

Ancient Greek Philosophy

Skidmore College
Fall 2012
PH 203
T-TH 11:10-12:30
Ladd 307

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Office hours: **T-TH** 1:15-3:00 pm
& by appointment

Course Description

This course is a study of ancient Greek philosophy from the so-called Pre-Socratics in early Greek civilization to Plato and Aristotle. The ancients engaged in a continuous dialogue about certain core philosophical questions, such as: What is the origin of philosophy? What is the nature of the cosmos? What is the relation between being and becoming? What is the nature of human beings? What is knowledge? What is happiness and how can human beings achieve it? It will be our task to enter into that conversation and consider its relevance for our own lives.

Required Texts

- *A Presocratics Reader* (Hackett)
- *Plato, Five Dialogues* (Hackett)
- *Plato, Republic* (Hackett)
- *Plato, Symposium* (Hackett)
- *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. by Richard McKeon (Random House)

Additional readings will be made available on the course website, which you can access at:
<http://blackboard.skidmore.edu>

Course Objectives

The primary objective of this course is to gain a historical and critical understanding of a number of the questions, ideas, and discussions that concerned the ancient Greek philosophers, whose thought lay the foundations for Western civilization. We will try to understand their approach to fundamental philosophical questions and we will explore differences and similarities between their views and our own understanding of the world and ourselves.

In addition, we will engage in philosophical thinking. Through the active appropriation of the texts we will endeavor to discover what it is like to think as philosophers do.

Course Policies

Please leave laptops, cell phones and other electronic devices turned off (there may be exceptions for students with documented disabilities).

Please bring the text(s) we are discussing to class; we will always read passages from them.

I will probably communicate with you via e-mail throughout the course. Please check your Skidmore e-mail account regularly.

Please feel free to come to my office hours with any question you may have about the course, the material we are discussing or any other issue. If you cannot make it to regular office hours, please feel free to make an appointment with me.

Attendance:

You are expected to arrive to class on time. Attendance is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences will have a depressing effect on your *final* grade.

Academic Integrity:

All of your work for this course is subject to the College Honor Code. Two main things must be noted for this class:

- a. Papers: any source that you use in your papers, including internet sources, *must* be quoted and cited. Failing to do so constitutes plagiarism. If you are not sure about what plagiarism is or have questions about a specific case, please consult me or a librarian. *When in doubt, cite.*
- b. Exams: you may study together to prepare for exams (in fact it can be very fruitful) but you *may not* make use of any notes or help from others (in any form) during exams.

Accommodations:

If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please contact me during office hours to discuss your specific needs.

Assignments:

No late assignment will be accepted without express permission of the instructor obtained at least 24 hours before the assignment's due date.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Participation (20% of the final grade):

- ❖ Open class discussion: this is a discussion-based course, therefore your regular participation is essential. You must read the texts carefully, often more than once, and be prepared to discuss the readings in class and share your insights.
After each reading assignment you should write one or two concise paragraphs. They will either be responses to questions I will assign in class, or they will pose questions or observations about some important issue in the reading (details will be provided in class). I will randomly pick students to present their responses/questions. Be prepared to address comments or questions your classmates and I may have about your presentation. Alternatively, study guides will be assigned to help you focus on the main points of the readings and get ready for class discussion.
After class, I will record next to your name a number between 0 and 2 corresponding to your participation for that day.
- ❖ At the beginning of each class, a team of two students will present a protocol that briefly summarizes and presents the main ideas discussed in our previous meeting, and poses one or two questions related to them that engage the class in a meaningful discussion (format and content will be explained in class). Each student will present two protocols during the

semester. Protocols that present the material clearly and succinctly and show critical thought and engagement with the issues we are discussing will receive full credit and either a “√” (1 point) or a “√+” (2 points). Assignments that evidence little effort or thought will receive no credit and a “-” (0 points).

Two exams (40%, 20% each) and two papers (40%, 20 % each)

They will be on material and issues we discussed in class. They will be explained in detail in class.

Tentative Class Schedule

The schedule is subject to change based on class needs and interests. Additional readings may be added at the discretion of the instructor. Precise reading assignments for each meeting will be provided in class.

Note: *PR* = *A Presocratics Reader*

Week 1

Sept. 6: Introduction to the course

Week 2

Sept. 11: Hesiod, *Theogony* (Blackboard; 3 separate short documents); Thales (*PR*, pp. 13-15)

Sept. 13: Anaximenes, Anaximander, Pythagoras (*PR*, pp. 16-29); Aristotle on Anaximander (Blackboard)

Week 3

Sept. 18: Heraclitus (*PR*, pp. 39-53); Nietzsche on Heraclitus (Blackboard)

Sept. 20: Parmenides (*PR*, pp. 55-63)

Week 4

Sept 25: Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus (*PR*, pp. 109-125)

Sept. 27: The Sophists: Protagoras and Gorgias (*PR*, 144-150; Gorgias fragment 14 only)

Week 5

Oct. 2: Plato, *Apology*

Oct. 4: **First Exam**

Week 6

Oct. 9: Plato, *Laches* (Blackboard)

Oct. 11: Plato, *Theaetetus* (Blackboard) 151d-152c; 161d-162a; 166d-167d; 169d-172c 177c-179b; *Republic* 523b-524e; *Phaedo* 72e-75e

Week 7

Oct.16: Plato, *Meno* 70a-86c

Oct. 18 *Meno* 86c-100b

How to write a philosophy paper

Week 8

Oct. 23: Plato, *Symposium* 201d-212c

Oct. 25: Plato, *Republic* 336b-339a; 341c-334c; 357a-362c ; 367d-380b; 386a-387c; 392a-b; 410a-417a

Week 9

Oct. 30: *Rep.* 419a-421a; 427d-445e

•••First paper due•••

Nov. 1: *Rep.* Book 6 TBA; 557b-563d; 592b

Week 10

Nov. 6: Aristotle, *Categories* Ch. 1-5

Nov. 8: Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.1-2, II.1; *Posterior Analytics* I.1, II.19

Week 11

Nov. 13: Aristotle, *Physics* II

Nov. 15: **Second Exam**

Week 12

Nov. 20: Aristotle, *Politics* I. 1-2; *Nicomachean Ethics* I. 1-5

Nov. 22: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 13

Nov. 27: *Nicomachean Ethics* I. 7-9, 10-13

Nov. 29: *Nicomachean Ethics* II, 1-5; III.1-5

Week 14

Dec. 4: *Nicomachean Ethics* II.6-9; IV. 1, 6; VI. 7.1.1141b8-23

Dec. 6: *Nicomachean Ethics* VI. 1, 5, 7; X. 6-8; *Politics* VII.13 and 14 (up to 1334b7)

Week 15

Dec. 11: Final discussion

Week 16

•••Second paper due••• Date to be announced