

PHIL 490/500 – The Aristotelian & Hellenistic Legacy of Zeno's Paradoxes

Spring 2018, University of Victoria

Department of Philosophy

Course website: available on <http://coursespaces.uvic.ca>

Instructor and Contact Information

Dr. Clifford Roberts (cliffordroberts@uvic.ca)

Office hours: Th 1:30 – 3:30 (or by appt.)

Office: CLE B318

Meeting Times & Place

Th 3:30-6:20

CLE B315

Course Description

The paradoxes of Zeno of Elea argue that motion and plurality are impossible by deriving absurd consequences from their existence. The perversity of these arguments – motion and plurality do, after all, exist: just look around! – might seem to disqualify them from serious scrutiny, yet the paradoxes exerted a tremendous influence on the physical theories of later philosophers. Aristotle, for instance, developed his physics partly in response to them; later still, in the Hellenistic period, the Epicureans and the Stoics produced physical theories that are clearly shaped by the desire to accommodate and respond to the paradoxes. Nor are the paradoxes and responses to them mere period pieces, artifacts of primitive philosophical understanding, for contemporary philosophers have been equally vexed by them, some arguing that they reveal important facts about such things as infinity, continuity and change. In this course we will examine the paradoxes themselves and the physical theories of Aristotle, the Epicureans, and the Stoics to which the paradoxes partly give rise. While our focus is *ancient* responses to the paradoxes, we will also discuss contemporary responses in order to evaluate the virtues and vices of both contemporary and ancient accounts. The goal is not merely to understand aspects of ancient physical theories, but to understand and evaluate them as distinctive attempts to disarm or accommodate Zeno's paradoxes.

Course Texts

[LS] = Sedley, D. & Long, A. A. (eds.) The Hellenistic Philosophers, Volume 1 (Cambridge)

[A] = McKeon, R. (ed.) The Basic Words of Aristotle, rev. ed., into. C. D. C. Reeve (Modern Library, 2001)

Course Evaluation

(1) Essays (total = 70%)

Two essays will be assigned during the term. The first is worth 30% and will be due at the end of Reading Break; the second paper is worth 40% and due at the end of term. Topics will be made available on CourseSpaces for both papers, but considerable latitude will be given to students to devise their own topics.

(2) Class Presentation (total = 30%)

Each student will be required to make a 10-20 minute presentation to the class on a pre-assigned topic. All students will be expected to sign-up for the topics by the middle of the 2nd week of classes.

Course Grading

Grades will be assigned in percentage points. The final grade for the course will be converted to a letter grade according to the follow table.

Grades	GPV	Percentage
A+	9	90-100
A	8	85-89
A-	7	80-84
B+	6	77-79
B	5	73-76
B-	4	70-72
C+	3	65-69
C	2	60-64
D	1	50-59
F	0	0-49

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 understand the University's policy on academic integrity:

<http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2012/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcI.html>

Policy on Late or Missed Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted and the student will receive a zero for the assignment. Missed assignments and tests can be made-up only if documentation is provided (e.g., a physician's letter)

which explains the failure to hand-in the assignment or sit the test. 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.

Course Schedule

Dates & Topics	Assignments
<p><u>Week 1:</u> <i>Historical Background: Zeno, Aristotle & the Hellenistic Schools</i> Jan 4</p>	<p>No Readings.</p>
Unit I: Zeno’s Paradoxes	
<p><u>Weeks 2-3:</u> Jan 11 & 18</p>	<p><u>Required Readings:</u> (i) §§2.3 & 3.1-3.4 in Huggett, Nick. “Zeno's Paradoxes” (https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/paradox-zeno/) (ii) §§2 & 5(a) in Dowden, Bradley. “Zeno’s Paradoxes” (http://www.iep.utm.edu/zeno-par/)</p>
Unit II: Aristotle’s Physics	
<p><u>Week 4: Infinity</u> Jan 25</p>	<p><u>Required Reading:</u> <i>Physics</i> III.4-8 ([A] pp. 257-269)</p>
<p><u>Week 5: Time & Place</u> Feb 1</p>	<p><u>Required Reading:</u> <i>Physics</i> IV ([A] pp. 269-300)</p>
<p><u>Week 6: Motion</u> Feb 8</p>	<p><u>Required Reading:</u> <i>Physics</i> III.1-2, VI ([A] pp. 253-6, 316-40)</p>
<p><u>Week 7: **Reading Break**</u> Feb 15</p>	<p>No readings. Essay #1 due on Feb 18</p>
<p><u>Week 8: Motion (cont’d)</u> Feb 22</p>	<p>Same as week 6.</p>

Unit III: Epicurean Physics	
<u>Week 9:</u> <i>The Fundamentals</i> Mar 1	<u>Required Reading:</u> [LS] pp. 25-31
<u>Weeks 10-11:</u> <i>Atoms, Minima, & Motion</i> Mar 8 & 15	<u>Required Reading:</u> [LS] pp. 37-52
Unit III: Stoic Physics	
<u>Week 12:</u> <i>Principles, Place & Void</i> Mar 22	<u>Required Reading:</u> [LS] pp. 268-274, 294-7
<u>Weeks 13-14:</u> <i>Continuum & Time</i> Mar 29 & Apr 5	<u>Required Reading:</u> [LS] pp. 297-308 Essay #2 due on Apr 12