Phil 213: Ancient Philosophy

DAMIEN STOREY | FALL 2018 | VERSION 1.0

WHEN & WHERE: Tue & Thur, 10.00–11.15, CASEB41
MY OFFICE: SOS 162
OFFICE HOURS: Thur 13.00–15.00 (or email to arrange a meeting)
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COURSE PARTICULARS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce the key thinkers and texts of ancient Greek philosophy, beginning with the very earliest western philosophers, the Pre-Socrates; following this with an careful look at the works of Plato and Aristotle; and concluding with Hellenistic philosophy, focusing on Epicureanism and Stoicism. In addition to a wide range of philosophical ideas—including physical and metaphysical theories, theories of belief and knowledge, and accounts of justice and the good life—the course will introduce the skills needed to read and interpret ancient texts. We will learn to appreciate that these texts are both remote in time, and so require an understanding of their cultural and historical context, and also highly sophisticated, and so require careful philosophical analysis.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

For each lecture there is assigned reading and, some weeks, a lecture-prep task. You'll find these in the Lecture Outline below. Your most important responsibility is to do the assigned reading and task (if you find the reading is too much or too difficult, please let me know). In addition, in lectures, students are expected to take an active role: listening carefully, asking questions, and engaging in discussion with each other and me.

ASSESSMENT

The course is assessed by:

1. (25%) Lecture-prep tasks. These are short tasks that you'll prepare for specific lectures. Assessment (per task): pass or fail.
2. (50%) Two essays of between 1500–2000 words. For each you'll be given essay questions and additional reading. Assessment (per essay): percentage/letter grade.
3. (25%) A final written exam. This will involve questions of various types—from multiple choice to written responses—that could be about any aspect of the course. Assessment: percentage/letter grade.

I'll keep you updated about what's required for each assessment well in advance—but, as always, make ensure that you have the latest version of this document (by checking the version number on the first page).

COURSE POLICIES

Late work. Any assessment that is late will lose marks at the rate of 10% per week for essays and 10% per day for lecture-prep tasks.

Referencing and plagiarism. Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work without acknowledgement, as if it were your own—whether deliberate or accidental. The university's guidelines are here. It is a *very* serious offence, and one that is easily spotted. The best way to avoid it is to learn how and when to reference—if you're in any way unsure, please ask me.

In addition to the recommendations I make here, I encourage you to root around in the library to find some of the many books on the topics we'll be looking at, especially when it comes to preparing for written work (though be sure to always reference any texts you use).

For texts from ancient authors, there are usually a variety of translations to choose from, which can differ from each other a great deal (including in quality). The following are some examples of reliable collections of translations:

- Julia Annas, *Voices of Ancient Philosophy: An Introductory Reader* (OUP, 2000) [This collection organises texts thematically, which might be helpful for written assignments.]
- Richard D. McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates: An Introduction with Texts and Commenty*, 2nd edt, (Hackett Publishing, 2011) [Also has a useful commentary]
- Patricia Curd, *A Presocratic Reader: Selected Fragments and Testimonia* (Hackett Publishing, 2011)
- John M. Cooper (ed) *Plato: Complete Works* (Hackett Publishing, 1997)
- C.D.C. Reeve & G.M.A. Grube (translators) *Plato, Republic* (Hackett Publishing, 1992)
- Terence Irwin & Gail Fine (translators) *Aristotle: Selections* (Hackett Publishing, 1995) [Has useful notes]
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translation and notes by Terence Irwin, 2nd edt (Hackett Publishing, 1999) [Has useful notes]

The following are some useful collections of papers, which we'll be reading from in some weeks:

- A.A. Long (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (CUP, 1999)
- Christopher Shields (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Ancient Philosophy* (Blackwell, 2003)
- Mary Louise Gill & Pierre Pellegrin (eds) *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy* (Blackwell, 2006)
- Frisbee Sheffield & James Warren (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Ancient Philosophy* (Routledge, 2014)

You should also listen to The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps: a podcast series by philosopher Peter Adamson that covers all the philosophers we'll be looking at—and many more—in episodes that are short and entertaining.

