

# INTRODUCTION TO ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

## PHIL 207A A01 (CRN 12673, 1.5 Units)

Fall 2025,

University of Victoria

Department of Philosophy

Course website: <https://bright.uvic.ca/d2l/home/424833>

### Instructor & Contact Information

Dr. Clifford Roberts ([cliffordroberts@uvic.ca](mailto:cliffordroberts@uvic.ca))

Office hours: Tue-Wed 1:30-2:30pm (or by appt.)

Office: CLE B318

***Provisional Draft:** This outline is intended only to give students a general sense of what the course is like. It is not the final, official course syllabus.*

### Class Times & Location

Tuesday-Wednesday-Friday 10:30-11:20am – Location: ECS 130

### Course Description & Intended Learning Outcomes

From the early 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, a succession of philosophers lay the groundwork for philosophical and scientific thought in the Western world. These philosophers were among the first in the Western tradition to think rigorously and precisely about central issues in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, and even philosophy of language. This course introduces students to some of the ideas, arguments and methods of investigation of these thinkers. After a brief examination of some Presocratic philosophers (Thales, Xenophanes, Heracleitus, Parmenides, Zeno, Democritus, and Protagoras), the lion's share of the course will be devoted to three profoundly influential thinkers: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. We will end with a brief examination of three schools of Hellenistic philosophy: Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Skepticism. We will read both primary texts by these thinkers as well as a scholarly commentary on them; our goal will be the articulation of a clear and precise account of their views, arguments, and methods of investigation.

### Course Texts

**Required:** (1) [AP] Christopher Shields, *Ancient Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Routledge, 2012); (2) [OR] Online readings, which will be made available through Brightspace.

### Course Evaluation

Students' grades will be based upon:

#### **(1) Take-Home Tests**

**Value:** 1<sup>st</sup> = 30%, 2<sup>nd</sup> = 33% (= 63%)

**Assignment:** Students will have 24-hours to answer questions online covering course material.

**Due dates:** see course schedule.

#### **(2) Final Essay**

**Value:** 34%

**Assignment:** Students will complete a final essay of 1500-2500 words. Essay topics will be provided two weeks before the due date.

**Due date:** *see course schedule.*

### **(3) Participation Grade**

**Value:** 3%

**Assignment:** Students will be awarded a grade on the basis of their participation in the class; this includes, but is not limited to, attending lectures.

### **Course Grading**

<b>Grades</b>	<b>GPV</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Description</b>
A+ A A-	9 8 7	90-100 85-89 80-84	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
B+ B B-	6 5 4	77-79 73-76 70-72	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material.
C+ C	3 2	65-69 60-64	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
D	1	50-59	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
F	0	0-49	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

Interpretation of these grade definitions is up to the discretion of the instructor. If you receive a grade during the course that you believe is unfair, please begin by discussing the matter with the instructor in a respectful, open-minded manner. Rest assured that if you still believe the grade you received is unfair you can appeal the matter to the chair of the department. For additional information regarding grades, please see the September 2025 issue of the academic calendar (online here: [Grading](#)). All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to percentage scores. Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that the student submits, whether individual or group work. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust, and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research, and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other acts against academic integrity are serious academic offences and they will not be tolerated in this course. Plagiarism includes the use of Chat GPT and similar technologies.

### *The responsibility of the institution*

Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams, and projects.

### *The responsibility of the student*

It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the [University's policy on academic integrity](#), as well as the or the [Tri-Faculty Standards for Professional Behavior for Students](#), which draws together a number of existing UVic policies in one place for ease of reference.

Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If the student is unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing sources, the instructor should be consulted. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include a warning, a failing grade, a record on the student's transcript, or a suspension.

It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the University's policy on academic integrity. For the policy, see the September 2025 edition of the academic calendar (online here: [University of Victoria Statement on Academic Integrity](#)).

### **Intellectual property of materials on the LMS website**

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the Policy on Academic Integrity (link above). Any evidence that you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

### **Policy on Late or Missed Assignments**

For assignments that are missed for no legitimate reasons, there will be arrangements made for a make-up assignment, however, a penalty of **10%** will be levied on this assignment. For assignments missed for legitimate reasons, the penalty will be waived. For information about what constitute legitimate reasons for academic concession, please see [here](#). The previous policies do not apply to students with documented disabilities; all attempt will be made to accommodate such students including, but not restricted to, providing make-up assignments and tests.

