

**PHIL 490 A02 (12536)**  
**How to Get Everything from Just One Thing:**  
**Plotinus' Metaphysical Monism**

Fall 2018, University of Victoria  
Department of Philosophy  
Course website: available at <http://coursespaces.uvic.ca>

**Instructor & Contact Information**

Dr. Clifford Roberts ([cliffordroberts@uvic.ca](mailto:cliffordroberts@uvic.ca))  
Office hours: Fri 12:45-2:30pm (or by appt.)  
Office: CLE B318

**Meeting Times & Place**

Tue–Wed–Fri 11:30am-12:20pm  
Room: TBA

**Course Description**

The late antique philosopher Plotinus (AD 205-270) is one of the most significant thinkers in the history of Western philosophy. Sometimes described as the “last ancient philosopher,” only Aristotle and Plato have had a greater influence on the history of philosophy. Plotinus developed a subtle and complex philosophical system that stands as the culmination of a tradition of thought – Platonism – stretching all the way back to Plato’s early Academy. For much of Western intellectual history, “Platonism” simply *meant* Plotinus’ philosophical system. This system, informed by close reading of Plato, synthesized Platonic thought with both Aristotelian and Stoic philosophy. Yet the most shocking feature of Plotinus’ thought is not this synthesis of apparently disparate philosophical outlooks, but his radical metaphysical monism. Plotinus identifies a single causal and explanatory principle of reality, which he calls “the One.” The One is not merely the foundational principle of reality, it also *comprises* the totality of reality: all there *really is* is the One. How is this possible? In this course, we will examine Plotinus’ answer to this question by focusing on his metaphysics. We will attempt to understand not only how Plotinus conceives of the One and its role in the production of reality, but also his conception of reality as structured and constituted by two other elements, Soul and Intellect.

**Course Texts**

Required: [E] = Emilsson, Eyjólfur K. *Plotinus* (Routledge, 2017). [*Available at the bookstore.*]  
[P] = Plotinus. *Enneads*. [*Readings will be available on CourseSpaces.*]

**Course Evaluation**

Students must submit a digital copy of each of the assignments through CourseSpaces and by the assignment deadline.

**(1) Essays**

**Value:** 1<sup>st</sup> essay = 30%; 2<sup>nd</sup> essay = 45% (**total** = 75%)

**Length:** ≥ 2400 words (per essay)

**Assignment:** Students must write a paper of the relevant length on one of a selection of topics provided by the instructor. Further information will be in assignment.

**Due dates:** see course schedule for when topics are assigned and papers are due.

**(2) Class Presentation**

**Length:** ≥ 15 mins

**Value:** 25%

Students will give a presentation to the class on a topic of their choosing from among those discussed in that week's assigned readings. Students will be required to meet with the instructor at least 3 days prior to the presentation to discuss the contents of their presentation.

**Course Grading**

Grades	GPV	Percentage	Description
A+	9	90-100	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.
A	8	85-89	
A-	7	80-84	
B+	6	77-79	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. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
B	5	73-76	
B-	4	70-72	
C+	3	65-69	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.
C	2	60-64	
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 pp. 51-53 of the most recent (September 2018) edition of the University of Victoria Undergraduate Calendar. 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.

### *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*

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: <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html>

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

The default expectation is that the student completes the assignments by the relevant deadline. However, I will consider extensions for assignments provided the student indicates a desire for an extension *when* the assignment is provided. Otherwise, delays in handing in assignments will be penalized by **5% for every day late** (i.e., an 85% paper will become an 80% paper after a day), unless the student can provide official documentation of the reason for the delay (e.g., a physician's note). 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.

## **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/services/counselling/>) 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://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-09/general/dates.html>

### Technology in Classroom

Some students require laptops or voice recognition apps for their learning strategies, so I do not prohibit their use in the classroom. However, studies demonstrate that multi-tasking reduces the performance of other nearby students, so anyone caught on social media, internet surfing, etc. will be asked to leave and potentially subject to disciplinary action.

### 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>Week 1</u> : Sep 5 & 7	<i>Plotinus' Heritage: Plato, Aristotle &amp; the Stoics</i> Reading: [E] chap. 1
<b><i>An Outline of Plotinus' Metaphysics</i></b>	
<u>Week 2</u> : Sep 11, 12 & 14	Readings: [E] chap. 2; [P] V. 5. 1-2
<b><i>Intellect: Its Essence &amp; Accidents</i></b>	
<u>Week 3</u> : Sep 18, 19 & 21	<i>Thinking &amp; Self-Thinking</i> Readings: [E] chap. 4; [P] V. 3. 1-11
<u>Week 4</u> : Sep 25, 26 & 28	<i>The Forms</i> Readings: [P] V. 5. 1-2; V. 7; V. 9 <b>**Topics for 1<sup>st</sup> Essay on Sep 25**</b>

<i>How Are the Sensible &amp; the Intelligible Related?</i>	
<u>Week 5:</u> Oct 2, 3 & 5	Reading: [P] VI. 4
<i>Soul: Its Essence &amp; Accidents</i>	
<u>Week 6:</u> Oct 9, 10 & 12	<i>Essence</i> Readings: [E] chap. 5; [P] IV. 1-2; IV. 9 <b>**1<sup>st</sup> Essay Due on Oct 20**</b>
<u>Week 7:</u> Oct 16, 17 & 19	<i>Accidents</i> Readings: [P] IV. 3. 9-13, 18-19, 22-23, 28-31
<i>The "Physical" World</i>	
<u>Week 8:</u> Oct 23, 24 & 26	<i>Matter &amp; Bodies, I</i> Readings: [E] chap. 6; [P] I. 8. 1-4, 9-10, 14
<u>Week 9:</u> Oct 30, 31 & Nov 2	<i>Matter &amp; Bodies, II</i> Readings: [P] II. 4. 1-6, 8-13; III. 6. 6-10
<u>Week 10:</u> Nov 6, 7 & 9	<i>The Living Being</i> Readings: [E] chap. 7-8; [P] I. 1; III. 4. 1-4 <b>**Topics for 2<sup>nd</sup> Essay on Nov 7**</b>
<u>Week 11-12:</u> Nov 16, 20 & 21 ( <b>No class:</b> Reading Break, Nov 12-14)	<i>Time</i> Readings: [E] pp. 167-172; [P] III. 7. 11-13
<i>The One, or the Good</i>	
<u>Week 12-13:</u> Nov 21, 23 & 27	<i>What It Is &amp; Does</i> Readings: [P] VI. 9; V. 3. 12-17; V. 4
<u>Week 13-14:</u> Nov 28, 30, Dec 4 & 5	Readings: [E] chap. 3; [P] III.8. 1-7 <b>**2<sup>nd</sup> Essay Due on Dec 5**</b>