ESSAYS

ESSAY 1: SOCRATIC PSYCHOLOGY

Between 1500–2000 words [strictly no longer or shorter]. Due 20th of November, 18.00. Two parts; do both, but focus on the first.

> 1) Carefully summarise Socrates' argument for the claim that no one desires bad things (77c–78b). Does this argument conclude that it is psychologically impossible to desire something that we believe to be bad? Even if your answer is 'yes', be sure to find and assess the reasons why some commentators have thought it only licences a weaker conclusion.
>
> 2) How does the psychological theory suggested by 77c–78b relate to what you've learned so far about Socrates' broader philosophical and ethical views. How, for example, might it relate Socrates' view of virtue or of the importance of definitional knowledge?

ESSAY 2: ANCIENT VIEWS OF AKRASIA

Between 1500–2000 words [strictly no longer or shorter]. Due 1st of January, 18.00.

> Explain the accounts of *akrasia* we find in Plato's *Protagoras*, Plato's *Republic*, and Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. Which of these three accounts of *akrasia*—or, if you wish, which fourth account—is the most successful?

Reading:

1. Primary texts: *Protagoras* 351b–end; *Republic* book 4, 435a–443a; Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, book 7, 1–10.
2. Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith (2007) 'Socrates on Akrasia, Knowledge, and the Power of Appearance' in Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destrée (eds) *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy From Socrates to Plotinus* (Boston: Brill)
3. David Bostock *Aristotle's Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), chapter 6

Optional/advanced reading:

1. Weakness of Will in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
2. Donald Davidson (1970) 'How Is Weakness of the Will Possible?' reprinted in Davidson (1980) *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press) pp. 21-42
3. C. Taylor (1980) 'Plato, Hare and Davidson on Akrasia' *Mind* 89 (1980) 499–518

LECTURE OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

How and why we study ancient philosophy

Lecture 1 – 18th Sept 2018

- Listen to episodes 1 and 2 of The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps.

PART I: EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY

Early Greek philosophy

Lecture 2 – 20th Sept 2018

- Listen to episodes 3 and 4 of HPWG.
- Richard McKirahan 'Presocratic Philosophy' in Shields (ed.)

Heraclitus

Lecture 3 – 25th Sept 2018

- Heraclitus, selected fragments.
- Listen to episodes 5 and 6 of HPWG.
- Edward Hussey 'Heraclitus' in A.A. Long (ed). (This will also help with the task.)
- TASK 1: Fragment B12. Due 23rd Sept. (The full task will be on Blackboard.)

Parmenides

Lecture 4 – 27th Sept 2018

- Parmenides, selected fragments.
- Listen to episodes 7 and 8 of HPWG. This is the last time I'll officially assign this—but keep listening!
- And this is optional, but very useful: Patricia Curd, 'Parmenides and After: Unity and Plurality' in Gill & Pellegrin (eds)
- And this is totally optional, but is a good example of a reading different from Curd's: David Sedley 'Parmenides and Mellisus' in Long (ed).

Eleatic pluralism and atomism

Lecture 5 – 2nd October 2018

- Daniel Graham, 'Empedocles and Anaxagoras: Responses to Parmenides' in Long (ed)
- Democritus in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

The political and intellectual life of classical Athens

Lecture 6 – 9th October 2018

- Josiah Ober, 'Orators' in Christopher Rowe & Malcolm Schofield (eds) *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (CUP: Cambridge, 2008)
- John Gibert, 'The Sophists' in Shields (ed)

Discussion class

Lecture 7 – 11th October 2018

- Discussion on *physis*, *nomos*, and justice
- Plato *Gorgias*, 482c–484c—Callicles on justice
- Plato, *Republic*, book 1, 336b–344c—Thrasymachus on justice
- The reading from last week will again be useful: John Gibert, 'The Sophists' in Shields (ed)

PART 2: SOCRATES AND EARLY PLATO.

