

PHIL 210 – Ancient Greek Philosophy, Spring 2016

MWF 9:05-9:55 Caldwell 105

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Office Hours: MW 10-11 or by appointment.

Office: 210B Caldwell Hall

Course Description

Is the world ultimately made of water? Or is it the result of a cosmic competition between Love and Strife? Is there a soul that lives on after death? Or does it migrate among humans, animals, and plants? Philosophers from Ancient Greece were interested in questions like these because they wanted to know the true nature of the world. As we will see in this course, their answers to these questions are as fascinating as the questions themselves.

In the first part of the course, we will discuss the Pre-Socratic philosophers including Thales, Democritus, Zeno of Elea, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Anaximander, Diogenes and others. In this part of the course, we will consider questions about the fundamental nature of reality. Is change an illusion or is stability? What is it to be a *physical* thing? Where did the Cosmos come from?

In the second part, our main focus will be on Plato. We will discuss his *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, and *Phaedo* as well as selections from his most famous work, *The Republic*. During this part, we will ask questions like: What is knowledge and how is it possible? What are the origins of good and evil?

In the final part, our main focus will be on Aristotle. We will discuss selections from his *Categories*, *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*, and *On Interpretation*. Topics discussed will include: Is the future unchangeable like the past? Is the soul separate from the body?

This course presupposes no familiarity with Ancient Greek literature or philosophy in general.

Textbook

Cohen, Curd, Reeve. *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy From Thales to Aristotle*. 4th ed.
ISBN: 978-1-60384-462-8

Course Goals

The goals of this course are:

- To introduce you to the thought of Ancient Greek philosophers and encourage you to see the intrinsic value of studying their work.
- To introduce you to the methods and goals of the history of philosophy, with the aim of developing your ability to charitably interpret unfamiliar texts and to assess the merits of the ideas therein.
- To help you develop the skill of engaging with complex, abstract and unfamiliar ideas with clarity and rigor.

- To encourage you to reflect carefully on the foundations of your own knowledge by reflecting on its humble origins and on impressive arguments for beliefs you may not hold.

Achieving these Goals

We will achieve these goals with the following methods:

- Students are expected to read assigned texts carefully before class and take notes of questions and comments you have about the text.
- I will give brief lectures to help explain the more complex material. However, most of class time will consist in my asking pointed questions about the text to help you guide your own thoughts.
- Sometimes I will ask small groups to work together to form an interpretation of an unfamiliar text to help develop the skill of constructing one's own interpretation of a text.
- When an objection to a philosopher's views is raised, I will do my best to respond "as" that philosopher. I will illustrate that though we may now reject these ancient beliefs, they have more merit than we might expect.
- When we find points of disagreement with a philosopher I will ask you to reflect on *why* your views are more plausible. For example, what is better about our current theories about matter? Why *can't* the world ultimately be composed of water?
- Exam questions will test not only your comprehension of the material discussed in class but also your ability to grasp the systematic points of view of many of these philosophers. For example, I might ask: how would Parmenides respond to the objection "I am not what I think about, therefore there are at least two things"? One should be able to answer this without our having discussed it explicitly in class.

Assignments and Grading

Participation (25 pts.)

Discussion Leadership (15 pts.)

After the add-drop period has concluded, I will assign each student three days on which they are one of the "discussion leaders." Discussion leaders are expected to come to class prepared to answer questions about the reading for that day's class. They should also prepare a few questions about the material that can be discussed in class if time permits. Five points will be awarded if a discussion leader offers thoughtful replies to my questions about the material and/or contributes to class discussion in some meaningful way. No points will be awarded if a discussion leader is absent without an approved excuse. Fewer than five points will be awarded if they are underprepared for class. Discussion leaders are welcome to discuss their readings with me before their class period.

Attendance (10 pts.)

Part of the participation grade will be determined by your attendance. I will ignore three unexcused absences over the course of the semester. Each unexcused absence after that will result in a loss of two points from your attendance grade.

Two Written Exams (20 pts. each)

There will be two take-home essay exams, each covering a third of the course material. Each exam will require approximately 4 pages of writing and will be submitted electronically. Essay questions will be announced one week before the due date.

Take Home Final Exam (35 pts.)

