

Philosophy 130: Ancient Philosophy, Course Outline

Course Description and Goals

Western philosophy began with the ancient Greek philosophers. The questions they raised and the answers they proposed inspired an entire tradition of thinking, which continues to this day. For this reason, studying ancient philosophy is a good way to become acquainted with the questions of philosophy. The goal of this course is to introduce the student to some of the major works of the Pre-Socratics, Sophists, Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus. Some questions we will consider include: What are the ultimate constituents of reality? What is a cause? Do we have a soul, and if so, does it exist after death? What is knowledge, and what can we know? Is there a best way to live, and if so what is it? The course will focus on critical reading, writing, and thinking skills.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

By the end of this course, students will accomplish the following:

1. Describe some of the major ancient Greek philosophies.
2. Develop and defend interpretations of the philosophic arguments and questions found in philosophic texts.
3. Ask relevant, critical questions about philosophic arguments, both about their internal logic (validity) and the truth of their premises (soundness).
4. Analyze and explain the relationship between philosophic terms, “happiness,” “good,” “pleasure,” “being,” “cause,” “form,” and “soul” based on the ancient Greek philosophies.
5. Describe the challenges in defining “knowledge” and “knowing.”

To support student success coherently across Philosophy coursework, these CLOs help students to reach the Philosophy Program Learning Outcomes 1 through 5:

1. Criticize philosophical arguments in classical texts.
2. Present well-defined claims of one’s own, to give clear philosophical arguments in defense of these claims, and to respond to critical objections others might raise to these claims.
3. Distinguish between logically valid and invalid deductive arguments, and be able to identify additional premises or logical relationships that could transform an invalid argument into a valid one.
4. Distinguish between descriptive and normative philosophical claims, and to use certain descriptive claims either to support or to criticize normative claims.
5. Appreciate how the discipline of philosophy has developed over time in response to internal challenges and advances in sciences and changes in social life.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy from Thales to Aristotle. Edited by Cohen, Curd, and Reeve. Hackett, 2005.
Epicurus. Letter to Menoeceus. Available online.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

50% = 5 two-page papers (on assigned topics)

20% = 2 quizzes (taken in class, without the aid of notes)

25% = 1 final exam (taken in class, without the aid of notes)

5% = participation

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Week 1 Epic Poets and Milesians

Week 2 Heraclitus

Week 3 Parmenides and Democritus

Week 4 Protagoras and Gorgias

Weeks 5-6 Plato, Meno

Weeks 7-8 Plato, Phaedo

Week 9 Aristotle: Physics 2.1-3, 2.8

Week 10 Aristotle: Metaphysics 1

Week 11 Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics 1

Week 12 Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics 2 and 10.6-9

Week 13 Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus

The following General Education Principles are met by this course:

Students in this course can expect to increase their **Communication skills** through examination and assessment of classic philosophical arguments, to better understand **Self and Society** through comprehension and analysis of classic philosophic texts, to better appreciate facets of **Ethics and Responsibility** through moral reasoning, and to enhance their Development of Personal Potential through exposure to some of the most pervasive philosophical questions.