

# **PHIL 401/501 History of Ancient Philosophy**

## **Condensed Syllabus—Fall 2014**

The information on this syllabus is condensed from the complete syllabus and course guide, which is available online on the Blackboard course website (<http://learn.gonzaga.edu/>).

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### **GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION**

It is often said that ancient Greece is the birthplace of western philosophy. The primary objective of this course is to explore the writings and arguments of the major thinkers that compose this philosophical revolution. Consequently, the course is both philosophical and historical. It is primarily philosophical in the sense that we will be surveying major works by the most significant thinkers in ancient Greece, attempting to understand the key components of their philosophical theories and the reasoning by which they support these theories. It is historical insofar as we will examine carefully the interrelations between the views of different thinkers and also, to the extent possible, explore the relevance of historical context to the ideas propounded by these thinkers.

**NOTE:** This course is restricted to Philosophy majors, minors, and graduate students and, by permission, to classics majors and minors.

### **COURSE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students completing this course will be able to

- explain the nature of philosophical inquiry in terms of its historical emergence
- list the major branches of philosophical inquiry and explain their nature and significance
- describe the general philosophical positions and arguments of key ancient Greek philosophers on topics such as the nature of reality, human reason and desire, learning and knowledge, political theory, and the good life
- read, understand, and analyze philosophical texts closely, carefully, and accurately
- express philosophical ideas with clarity and sophistication
- engage in effective cooperative philosophical inquiry

### **GRADING**

Graded exercises in this course serve the specified course learning outcomes, and will include:

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| 1. course participation: class attendance, discussion, quizzes             | 10% |
| 2. Designated Discussion Leader DB posts (total of 5 over semester)        | 15% |
| 3. papers and/or midterm exam (at least 2 at 25% each; additional allowed) | 50% |
| 4. comprehensive final exam  | 25% |

**All** required work must be completed successfully in order to pass the course. Work submitted after specified deadlines will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor, and will normally be assessed a penalty.

### **Course Participation**

Course participation will be graded on the basis of evidence of preparation for class by completing the reading, willingness to take part in class discussion, and other broadly conceived contributions to the course. If class discussion is of poor quality, I reserve the right (reluctantly!) to conduct quizzes.

**Designated Discussion Leaders**

While I expect all students to participate in class discussions to the extent possible, I want to structure class in order to increase the value of class discussion and to ensure that over time all students in class contribute to the philosophical work we do in class. Remember, philosophy is not only a subject matter, it is a way of life!

Consequently, I will divide the class into 5 groups. For each class day (with the exception of our last few meetings), one group of students will be “Designated Discussion Leaders,” with responsibility to summarize key issues in the reading assignment, raise questions of interpretation or application of the reading material, and / or critically respond to the ideas in the readings (see the schedule below for the assigned dates for each Group).

To prepare for serving as Designated Discussion Leaders, each of the students in the Designated Group for that class day will be required to make a post to the Blackboard course site Discussion Board. The post should be a critical response to the reading assignment that engages the ideas and arguments of the reading, should be about 250 words in length, and must be submitted no later than 12 midnight the evening prior to class. Strictly speaking, I will not grade the posts for correctness of content, but will look for evidence that you have read the primary texts and grappled with the philosophical issues that they raise. Posts will be graded on a 5-point scale (with 5 as the fairly rare high point of the scale, and 4 as the normal grade given to posts that satisfy the assignment as I have described it here). If you are having difficulty choosing a topic for your DB Post, the Course Guide (on the Blackboard course website) has background information and questions for each class day’s reading assignments. Please note: posts submitted after the 12 midnight deadline will not be counted for credit under any circumstances. Plan ahead to ensure that you submit your posts in a timely way.

Designated Discussion Leaders should bring a copy of their DB post to class. The instructor will conduct a mini-seminar with the Leaders based on their posts at the beginning of class.

**Papers and/or Midterm Exam**

Students must complete either two papers or one paper and the Midterm Exam. Any student who has not submitted at least one paper by Midterm week must take the Midterm Exam. If you write more than 2 papers (or more than 1 paper and the midterm), the additional paper will be averaged in with your prior work with the understanding that it can raise but not lower the paper/midterm component of your grade.