There will be no in-class final exam. Instead, you will be given a third essay exam similar in style to the previous written exams. However, the final will require approximately 6 pages of writing and will cover the content of the entire course, but with a focus on Aristotle. The final essay questions will be announced one week before the date of the final exam.

Course Grade Guide

A: 94-100 B+: 87-89 B-: 80-83 C: 74-76 D+: 67-69 F: 0-59

A-: 90-93 B: 84-86 C+: 77-79 C-: 70-73 D: 60-69

Please see UNC's official grade guide for University-wide standards for the quality of work that merits each grade.

Course Policies

- Our classroom will be technology-free, unless I specify otherwise. I will count any student that uses an unapproved electronic device during lecture and group discussion absent for that day. For almost all classes, you will just need something to take notes with and your text.
- Discussions will be respectful. No one wants to feel uncomfortable or unsafe in a classroom. Any comment or action that discriminates or harasses on the grounds of sex, gender, race, sexual identity, nationality, or any physical characteristics will not be tolerated. If you feel disrespected in any way during the class, please contact me immediately.
- The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. In the first instance please visit their website <http://accessibility.unc.edu>, call 919-962-8300 or email accessibility@unc.edu.
- Plagiarism and collaboration of any kind on exams is strictly prohibited. For more information about the Honor Code, please visit studentconduct.unc.edu. If you need help citing material or are worried about the originality of your work, please contact me before turning in your work.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – The Milesians and Pythagoras

1/11 – Introduction to the class

1/13 – Read 2. The Milesians from AGP

1/15 – Read 3. Pythagoras from AGP

Week 2 – Heraclitus and Parmenides

1/18 – **Class Cancelled, MLK Day**

1/20 – Read 5. Heraclitus from AGP

1/22 – Read 5. Heraclitus from AGP

Week 3 – Parmenides and Zeno

1/25 – Read 6. Parmenides from AGP

1/27 – Read 6. Parmenides from AGP

1/29 – Read 7. Zeno from AGP

Week 4 – Empedocles, Anaxagoras

2/1 – Read 8. Empedocles from AGP

2/3 – Read 9. Anaxagoras from AGP

2/5 – Re-read 9. Anaxagoras from AGP

First Exam Questions Announced

Week 5 - The Sophists, Atomists and Diogenes

2/8 – Read 10. Atomists from AGP

2/10 – Read 13. Diogenes from AGP

2/12 – Read 14. The Sophists from AGP

Week 6 – Plato: Euthyphro

2/15

First Exam due via. email before 9:05 AM

2/17

2/19

Week 7 Plato: Meno

2/22

2/24

2/26

Week 8 Plato: Phaedo

2/29

3/2

3/4

Week 9 Plato: Republic VI/VII

3/7 – Book VI – Sun and Line Analogies (selection)

3/9 - Book VII – Allegory of the Cave (selection)

3/11 - Discussion

Second Exam Questions Announced

Week 10 **Spring Break**

Week 11 Plato: Timaeus

3/21 – AGP p.652 - 670

3/23 – AGP p.670- 682

3/25 – **Classes Cancelled**

Second Exam due via email before 9:05 AM

Week 12 Aristotle: *Categories* and *Metaphysics* (selections)

3/28 – Categories (p.694-700)

3/30 – Metaphysics Book I (p.796-809)

4/1 – Metaphysics Book VII and VIII (p.815-833)

Week 13 – Aristotle: *Physics*

4/4 – Physics Book II (p. 740-757). Focus on discussion of **luck** and **chance**.

4/6 – Physics Book III (p. 758-63)

4/8 – Physics Book VIII (p.763-4) [Discussion Section]

Week 14: Aristotle: *De Anima*

4/11 - De Anima Book I and II (p.847-855)

4/13 – De Anima Book II (p. 855-863)

4/15 – De Anima Book III (p.863-869)

Week 15: Aristotle: *On Interpretation*

4/18 – De Interpretatione 9 (p. 704-708)

4/20 - De Interpretatione 9 (p. 704-708),

4/22 – See Sakai: Epictetus on Diodorus

Week 16

4/25 – Selections on Personal Identity

Final Exam Questions announced

4/27 – Review for Final

5/5 – Meet During Final Exam Period (8AM-11AM)

Final Exam Due via email: Thursday, May 5 at 11 AM