



Arcadia Center for Hellenic, Mediterranean and Balkan Studies

Arcadia University

GREC PHAN 340 Greek Philosophy

Credits: 4

Course Description

There are no prerequisites for this course in Greek philosophy. We shall start with the early stirrings of philosophy in the Pre-Socratic fragments. The text for this part of the course has virtually no commentary so you will have to use your imagination to understand and comment on the meanings of these elusive fragments. We will then turn to Plato's works from which we shall read the Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, the Phaedo the Symposium and the Protagoras. We shall then proceed to Aristotle's works from which we will read selections from the Categories, On the Soul, the Nicomachean Ethics and the Politics.

One of the aims of the course is to discern the differences between the various classical philosophical traditions and the application of these traditions to politics, ethics and art. The course aims to stimulate thinking about current problems of culture through the prism of the ancient Greek philosophers. Though they differed greatly from each other, these thinkers all proceeded from the common understanding of nature (physis) which encompassed the physical universe, including humans, their psychology and their societies, and even the divine. They believed in the power of human logos to articulate this intelligibility in ways that make existence meaningful. Hopefully, through readings and discussions, we will locate some of these meanings—not as museum relics—but as ideas whose illuminations span the ages and continue to shed light into the deepest of human concerns.

The nature of our subject imposes on all of us, on teacher and student alike, the need to adopt a philosophical attitude, namely, that we begin with questions that beckon us to inquire into the nature of Greek philosophy. Aristotle described this attitude in his *Metaphysics* as one of wonder: "For it is owing to their wonder (τό θαυμάζειν) that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize." In this regard, we shall be guided by the words of John Herman Randall, an American historian of philosophy, who has written that: "Philosophy... is a human and cultural enterprise to be inquired into, rather than a mere term to be defined."

There are no secondary literature requirements. We have a small library with some excellent introductory books if you wish to study beyond the text. However, your libraries in the US are far better stocked with commentaries on the philosophers that we will be studying. Our hope is that here, in Greece, despite the cacophony around us, you will hear echoes from the past and that these will inspire you to come into direct contact with the ideas of these sages.

Texts

The Presocratic Philosophers.

The Collected Dialogues of Plato. Edited by E. Hamilton and H. Cairns.

The Basic Works of Aristotle. Edited by R. McKeon or Complete Works (Ross translation).

Course Requirements

The requirements for the course are class participation, maintaining a journal with weekly entries, in-class presentations, and two essays (3500 words each) on selected topics.

Schedule

Weeks 1-3 Pre-Socratic Search for the Underlying Principle and Nature of Things
Classes 1-2 Milesians (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes), Heraclitus Pythagoras
Classes 3-6 Xenophanes, Eleatics (Parmenides, Zeno), Pluralists (Empedocles, Democritus)

Weeks 4-8 Socrates and Plato: The Quest for Human Excellence

Classes 7-13 Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo,
Class 13 1st Essay Due (3,500 words)
Classes 14-16 Symposium and Protagoras.
Weeks 9-12 Aristotle: Theory of Human Nature, Ethics, and Politics
Classes 17-26 Aristotle (Categories, De Anima, Nicomachean Ethics*, Politics*)
Class 26 2nd Essay Due (3,500 Words)

Class by Class Schedule of Topics and Readings

Class 1: Introduction
Class 2: Milesians: Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes
Class 3: Xenophanes, Pythagoras, Heraclitus
Class 4: Parmenides
Class 5: Parmenides
Class 6: Empedocles, Democritus, Anaxagoras
Class 7: The Socratic Revolution – Euthyphro
Class 8: Euthyphro
Class 9: Apology
Class 10: Crito
Class 11: Phaedo
Class 12: Phaedo
Class 13: Phaedo, Symposium
Class 14: Symposium
Class 16: Introduction to Aristotle
Class 17: Selections from Aristotle's Categories

- Class 18: Nicomachean Ethics Book 1
- Class 19: Nicomachean Ethics Book 1 and Introduction to De Anima
- Class 20: De Anima Selections
- Class 21: De Anima Selections
- Class 22: Nicomachean Ethics, Book 2, Definition of Moral Virtue
- Class 23: Selection of Virtues for Study Depending on Class Interests

*Selections

Grading Policy

Grades will be determined according to class participation (including class presentations) journal entries and papers. There is no curve. The distribution of points will be as follows:

Class Discussion	30%
Journal	30%
Essays	40%

THE RESPONSE JOURNAL

In this course you will be keeping a response journal (one page single-spaced, 450-500 words) in which you will record your responses to the assigned readings. Please do not manipulate margins and the like to fill up a page. Each Thursday you should come prepared with one journal entry focusing on one specific aspect of the text you have read. Each entry should be one to two pages long, preferably typed. This will give us a total of thirteen or so entries for the course. I will return your journals on Tuesday of the following week, with comments. When you get them back, keep them in a loose-leaf binder or folder and use them for further study.

It is significant that your journal entries deal with questions that are meaningful to you; perhaps something that baffles you or perhaps your insight into an important problem. They should not be perfunctory summaries nor should they be derived from secondary literature. It is important that you acquire the habit of carefully citing the passages that are relevant to the issues that you are discussing. When we are confronted with new or unfamiliar ideas that are at loggerheads with our beliefs we have a tendency to project our biases onto the text because this protects us from the unsettling effort of seriously grappling with new and challenging points of view.

The entry should present one well-focused, clearly defined idea, which shows that you have grasped the premises of the problem that you are discussing. In philosophy we deal with arguments; with reasoning that defends our claims. It is not acceptable to say that "I disagree with X"; you have to present an argument: "I disagree with the X's argument because..." Also what we "feel" about an argument is not sufficient. Even if we find an idea revolting or unacceptable we have to defend our rejection with arguments. A common trap we all fall into occasionally is writing rather broad, unfocused entries which jump from one idea to another. Another trap is to summarize without critically outlining the substance of the argument.

The journal entry should start from some premise of interest and close at some end point of tentative investigation. Since it does not aim at completeness or exhaustive analysis of an issue this exercise should be a pleasant experience without stress and tension. Its aims are to help you sharpen your understanding of the works we are studying, to help you contribute to class participation, and to help you prepare for the Term Essays. Often I will ask you to read these in class because the issues that you raise are usually issues that are on the minds of your fellow students. You will also find that the entries are a valuable testing ground for your midterm and final essays.

Everyone should get full credit; all it takes is a serious effort to reflect on the material we are studying. I will use the following general criteria to evaluate each entry:

Full Credit (Check mark)

- probes a particular idea in depth
- presents criticism and offers opinion
- supports points in a clear and detailed manner
- is neat and carefully prepared

Half Credit (Minus Check mark)

- lacks a premise, does not achieve depth and lacks probing questions
- does not support points with an argument
- is not as neat and careful as should be