

PHIL 3000-001—HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY: ANCIENT
SPRING, 2012; HALE 240, 10:00-10:50 A.M., MWF
SYLLABUS

Jason Potter

Phone: (303)402-9465

E-Mail: jason.potter@colorado.edu

Web Site: <http://www.colorado.edu/philosophy/potter/phil3000-010.html>

Please note: all handouts, study guides, reading lists, and this syllabus will be available at this web site.

Office Hours: 1:00-1:50 p.m. M-W, in Hellems 15, and 2:00-2:50 p.m. Fridays in Hellems 164B.

Course Description

Two questions lie at the heart of Greek philosophy: (1) What is the nature of reality? and (2) What is the nature of human beings? In several societies of the northern and eastern Mediterranean, thinkers of the 6th, 5th and 4th centuries BCE grappled with these questions.

Taken as a group, their efforts have left a permanent mark on how the people of (broadly) western societies think about the world and themselves. They also form the origin for much of what we think about numerous other questions, including "what is a successful explanation?", "what is it to be rational?" and "what is a good life?" The course is divided in three parts: Presocratic Philosophy, Plato, and Aristotle. In the first week or two we will discuss the Presocratic attempts to uncover the nature of the physical universe. Next, we will examine Plato's response to the Presocratics and his assertion that the formal rather than the physical order is most real. Finally, we will wrestle with Aristotle's response to Plato and his account of human nature and happiness.

Course Objectives

There are many fine reasons to study philosophy. I will not attempt to persuade you of these here, at the very least because the works of Aristotle and Plato offer many extended arguments and meditations on precisely how and why you should undertake philosophical study. But you should have some idea what we hope to gain by our 15 weeks together. While there are many high ambitions lurking, I do have a set of "least" ambitions for our time and efforts here:

1. That you learn to identify arguments, the chief tool of philosophical work.
2. That you learn to express your thoughts clearly.
3. That you make progress in the fine art of assessing, analysing and criticizing arguments generally.
4. That you leave here knowing a) what some of the Presocratics, Plato and Aristotle were trying to accomplish; b) some of the tools they invented for the task; and c) why otherwise normal people like myself would boldly claim we cannot understand ourselves if we do not understand what Aristotle, Plato and their precursors thought.

Required Texts

S. Marc Cohen, Patricia Curd, and C.D.C. Reeve (Eds.), *Ancient Greek Philosophy*.

Course Requirements & Percentage of Final Grade

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|---|-----|
| (1) Attending/Participating in Class* | 10% |
| (2) 7-page first paper | 30% |
| (3) 7-page second paper | 30% |
| (4) Final Comprehensive Exam (takehome) | 30% |

*Not everyone is amenable to public speaking and discussion. Philosophy is a discussion sport, as you will discover in reading Plato's dialogues. If you can bring yourself to speak, you will find it easier to understand the issues and arguments, largely because we often do not know what we think until we try to say it. However, I will not use class participation to decide a grade. Class attendance does count, and reaps an easy reward. Those who attend all but 3 classes or less get an A for this 10% of the course. If you miss *any* classes beyond 3, expect your grade for this portion of the course to drop in increments until, having missed 10 or more classes, you have an F for this part.

Extremely Generous Rewrite Option:

You may rewrite your first paper, using criticisms and suggestions on the graded paper as a guide, and then turn it in at the final exam date for the course; the grade you receive on the revised paper will replace the grade you originally received. Never *assume* that just because you make changes to the original paper, I will necessarily raise your grade. I may notice deficiencies I missed in the first reading. Therefore, if you choose to revise the paper, make a serious stab at those revisions recommended!

Notes on Course Requirements:

(1) The first paper will be on one of a list of assigned topics drawn from our readings in the Presocratics and Plato. The second paper will be on topics drawn from our readings in Aristotle. Paper topics will be handed out at least 2 weeks in advance of their due dates. All papers must be typed and turned in by 5:00 p.m. on the due date either to my office or to my mailbox in Hellems 169. You may email your paper to me, but it is **your** responsibility to make sure I get a copy of your paper by the due date and time. A better method is to upload the paper to my fileserv (an explanation for the use of this server is available online on the main course page for this class). Late papers, other things being equal, are a Really Bad Thing.