Reading Platonic dialogues

Lecture 8 – 16th October 2018

- The introduction to T. Brickhouse & N. Smith, *The Philosophy of Socrates* (Westview Press, 2000) [Think especially carefully about the interpretive principles they introduce]
- Christopher Gill, 'The Platonic Dialogue' in Gill & Pellegrin (eds)

The life and death of Socrates

Lecture 9 – 18th October 2018

- Plato's *Apology*
- Brickhouse & Smith, *The Philosophy of Socrates*, chapter 1

The Socratic search for definitions

- Plato, *Euthyphro* (whole dialogue—it's short) and *Meno*, 70a–80e & 86d–87e
- Brickhouse & Smith, *The Philosophy of Socrates*, chapter 3
- TASK 2: Socratic definitions. Due Sunday (21st) at 12 noon. Late submissions lose 10% per day. (Task will be on Blackboard)

All desire is for the good

Lecture 10 – 25th October 2018

- Plato, *Meno* 77c–78b, *Gorgias* 467c–468e, & *Protagoras* 351b–end [These passages are all quite difficult, with each making complex arguments—read them carefully.]
- Brickhouse & Smith, *The Philosophy of Socrates*, chapter 5.3 (pp. 173–182).

Virtue, knowledge, & happiness

Lecture 11 – 30th October 2018

- Plato, *Meno* 85b–96d, *Laches* 194c–201c, & *Protagoras* 352a–362a
- Brickhouse & Smith, *The Philosophy of Socrates*, chapter 4

PART 3: MIDDLE PLATO

Justice and the Project of Plato's *Republic*

Lecture 12 – 1st November 2018

- Plato, *Republic*, books 1 and 2.

Plato's psychology

Lecture 13 – 6th November 2018

- Read again: Plato, *Protagoras* 352A–362A.
- Plato, *Republic*: book 4, 435A–443A.
- Allan Silverman, 'Plato: Psychology' in Shields (ed).
- TASK 3: Argument reconstruction: tripartite soul in book 4. (Due November 4th at 18.00).

Belief, knowledge, & Platonic Forms

Lecture 14 – 8th November 2018

- Read again: Plato, *Meno* 96D–END.
- Plato, *Phaedo*, 74A–79C and 96A–105B.
- Plato, *Republic*, book 5, 473A–480A.

Republic book 10: Plato's criticism of poetry

Lecture 15 – 13th November 2018

- Plato, *Republic*, book 10, up to 608B
- This handout [Print out and bring to class]
- Optionally: J. Moss 'What Is Imitative Poetry and Why Is It Bad?' in G.R.F Ferrari (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's* Republic (Cambridge: CUP, 2007)
- TASK 4: Mini-essay: why does Socrates believe that poetry should be banned from a just city?

Discussion class

Lecture 16 – 15th November 2018

PART 4: ARISTOTLE

The human function and the human good

Lecture 17 – 20th November 2018

- Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, book 1 [chapter 7, where Aristotle presents his function argument, should be read in great detail]
- ESSAY 1: Topic on Socrates/Early Plato—title above.

Aristotle on character virtue and practical wisdom

Lecture 18 – 22nd November 2018

- Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, book 1, chapter 13; book 2; and try to read book 3, chapters 6–12
- Listen to episodes 44 and 45 of The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps.

Three views of *akrasia*: Socrates, Plato, & Aristotle

Lecture 19 – 27th November 2018

- Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, book 7, 1–10 [chapter 3, where Aristotle gives his main account of *akrasia* should be read in great detail]
- Aristotle's Ethics in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Read at least up to section 7, on *akrasia*.
- Re-read the relevant sections of the *Protagoras* and *Republic*
- TASK 5: Akrasia summary. Due Monday (26th) at 10am.

Aristotle on causes and change I

Lecture 20 – 29th November 2018

- Aristotle, *Physics*, book 1 (extracts on Blackboard)
- Listen to episodes 39 and 40 of The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps.

Aristotle on causes and change II

Lecture 21 – 4th December 2018

- Aristotle, *Physics*, book 2 (extracts on Blackboard)
- Listen to episodes 39 and 40 of HPWG.