*Papers.* The papers are intended to increase your comprehension of the primary texts based on your reading, in-class lectures, and class discussion. You will be allowed to select your paper topics with one basic restriction: that you raise and address a philosophical problem related to the primary texts. Any paper in the history of philosophy should summarize and explain the views of the relevant thinkers, and develop some critical response to those views. Further, the paper must be an argumentative essay, in which you state and defend some view on the topic in question. In order to help you focus the topic of your paper, I require that students complete the **Essay Topic Approval Form** before submitting any paper. Ideally, papers should be written and submitted as soon as possible after we have covered the relevant material in class discussion, while it is still fresh in your mind.

*Midterm Exam.* The Midterm Exam will be distributed in class and will be due one week later during Midterm Week (see the schedule for details). The Exam will have multiple-choice questions and at

least one short essay question. Students will be allowed to consult notes and books and may discuss the exam questions with one another. However, all answers submitted must be the student's own answers.

### **Final Exam**

The final exam will be comprehensive in the sense that you will be asked to compare and contrast the main views of the thinkers we have studied in this course. This might sound rather daunting, but you will find that we spend a good portion of our in-class discussion time noting the similarities and differences of the views Greek philosophers held on the most important points of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. The exam will be held and the date, time, and location specified on the schedule with exceptions granted only in writing by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

### **CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS / DECORUM**

I've already noted that for the ancients, philosophy was a way of life. Philosophical activity requires the difficult work of philosophical dialogue. If we care about exploring what is true, and critically examining our ideas and arguments, we must cultivate concentration, focus, and rigorous thinking, and must pay careful attention to one another in discussion. Since class time in this course is devoted to these objectives, I find it important to foster the most suitable possible environment for philosophical inquiry. Consequently, no computers or other electronic devices are allowed in class without prior approval. They simply are too much of a distraction for most students to be effective educational tools. I should not have to mention, but for the sake of clarity will do so, that cell phones, text messaging, and other technological and non-technological distractions are not allowed during class sessions. Any student failing to honor these expectations will be asked to leave class.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Honesty is a key virtue in a community of scholars. This virtue is particularly important for scholars who have decided to study philosophy. The University has expressed its commitment to academic honesty by adopting an "Academic Honesty Policy." You should be familiar with this policy.

The most troublesome area for students is **plagiarism**. To plagiarize is to take the ideas or words of another and to present them as one's own. To avoid plagiarizing, students must, at the least, acknowledge the source of ideas or wordings. Moreover, students should seek to move beyond their sources and to do original work. It is not acceptable for students to quote or paraphrase any other person's work, including texts used in the course, without properly acknowledging and citing the source. Failure to provide such citations will constitute academic dishonesty. The best rule to observe is the following: If you are unsure whether to give credit or not, give credit! The point of footnotes and endnotes is to indicate to your reader that the idea or wording is not your own, and to give your reader some idea of where to go to find this information.

In addition to plagiarism, other problems that students have with academic honesty include submitting work that has been submitted for credit in another class ("recycling") and improperly giving or receiving aid on exams or other course assignments. Students should avoid these and all other forms of academic dishonesty.

The typical penalty for any assignment on which academic dishonesty has occurred will be a grade of "0" (zero). In some cases, a more severe penalty (as discussed in the University's "Academic Honesty Policy") may be imposed.

The instructor reserves the right to submit copies of student papers to a plagiarism detection site such as TurnItIn.com, or to require that students do so.

Since academic honesty is so basic to the integrity of the academic enterprise, I make completion of an Academic Honor Pledge a basic expectation of this course. This pledge must be signed and returned to me at the beginning of the semester.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

Cohen, Curd, Reeve, eds. *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy from Thales to Aristotle*, 4th ed. Hackett, 2011. (older editions of this text are available on the used market, but I would prefer that students purchase the new edition, because it includes revisions and additional material)

Supplementary readings available online on the course website

### CONDENSED SCHEDULE

See Class Preparation Guide (available online) for background info and study questions for each class meeting day. Readings should be completed prior to class on the day assigned in the schedule. *RAGP* = *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy from Thales to Aristotle*, 4th ed. Where reading portions can be clearly specified by author and text I have not included page numbers in the *RAGP* anthology. Letters after course dates specify the Designated Discussion Leader group for that class meeting.