(2) Since a philosophical essay is *not* like other kinds of essays you may have written in college (or elsewhere), it is strongly recommended that before preparing your papers, you read very carefully the helpful hints for doing philosophy papers, the list of abbreviations used in grading papers, and the model history-of-philosophy paper (all to be found in the supplementary packet available on Electronic Reserve through Norlin). I do assume that you have already learned how to write essays in English.

(3) The final exam will be a comprehensive, take-home, open-book exam covering the entire course. It will consist of 10 yes/no questions, 10 short-answer questions, some reading identifications and one long essay question.

Clarifications, Rules of the Road, Regrettable Necessities & Errata

(1) What your grade means:

A: Superior work

B: Good work

C: Work with some strengths, balanced against clear weaknesses

D: Work with few strengths, many weaknesses

F: Work that brings CPR to mind

(2) Late written assignments are accepted in the event of civil emergencies, Ebola outbreak, or fits of generosity on my part. However, none are accepted without approval from me prior to the day on which the assignment in question is due.

(3) Breaches of academic honesty will receive the harshest allowable university penalty.

(4) You are responsible for the entire reading assignment—not just what we discuss in class.

(5) Reading assignments in philosophy tend to be both challenging and time consuming. You might want to take this into account when planning your semester.

(6) Readings should be done prior to the class for which they are assigned. If this involves a range of days, you should have everything read by the first day in the range.

(7) Total points possible: 100. No extra credit.

(8) What to expect from me: prompt and honest feedback, clear lectures, sufficient contact outside class (e.g., office hours, e-mail).

(9) Since students often do not pick up their final papers, please let me know in advance if you would like detailed comments on yours.

(10) There will be a one-day "cooling off" period following receipt of grades for each assignment.

(11) This syllabus is subject to revision.

Assignment Schedule

First Paper: Topics distributed February 15, Due March 16

Second Paper: Topics distributed April 6, Due May 2

Final Exam: Distributed May 6 via website or Desire2Learn site; Handed in May 8, 4:30 p.m. in our classroom

One Last Thing

Since I find it very helpful to speak one-on-one with each of you at least once, there will be required, ten-minute meetings in my office hours. Let's try to get all of these out of the way by March 9 at the latest (there is a sign-up sheet that I will pass around during the first week of class for the purpose of arranging for such meetings).

READING SCHEDULE

Presocratics

- 1/20: Robinson, (pp. 3-21) (HESIOD). [available for download from website]
1/25: pp. 1-10, 15-23 (THALES/ANAXIMANDER/PYTHAGORAS/XENOPHANES)
1/30: pp. 24-63. (HERACLITUS/PARMENIDES/ZENO)
2/3: pp. 64-88. (DEMOCRITUS, DIOGENES, MELISSUS, The SOPHISTS)

Plato

- 2/6 thru 2/8: Plato Introduction (pp. 89-96); Euthyphro (entire) (pp. 97-111)
2/10 thru 2/13: Apology (pp. 112-130) & Crito (pp. 131-141)
2/15 thru 2/17: Meno (pp. 191-216)
2/20 thru 2/22: Phaedo (pp. 217-251)
2/24 thru 2/27: Republic I (pp. 263-291)
2/29 thru 3/5: Republic II & III (pp. 292-349)
3/7 thru 3/12: Republic IV & V (pp. 350-408)
3/14 thru 3/19: Republic VI & VII (pp. 409-460)
3/21-3/23: Plato Review

Aristotle

- 4/2: Categories 1a 1-4b 18 (pp. 577-594)
4/6 thru 4/13: Physics I: 184a 10-192a 40; Physics II: 192b 1-200b 8; Metaphysics VII.1-4; 1028a 7-1030b 15
4/16 thru 4/20: De Anima I: 402a 1-408b 25; De Anima II.1-4; 412a 1-416b 30; De Anima II.5-12: 416b 31-424b 20; De Anima III.1-11424b 21-434a 20
4/23 thru 4/27: Nichomachean Ethics—Books I, II & III
4/30 thru 5/2: Nichomachean Ethics—(Books IX, X)

5/2 & 5/4: Review