely peruse the readings: you must endeavor to understand the author's position and how the author justifies it. In some cases, this may take multiple readings to accomplish. However, reading assignments are relatively short so that this is feasible. In addition, it is good to take notes while reading, so that you can remember the author's main points. Reading questions will be provided to help guide you in this. Finally, feel free to bring questions to class. This material is hardly obvious and, despite over two thousand years of scholarship, it still challenges most intelligent people.

Class Participation: Class attendance and participation is very important in understanding and retaining the class material. As noted above, attendance is required and I will do my best to encourage class participation. I do recognize that not everybody is comfortable speaking in class, and so only repeated class absences will lower your grade. Nevertheless, active class participation can increase your final grade if you are in a borderline situation.

Quizzes: Ever two or three classes, there will be a quiz that will assess your understanding of the reading and what we have covered in class. Generally, these quizzes will consist of three or four fill-in-the-blank questions and one or two short

answer (4-5 sentences) questions. These quizzes will not be announced in advance and can only be made up in extraordinary circumstances.

Papers: Communicating your ideas, and those of others, is the most essential skill you can learn in college. To this end, I will provide you opportunities to train this skill in the context of philosophical explication and evaluation. Philosophical explication requires clearly and charitably articulating another's argument/position, while philosophical evaluation requires either critical judgment or positive development of another's argument/position. In particular, critical judgment involves diagnosing and justifying a serious problem or difficulty in another's argument/position. Positive development involves defending another's argument/position, justifying its importance and correctness while drawing out its implications. The particular format and topics of each paper will be announced and discussed in class. In addition to the particular requirements for each paper, your papers should

- Have an appropriate title,
- Be of appropriate length (I realize that sometimes is necessary to write a longer paper, and that is acceptable; just keep in mind that a longer paper is not always a better paper), and
- Be typed and double-spaced, employ a 12pt "Times New Roman" font, and possess 1 inch margins.

I will provide you with a sample rubric so you are familiar with the grading criteria and can anticipate how your papers will be graded.

Final Exam: There will be one final exam in this course, which will test your overall comprehension of the course material. In particular, there will be

- Fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice questions to assess your knowledge of the key figures and their general ideas,
- Fill-in-the-blank questions on the key "untranslatable" Greek words employed throughout the course,
- Short answer questions (4-5 sentences), where you are provided a few lines from the reading, and you must identify its author and its significance within that author's philosophical theory, and
- Longer answer questions (10-15 sentences), where you are asked to rehearse and explain small chunks of an author's arguments.

**Everything on the final exam will consist of material explicitly presented and discussed in class, so take good class notes.** We will discuss the final exam more in class towards the end of the term.

### A Note on Classroom Courtesy

Classes begin on the hour. Students are expected to be seated by that time and to remain seated until the class is dismissed. If you must leave before the class ends because of a medical appointment, or similar commitment, notify me before class

begins and sit near the door. Students who leave without providing such notice and have not suddenly taken ill will be expected to file a drop form and not to return.

### **Texts**

Baird, Forest E and Walter Kaufmann. *Philosophy Classics, Vol. I: Ancient Philosophy*. Fourth Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994.

Irwin, Terence. *Classical Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Plato. *Republic*. Translated by G.M.A Grube and revised by C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992.

Handouts will comprise the remaining reading material.

### **Course Outline**

#### *Part I, Introduction and the Homeric World View* [Week I]

- Introduction
- The Homeric World View

#### *Part II, Presocratic Thought* [Weeks I – II]

- The Milesian Monists: Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes
- The Solitary Figures: Pythagoras, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus
- The Eleatics: Parmenides and Zeno of Elea
- The Pluralists: Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Leucippus, and Democritus
- The Sophists: Protagoras, Gorgias, and Critias
- The Peloponnesian War: Thucydides

#### *Part III, Plato's Socrates* [Week II – III]

- *The Euthyphro*
- *The Apology*
- *The Crito*

#### *Part IV, Plato* [Weeks III – V]

- *The Phaedo*
- *The Meno*
- *The Republic*

#### *Part V, Aristotle* [Weeks V – VI]

- *Physics*
- *Metaphysics*
- *De Anima*
- *Nicomachean Ethics*

### **Plagiarism – The Short Note**

**pla·gia·rism** (plā'jě-rîz'ěm) *n* 1: a piece of writing that has been copied from someone else and is presented as being your own work. 2: the act of plagiarizing; taking someone's words or ideas as if they were your own.

Plagiarism is bad. Do not do it. It amounts to lying, cheating, and stealing. Anyone caught doing it can fairly assume that they will not pass this course.

To discourage plagiarism, [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com) will be used to check each of your assignments for their “plagiarism factor”. A separate handout on this process will be provided.

### **Plagiarism – The Long Note**

It is the individual student's responsibility to be aware of the university policies on academic integrity, including the policies on cheating and plagiarism. This is available online at: <http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html> and in the section on "University Policies" of *The Word: Undergraduate Student Handbook*.

Students who plagiarize face serious sanctions at both the course level, and the university level. At the course level, faculty members have significant discretion to determine the sanctions that are appropriate to individual cases of cheating and plagiarism. Within the Philosophy Department, it is customary for professors to give plagiarized assignments a failing grade and, when appropriate, fail students for the course. Additionally, a letter may be sent to the Dean of Students indicating that the student in question has submitted plagiarized material and received a course-level sanction. Plagiarism is also a violation of the community standards of Carnegie Mellon University. As such, allegations of plagiarism may be brought before a University Academic Review Board, which will determine whether community standards have been violated and level additional sanctions, if appropriate. Although this body also has significant discretion over the sanctions that it levels, plagiarism can result in academic probation, suspension, and even expulsion.