T 9/2

#### Course Introduction

#### I. Pre-Socratic Philosophy (see Pre-Socratic intro in *RAGP*, 1–10)

- Th 9/4 A Milesians and Pythagoreans (*RAGP*, 10–23, 97–99)  
 T 9/9 B Xenophanes and Heraclitus (*RAGP*, 23–40)  
 Th 9/11 C Eleatics: Parmenides, Zeno, and Melissus (*RAGP*, 40–51; 93–96)  
 T 9/16 D Pluralists and Atomists (*RAGP*, 52–93)

#### II. Socrates and the Sophists (see Socrates intro in *RAGP*, 127–31)

- Th 9/18 E Sophists (*RAGP*, 104–18); Plato's *Protagoras* 317e–334c  
 T 9/23 A Plato, *Apology*  
 W 9/24 **Last day to submit Pre-Socratic paper (no later than 5 pm)**  
 Th 9/25 B Plato, *Crito*; *Euthyphro*  
 T 9/30 C Plato, *Meno*

#### III. Plato (see Plato intro in *RAGP*, 127–34)

- Th 10/2 D *Phaedo* (all, but especially 64c–67e; 69e–84b; 87a–91c; 95e–107d)  
 T 10/7 E **Learning Outcomes Assessment Day (class cancelled)**; read *Republic* Book I and make at least one 250-word post on Blackboard  
 W 10/8 **Last day to submit Socrates paper (no later than 5 pm)**  
 Th 10/9 A *Republic* II–IV (esp. 357a–379c; 394d–396e; 407b–410a; 412c–421c; 427e–444a)  
 T 10/14 B *Republic* V, 472b–VI, 506b  
 Th 10/16 C *Republic* VI, 506b–VII, 541b; *Symposium* 203b–212b  
 F 10/17 **optional midterm exam distributed**  
 T 10/21 D *Republic* VIII–X (esp. synopses at *RAGP* 567, 594, and 616, and 571a–592b; 608b–611d; 614b–621d)

Th 10/23 E *Parmenides* (at least 127b–135d); *Timaeus* (at least 27e-44c); Plato wrap-up  
F 10/24 **midterm exam due (send answers via email no later than 5 pm)**

**IV. Aristotle** (see Aristotle intro in *RAGP*, 683-92)

T 10/28 A Aristotle introduction; *Physics* I–II  
Th 10/30 B *De Interpretatione*; *Topics*; *Posterior Analytics* I, 1-3; II, 8-10, 19; *Categories*  
M 11/3 **Last day to submit Plato paper (no later than 5 pm)**  
T 11/4 C *Metaphysics* I  
Th 11/6 Aristotle catch-up day; assignment TBA  
T 11/11 D *Metaphysics* IV, VII  
Th 11/13 E *Physics* VIII, 6; *Metaphysics* VIII, XII  
T 11/18 A *De Anima (On the Soul)*  
Th 11/20 B *Nicomachean Ethics* I–II  
T 11/25 C *Nicomachean Ethics* III, VI, VII  
Th 11/27 **Thanksgiving Vacation**  
T 12/2 D *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII–IX (Blackboard); X  
Th 12/4 E *Politics* I-III, VII, 13, 15  
M 12/8 **Last day to submit Aristotle paper (no later than 5 pm)**

**V. Post-Aristotelian Philosophy**

T 12/9 Post-Aristotelian Schools: Skepticism, Epicureanism, Stoicism (Blackboard)  
Th 12/11 Neoplatonism: Plotinus (Blackboard); Course Conclusion

FINAL EXAM: Friday, December 19, 1-3 pm., in College Hall 101 (no exceptions without approval in advance by the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences)