

Ancient Philosophy

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Instructor: Dr. Lindsay Rettler
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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description and Goals

This course is an overview in ancient Greek philosophy, with special attention to issues in metaphysics and epistemology. We'll start by focusing on some early Presocratic philosophers, to understand what sorts of questions they asked. Then we'll see how Socrates approached questions in philosophy, followed by his student Plato, and Plato's student, Aristotle. By the end of the course you should have a grasp of many central questions that occupied the earliest Western philosophers, as well as how to try to answer them. You should also see significant improvement in your ability to analyze arguments and critique them.

Required Texts

- *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle* edited by S. Marc Cohen, Patricia Curd, and C.D.C. Reeve (3rd edition, Hackett Publishing Co. 2005)
- Optional: *Ancient Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* by Julia Annas (Oxford University Press, 2000)

Course Requirements

Participation and Reflection Papers (15%): You are expected to come to class regularly and participate in class discussion. The articles we're reading are difficult and dense and you will almost certainly not get what you need out of them by simply reading them by yourself. You should take notes on what you read and be prepared to talk about the readings. On various days throughout the semester I will assign short one-page reflection papers either at the end of class or as a take home assignment.

Two Critical Papers, 3-4 pages, 15% each (30%) In these papers you will articulate the argument of a particular philosopher and then critically engage with that argument. You should spend approximately half of the paper reconstructing the philosopher's argument and the other developing your critique. These papers will prepare you for your final paper.

Final Paper, 5-8 pages (25%) In this paper you will engage with one of the philosophers we've studied this semester. I will provide several paper prompts, though you can choose your own topic as long as you approve it with me. You should clearly present arguments in favor of a concise thesis, show that you understand how people might object to your view, and explain how you can respond to such objections. Make sure to engage and reference the philosophers we've read in class, but do your best to go beyond them in some significant way. Make your *own* contribution.

Course Requirements, continued...

Final Exam (25%) The exam will cover all of the material for the course, and will be in the form of short essay questions. I will provide a study guide.

Administrative Issues

Classroom Conduct: Please be respectful of others in this course. This means you should arrive to class on time and be an active participant. Pay attention to people when they are speaking. Of course people will disagree with one another in this course—one of the goals of the class is to explore such disagreement in a critical and structured manner. However, in presenting your thoughts make sure you speak with respect and professionalism. Anything that might be perceived as insulting or a personal attack will not be tolerated. Put your phones on silent or vibrate—texting or answering your phone in class is not acceptable.

Late Assignments: All papers are due at the beginning of class. Late papers will be penalized one partial grade per day starting with the due date. I understand that emergencies happen, so come talk to me if you encounter a problem that prevents you from turning in your papers on time. If, however, you do not bother to make arrangements with me within 24-hours of the due date there is no way to avoid the penalty. *Note:* you must turn in all assignments to pass the course.

Office Hours: I am always available during office hours to discuss any questions about the course or philosophy in general, or anything else of importance to you, including personal issues. I'm also a good resource for working through paper ideas, including questions about how to get started. You will benefit the most if you come talk to me early on about anything confusing and if you discuss written work at least several days *before* it's due. I'm also happy to answer questions via email. If my scheduled office hours don't work for you, then please contact me to schedule a different time.

Academic Integrity: I will enforce the university's policy on academic integrity and report all academic misconduct. You are responsible for making yourself aware of the relevant policies and procedures in the undergraduate catalog. Offenses include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. Please refer to the student code of conduct for more information.

Accommodation for Disabilities: Individuals who have any disabilities, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this course are encouraged to inform me at the beginning of the semester. I will work in conjunction with the Office for Disability Services to adapt or modify methods, materials, and testing to ensure that everyone can participate equally.

Course Schedule

The following is an outline of topics and readings for the course, all of which I will provide. I reserve the right to change this schedule at any time, though I will notify you at least a week in advance. CCR refers to *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy* edited by Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, the 3rd Edition (Oxford 2005). I will provide the additional readings listed. Please complete the readings before class on the days for which they are listed.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction (Week 1)

Why Study the Ancient Greek Philosophers?
Some Basic Logical Tools

PRESOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY

Basic Principles Being and Unity (Week 2)

The Milesians: Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes; CCR, pp. 8-14
Mary Ellen Waithe – *Ancient Women Philosophers*, pp.11-18
Themistoclea, Theano, Arignote, Myia, and Damo

Basic Principles: Change (Week 3)

Heraclitus and Parmenides; CCR, pp. 24-41
Zeno of Elea; CCR, pp. 59-63

SOCRATIC AND PLATONIC PHILOSOPHY

The Socratic Method (Week 4)

Socrates and the Sophists; CCR, pp. 80-88
Mary Ellen Waithe – *Ancient Women Philosophers*, pp. 75-82
Aspasia and Sophistic Rhetoric
Plato's *Euthyphro*; CCR, pp. 97-114

Socrates on Trial: His Defense of Philosophy (Week 5)

Plato's *Apology*; CCR, pp. 115-140

CRITICAL PAPER #1 DUE

Plato's Forms: For and Against (Weeks 6-7)

Julia Annas – *Voices of Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 234-258
Excerpts from Plato – *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, and *Republic*
Aristotle – *On Forms*

Knowledge and Skepticism (Week 8)

Plato's *Meno*; CCR, pp. 203-228
Plato's *Theaetetus* 148c-151d

Course Schedule, continued...

Reason and Emotion (Week 9)

Julia Annas – *Voices of Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 71-83

Excerpts from Plato – *Republic* and *Phaedrus*

CRITICAL PAPER #2 DUE

PAPER DISCUSSION (Week 10)

James Pryor – Guidelines for Writing Philosophy

ARISTOTELIAN PHILOSOPHY

Cause and Explanation (Week 11)

Metaphysics Book I; CCR, pp. 758-771

Julia Annas – *Voices of Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 259-279

Excerpts from Plato's *Phaedro*, and Aristotle's *Physics*

Matter, Form, and Substance (Week 12)

Metaphysics Book VIII and VIII; CCR, pp. 777-800

Happiness and the Good Life (Week 13)

Nicomachean Ethics Book I; CCR, pp. 832-845

Moral and Intellectual Virtue (Week 14)

Plato's *Protagoras*, excerpts; CCR, pp. 154-180

Nicomachean Ethics Book II and VI; CCR, pp. 845-852

Praise, Blame, and Responsibility (Week 15)

Julia Annas – *Voices of Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 12-34

Excerpts from the Stoics, Cicero, and Epicurus

Nicomachean Ethics Book III; CCR, pp. 852-863

FINAL PAPER DUE

FINAL EXAM (Finals Week)