Discussion class

Lecture 22 – 6th December 2018

PART 5: HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY

Epicureanism

Lecture 23 – 11th December 2018

- Shields (ed) 'Hellenistic Philosophy: Introduction'
- Listen to episodes 55 and 56 of HPWG. [57–59 are also relevant]

Stoic physics

Lecture 24 – 13th December 2018

- Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 7.132-160
- Listen to episode 62 HPWG. [60 and 61 are also relevant]

Stoic ethics and psychology

Lecture 25 – 18th December 2018

- Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 7.84-131
- Listen to episode 63 and 64 of HPWG.

In-class exam

Lecture 26 – 20th December 2018

SOME WRITING ADVICE

WRITING AND ESSAYS

Please pay close attention to the following advice, especially 1 and 2. They try to cater for the most common and most easily solved problems I find in students' writing. Please take them seriously.

1. *Explain*. In short: explain *everything*. It should be possible for an intelligent peer who hasn't studied philosophy to fully understand your essay without needing to read the authors you're writing about. So, for example: if you use a technical term or mention a concept that has particular significance for an author, make sure you clearly define and/or explain it. Similarly, for any argument or position you discuss, you must clearly explain it to your reader. This is partly because good academic writing should be explicit and easily understood, but it is not the only reason. Another reason is that your ability to explain the ideas you're discussing—clearly, precisely, and succinctly—is one of the principal things you're being assessed on. You might well know, say, what a categorical imperative is, but you need to *show* that you know it and how precisely you know it. Explaining even small, simple ideas well is a lot harder than you might think; don't underestimate how important it is, and how much work it takes.

2. *Justify*. Assume that for every claim you make, the reader is asking 'why should I believe that?' In a philosophy essay, there should always be an excellent answer to this question. You should consider this to be, above all else, your aim when writing an essay. The worst thing you can do is to make bold assertions without defending them, and the second worst is to make bold assertions and defend them weakly. Note that this includes interpretive claims: if you write 'Plato believes that p', you need to show your reader, perhaps by giving a supporting quote, that this is indeed something Plato believes.

   A bad essay: 'p!'
   A good essay: 'For reasons x, y, and z, it seems that p.'
   An excellent essay: 'Reasons x, y, and z give us good grounds for thinking that p, although someone might offer an objection along the following lines … However, I think there is a promising response to this objection …'

3. *Use headings*. Before you start writing, sketch a structure for your essay. When writing, use headings that reflect this structure. A typical essay might have 2–4 headings.

4. *First understand, then assess*. Be careful not to rush into criticisms of what you read before you've fully understood it. Approach everything you read with charity. That is, assume (since it's likely) that the author has thought intelligently and carefully about what they've written, so is unlikely to have made obvious mistakes. For example, if you notice a *prima facie* objection to something you're reading, read it again carefully to see if there's a way to understand it that avoids the objection or try to think of a plausible implicit assumption the author might have made that caters for the objection.

5. *Be sufficiently detailed.* The topics we'll look at are broad. One could reasonably spend years writing hundreds of pages about them—you have at most a few pages and a few weeks. This presents a challenge: on the one hand, you want to cover the whole topic, showing that you're familiar with all the major issues that arise; on the other hand, you want to do more than simply scratch the surface, never looking at anything in detail. This can be a difficult balance to achieve, but in general it is much better to *err on the side of detail*. A good approach might be to devote about the first third or half of your essay to a more general discussion and then use the last half or two-thirds to examine one or two smaller points in much greater detail—you might, for example, focus on one argument, premise, or objection that you think is especially important or interesting.

6. *Ensure your conclusions reflect your arguments.* You might have been taught that strong, persuasive prose requires confident assertions, rather than hesitant, qualified ones. This is not the case in philosophy: your assertions should reflect the actual degree of confidence that is warranted by the evidence you've provided. Decisive arguments are rare—even rarer are decisive arguments in just a few lines of a student's essay. So be very careful not to mistake considerations that give us a good reason for believing that p for an argument that shows conclusively that p. A good essay is likely to have a large range of (appropriate) qualifying phrases: 'this shows decisively that p'; 'this is a strong reason to believe that p'; 'this suggests that p'; 'this makes it less implausible that p'; and so forth. Be especially careful with strong 'success' verbs like refute or prove.