### **Accessibility**

The University of Victoria is committed to creating a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you have a disability or chronic health condition, or think you may have a disability, you may also want to meet with an advisor at the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL). For more information about CAL, see:

<https://www.uvic.ca/accessible-learning/>

### Counseling Services

Many, if not most, students experience some difficulties with their mental health during their years as undergraduate students. Make sure you are familiar with the university's **Counseling Services** (<https://www.uvic.ca/students/health-wellness/counselling/index.php>) which is an excellent resource you have at your disposal on campus. It is hard to shake the stigma associated with problems like depression and anxiety, but if at any point you can benefit from help with mental health issues, please contact Counseling Services. They genuinely want to help, and why not take advantage of this free resource?

### Important Dates

Please consult the university calendar's **Academic Year Important Dates** for information about last possible dates to withdraw from courses without penalty, examinations period start/end dates, and so on: <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/dates/>

### Academic Advising

For information about declaring a program, academic concessions or interpreting your CAPP report, please visit **Undergraduate Advising** (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/advising/>) or make an appointment with an adviser.

### Territory Acknowledgment

The University of Victoria is committed to acknowledging and respecting the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. For information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, please visit the **Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement**: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/indigenous/>.

### Course Schedule

Dates	Assignments
<u>Weeks 1-2:</u> Sep 3, 5, & 9	<i>The Presocratics I</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 1-13; [OR] Fragments of Presocratics
<u>Weeks 2-3:</u> Sep 10, 12, & 16	<i>The Presocratics II</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 13-31; [OR] Fragments of Presocratics
<u>Weeks 3-4:</u> Sep 17, 19, & 23	<i>Socrates I</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 35-45; [OR] Excerpts from Plato's dialogues
<u>Week 4:</u> Sep 24, 26 *Sep 30: National Truth & Reconciliation Day No Class*	<i>Socrates II</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 46-58; [OR] Excerpts from Plato's dialogues <b>Take-Home Test #1: Sep 27-8</b>

<u>Weeks 5-6:</u> Sep 30, Oct 1 & 3	<i>Plato I</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 61-82; [OR] Excerpts from Plato's dialogues
<u>Week 7:</u> Oct 7, 8, & 10	<i>Plato II</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 82-100; [OR] Excerpts from Plato's dialogues
<u>Week 8:</u> Oct 14, 15, & 17	<i>Plato III</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 100-111; [OR] Excerpts from Plato's dialogues
<u>Week 9:</u> Oct 28, 29, & 31	<i>Aristotle I</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 117-127; [OR] Excerpts from Aristotle <b>Take-Home Test #2: Nov 1-2</b>
<u>Week 10:</u> Nov 4, 5, & 7	<i>Aristotle II</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 127-150; [OR] Excerpts from Aristotle
<u>Week 11-12:</u> Nov 14, 18, & 19 <b>*Nov 11 &amp; 12: Reading Break No Class*</b>	<i>Aristotle III</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 230-293; [OR] Excerpts from Aristotle
<u>Week 12-13:</u> Nov 21, 25, & 26	<i>Hellenistic Philosophy I</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 167-191
<u>Week 13-14:</u> Nov 28, Dec 2 & 3	<i>Hellenistic Philosophy II</i> Readings: [AP] pp. 191-228 <b>Final Essay: Due Dec 6<sup>th</sup></b>

## **Other Resources**

### **Student Resources**

- [UVic Learn Anywhere](#). UVic Learn Anywhere is the primary learning resource for students. It offers many learning workshops and resources to help students with academics and learning strategies.
- [Library resources](#). Information for students wishing to use the UVic library.
- Indigenous [student services](#)
- [Centre for Academic Communication](#)

- e. [Learning Strategies Program](#)
- f. [Academic Concession Regulations](#)
- g. [Academic Concessions and Accommodations](#)
- h. Academic accommodation & access for students with disabilities – [Policy AC1205](#)
- i. [Student wellness](#) resources.
- j. [Ombudsperson](#). A resource to help resolve disputes or complaints.
- k. Other [student groups and resources](#).

#### University Statements and Policies

- a. University Calendar – [“Information for all students”](#)
- b. [Creating a respectful, inclusive and productive learning environment](#)
- c. [Accommodation of Religious Observance](#)
- d. [Student Conduct and Non-Academic Student Misconduct](#)
- e. [Accessibility](#)
- f. [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#)
- g. [Equity and Human Rights](#)
- h. [Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response](#)
- i. Discrimination and Harassment [Policy](#)