

# Introduction to Ancient Philosophy

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PHI205/CLA205/HLS208

**Instructor:** Merrick Anderson

**Class:** MW, 9:00-9:50 am

**Location:** McCosh 62

**Office Hours:** W, 3:00-5:00 pm (and by appointment)

## Overview and Objectives

This course examines the ideas of the pre-Socratic philosophers, the sophists, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and the later Greeks. We will study a variety of intellectual innovations made by the Ancient Greeks, including their important contributions to (what we now call) epistemology, metaphysics and philosophical methodology, although particular emphasis will be placed on ethical topics. Specific questions to be discussed include: What is knowledge, and how is it possible? What is the value of a definition? What is the nature of the soul and mind? What is virtue, and what is its relation to happiness? What is the good life for a human being? We will also think about the relevance of Ancient Greek philosophical positions to our own lives and to our own understanding of the world. In doing so, we will test the staying power of Plato and Aristotle's thought and, more importantly, put into action the Socratic sentiment that the unexamined life is not worth living.

## Requirements and Evaluation

There will be three assignments throughout the term as well as one take-home mid-term and one final exam. The first assignment will be short and will introduce students to the fundamentals of writing philosophy papers; the remaining assignments will increase in length and build on these fundamentals. Students are expected to attend classes regularly and participate in precepts.

- Assignment 1 (500 words) 10%
- Assignment 2 (1000 words) 15%
- Assignment 3 (2000 words) 25%
- Mid-term 20%
- Final Exam 25%
- Participation 10%

## Administrative Issues

*Late Assignments:* Late work will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade (from an A- to a B+, for example) for the first two days an assignment is late and each day after that, unless there are legitimate extenuating circumstances. Please ask in advance for any extension.

*Please familiarize yourself with the university's policies on plagiarism and abide by the Honor Code.*

## Required Texts

Plato, Complete Works, edited by John M. Cooper.

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, translated by Terence Irwin

The remaining readings (including recommended readings) will be posted on Blackboard.

## Course Outline and Readings

### 1. Introduction

Brief historical outline: Presocratics, Sophists, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and later philosophy.

### 2. The first philosophers: Heraclitus

Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Ch. 6, "Heraclitus of Ephesus"

Suggested further reading:

E. Hussey, "Heraclitus", in A. A. Long (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, 1999, 88-112

### 3. Parmenides

Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Ch. 8, "Parmenides of Elea"

Suggested further reading:

D. Sedley "Parmenides and Melissus", in A.A. Long (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*

### 4. The Sophists on Justice

Gagarin and Woodruff, *Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists*, from part IV, "Antiphon", "Sisyphus Fragment" and "*Anonymous Iamblich*"

### 5. Gorgias on Moral Responsibility

Gagarin and Woodruff, *Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists*, from part IV, Gorgias' "Encomium of Helen"

### 6. Plato's *Apology*: The examined life

Plato, *Apology*

### 7. Plato's *Euthyphro*: How to define

Plato, *Euthyphro*, beginning-11b

Suggested further reading:

R. Sharvy, "Analysis and Definition in Plato and Others", *Nous* 6.2 (1972), 119-137

### 8. Plato's *Euthyphro*: Socratic piety

Plato, *Euthyphro*, 11b-end

Suggested further reading:

C. Taylor, "The End of the 'Euthyphro'", *Phronesis* 27.2 (1982), 109-118

### 9. Plato's *Meno*: Virtue and the Socratic paradox

Plato, *Meno*, beginning-86d

Suggested further reading:

T. Irwin, "Socratic Method and Socratic Ethics: The Meno" in *Plato's Ethics*, Oxford, 1995, 127-147

**10. Plato's *Meno*: Learning as recollecting**

Plato, *Meno*, 80c-end

Suggested further reading:

D. Scott, "The Meno" in *Recollection and Experience*, Cambridge, 1995, 24-52

**11. Plato's *Republic*: What is justice, and what kind of good is it?**

Plato, *Republic*, Book 1 and Book 2, 357a-367d

T. Irwin, "Republic 2: Questions about justice," in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato 2*, Oxford, 1999, 164-85

**12. Plato's *Republic*: Parts of the soul?**

Plato, *Republic*, Book 4, 427a-445e

H. Lorenz, "The analysis of the soul in Plato's Republic" in G. Santas (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic*, Blackwell, 2006, 146-165

**13. Plato's *Republic*: Opinion vs. Knowledge**

Plato, *Republic*, Book 5, 472a-end

L. Brown, "The Verb 'to be' in Greek Philosophy: Some Remarks" in S. Everson (ed.), *Companion to Ancient Thought: Language*, Cambridge, 1994, 212-236

**Fall Recess**

**14. Plato's *Republic*: The cave**

Plato, *Republic*, Book 7, beginning-521c

**15. Plato's *Republic*: Justice defended**

Plato, *Republic*, Book 9

**16. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: The human good, happiness, and the ergon argument (11/12)**

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1 and Book 10, Chs. 6-8

**17. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: Character virtue**

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1, Ch. 13, and Book 2

**18. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: Choice and moral responsibility**

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 3

Suggested further reading:

S. Bobzien "Choice and Moral Responsibility" in R. Polansky (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Cambridge, 2014, 81-109

**19. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: Pleasure and final comments on happiness**

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10

Suggested further reading:

V. Harte, "The Nicomachean Ethics on Pleasure" in R. Polansky (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Cambridge, 2014, 288-318

**20. Aristotle's *Physics*: Change**

Aristotle, *Physics*, Book 1, Chs. 7-8

**21: Aristotle's *Physics*: The four causes**

Aristotle, *Physics*, Book 2, Chs. 1-3

Suggested further reading: J. Ackrill, "Explanation in Natural Science" in *Aristotle the Philosopher*, Clarendon Press, 1981,

**22. Aristotle's *Physics*: Chance and luck**

Aristotle, *Physics*, Book 2, Chs. 4-6

H. Lorenz, "Natural Goals of Actions in Aristotle", *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* Vol. 1.4 (2015), 583-600

**23. Epicurus: Atoms and pleasure**

A.A. Long and D. Sedley, "Epicureanism, Section 21: Pleasure" from *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Cambridge, 1987

**24. The Examined Life?**

No new readings