7. *Show 'independence of thought' rather than 'originality'.* You might think that philosophy encourages you to express your unique opinions, an opinion differing from those of the authors you'll read. But by itself, originality—the simply fact that an idea is new—has little value and it should not be your aim. After all, an idea can be both original and obviously false. What *has* value is independence of thought. If you agree with the conclusions of a certain author because you fully understand them, have thought critically about their arguments, and carefully assessed alternative possibilities, then you believe nothing original, but you are showing admirable independence of thought.

8. *Use quotes.* Especially in historical subjects, including quotes from relevant primary texts can be an excellent way to illustrate, justify, and give some focus to your discussion. One way (of many ways) to use a quote would be the following: make a claim; present a quote that you think backs up the claim; and then explain and interpret the text of the quote in order to show that and why it backs up your claim. Two cautions: first, quotes from secondary sources are rarely useful; second, never use a quote as a way of *saying* something—rather, a quote should be presented as evidence *about which* you have something to say.

For more guides to essay writing, see Jim Pryor, Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Essay, and James Lenman, How to Write A Crap Philosophy Essay.

SOME BASICS OF TYPOGRAPHY

The following are a few typographic conventions worth learning.

1. *Indent paragraphs.* But do not indent the opening paragraph of the document or the first paragraph after a section heading. You may instead—not in addition—separate paragraphs with a blank line, although this is better suited to list-like texts, such as legal documents, than continuous prose.
2. *Use single line spacing.* It's easier to read. Double spacing is only necessary when a printed copy of you work will be annotated.
3. *A footnote mark is always placed after punctuation.*[1] It is almost always best to place a footnote at the end of the sentence, *after* the sentence-ending full stop, even if you are referring to something earlier in the sentence. Avoid consecutive footnotes; instead, place all information in one footnote if possible.
4. *Indicate quotes with either quotation marks or by using a block quote.* Extra flourishes, such as italicising, are unnecessary. And never place a block quote within quotation marks.
5. *Learn the difference between a hyphen (-), en-dash (–), and em-dash (—).* Use an en-dash like 'to' in ranges of dates or numbers (e.g. 87–142) and to express certain relationships between words: for example, an 'on–off switch' or 'Irish–American relations'. Either an en- or em-dash can be used to indicate a parenthetical phrase. If you use an en-dash, add a space either side – like so – but em-dashes are always unspaced—like so.
6. *Make ellipses with three full stops separated by spaces.* Like this . . . , with a space either side. You will most commonly use an ellipsis to indicate portions of text that you've omitted from quotes. Don't omit any sentence-ending full stops that precede an ellipsis (i.e. together they make four stops). For example:

   > [P]articular care needs to be exercised when eliding text to ensure that the sense of the original is not lost . . . A deletion must not result in a statement alien to the original material. . . . Accuracy of sense and emphasis must accompany accuracy of transcription. (*CMS*, 16th, 13.49)

7. *Use a single space after full-stops.* A double space, once common, is now rightly recognised as unnecessary.

REFERENCING

In your essays you should reference both quotes and claims or arguments that originate from one of the authors you've been reading. You should also have a bibliography of all the works you've referred to in the text.

You can use whatever bibliographical style you choose, so long as it's consistent. The following is an example of a typical author–year referencing style, starting with what the bibliography will look like:

Book: Author (Year) *Title*, Place: Publisher.

Fine, G. (1993) *On Ideas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Freeman, S. (ed.) (2003) *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Article: Author (Year) 'Title', *Journal*, Volume, pp. Pages.

1. This includes full stops, commas, colons, semi-colons, and quotations marks.

Irwin, T.H. (1977) 'Plato's Heracleiteanism', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 27, pp. 1–13.

Article in book: Author (Year) 'Article Title' in Editor(s) (ed(s).) *Book Title*, Place: Publisher.

Scanlon, T.M. (2003) 'Rawls on Justification' in S. Freeman (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

In-text citation: (Author, Year, Page(s))

It has been argued that the charge of conservativism laid against Rawls' idea of reflective equilibrium is unsound (Scanlon, 2003, pp. 150–151).

Scanlon argues that the charge of conservativism laid against Rawls' reflective equilibrium is unsound (2003, pp. 150–151).