

# Introduction to Ancient Philosophy

Ph 207a A01 Spring 2020

CRN 22327

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Caryatids, Erechtheion (421 - 406 BCE), Athens Acropolis

## Course description

In this course we consider the earliest reflections on the structure of the world, the nature of wisdom, the foundations of the good life, and the limits of knowledge in the European philosophical tradition. Class discussion centred on course topics is highly encouraged. Students from all faculties are welcome to attend.

We begin by respectively reviewing the suggestions that everything is made up of certain basic constituents, such as water, air, atoms or something else, and that the properties of things depend on the proportions of their constituents. We continue by considering classical Greek critiques of traditional religious beliefs, of gendered and ethnocentric practices, and of societal structures that allow populists to gain the upper hand in the state.

Furthermore, we consider explanations of how the constantly changing appearances of our world may be related to more stable, underlying, structures and processes, we examine diverse conceptions of justice, and ask whether reason is sufficient to counter the proliferation of unfounded opinions. Throughout the course the ability to work with arguments founded on a broad knowledge base is emphasised.

## *Texts*

Required: Reeve Miller and Gerson (eds.), *Introductory Readings in Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy* (Hackett, 2015). Highly recommended optional: Catherine Osborne, *Presocratic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2004), and Julia Annas, *Ancient Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2000). Some additional texts may be assigned throughout the course, to be downloaded through the *Coursespaces* or found in the Reserve Room of the MacPherson/Mearns Library.

## *Course organisation and student engagement*

To facilitate class discussion assigned weekly texts are to be read *ahead of class lectures*. Attendance during class periods, constructive participation and tolerance of the views of others are expected. Students are

responsible for materials covered if classes are missed and expected to ask classmates about any announcements while absent. Everyone is encouraged to be self-reflective about his or her own beliefs and to constructively contribute to class discussion. Class time will be devoted to brief presentation of key points from the material assigned, and to class discussion. Work will be assessed on the basis of a) care in the explanation of key points, b) quality of development of points presented, c) clarity, neatness, and organisation of points.

#### *Tips for best performances*

1. Do readings and weekly assignments ahead of class periods.
2. Come to class and participate in class discussion with constructive points.
3. Speak to the instructor if failing to understand the material.

#### **Graded student activities**

1. Participation, including weekly assignments	20%
2. Mid-term test	30%
3. A final take-home exam	50%

**1. Participation.** Assessed on the basis of a) *regular attendance*, b) *constructive participation in class discussion*, c) *weekly assignments* based on the course readings and analysis of the issues under discussion. *Class attendance will be taken, and is particularly encouraged in the case of guest speakers* (justified absences on those days should be discussed with the instructor ahead of time).

#### *Weekly response assignments*

You are expected to write up a brief response to a question regarding each week's readings to help you engage with the material and concepts before the lecture. Responses should be brief, and handed in on the first day of classes every week (usually Tuesdays). Your response should be in your own words and **not** be copied from the textbook or other texts. At the head of the page please state, in this order, a) your last and first name (e.g. JONES, Peter), b) the date assignment is due (e.g. 9 January 2018), c) the particular readings discussed (e.g. Singer and Taylor). Feedback will be given on the first sets of assignments, and occasionally thereafter. At the end of the semester the total of the assignments minus the two with the lowest grades will be graded on a pass or fail basis. Both quantity and quality of assignments will be taken into account in grading.

**2. Mid-term test.** It covers both readings and further points raised in lectures. Both understanding and recall of material covered, and reflective analysis, is expected. Test questions will likely consist of a combination of shorter and longer answer questions.

**3. Final take-home exam.** Comprehensive, comprised of long answer (and possibly also short answer) questions. Handed out on the last day of classes. Completed exams should be printed out and handed in to a specially labelled box at the Department of Philosophy **by NOON five (5) days after the last day of classes**. Late exams will **NOT** be accepted (they will receive 0%). **Exams should also be submitted through Coursespaces** (unless otherwise indicated).

All graded work will be assessed on the basis of (1) care in the explanation of key points, (2) quality of development of points presented, (3) clarity, neatness, and organisation of points. Understanding of material covered and reflective analysis will be expected throughout.

## Grading scale and interpretation

Percentages will convert to a letter grade according to the standard University scheme:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 65-69	D = 50-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 60-64	F = 0-49
A- = 80-84	B- = 70-72		

### *What the Grading Scale Means:*

- A+, A, or A-** 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, or B-** 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.
- C+ or C** 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** 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** Work that is not worthy of course credit toward 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 (or TA) 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 edition of the *Uvic 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. Final examinations are the property of Uvic and are not returned. They are available for viewing at the Records Office according to Uvic procedures and regulations (pp. 49-51 of the calendar).

## Territory acknowledgment

We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. This acknowledgment entails a commitment to ongoing dialogue and reconciliation with the peoples of these lands. For information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, please visit the UVic Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement.

## Other matters

*Late assignments, extensions and plagiarism*

Late weekly assignments will **not** be accepted and the test will **not** be rescheduled (no make-up exams). If a test is missed serious, **documented**, reasons, the final exam will be weighted so as to incorporate the weighting of the missed exam. Documented evidence for having legitimately missed an exam and an explanatory statement in writing have to be received **no more than ten days after the deadline or exam missed**.

#### *Academic integrity*

The University Calendar states that “Academic integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. ... Any action that contravenes this standard, including misrepresentation, falsification or deception, undermines the intention and worth of scholarly work and violates the fundamental academic rights of members of our community.” Violations of academic integrity include plagiarism, multiple submissions, falsifying materials subject to academic evaluation, cheating on work, tests and examinations, and aiding others to cheat. Penalties for these violations vary, with first violations generally resulting in a failing grade on the work. Please familiarise yourselves with the policies at <http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2016-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html#>.

#### *Transition and inclusivity/diversity*

Students who are new to the University, and would like assistance may contact the Transition Office, [www.uvic.ca/transition](http://www.uvic.ca/transition). UVic is committed to providing a safe, supportive learning environment for all members. Further information regarding UVic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are located in the Uvic calendar (p. 15), but if you have any particular concerns in our course please do not hesitate to contact me.

#### *Counselling Services*

Many, if not most, students experience some difficulties with their mental health during their years as undergraduate students. 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 UVic Counselling Services, which is an excellent resource at your disposal on campus. They genuinely want to help, so why not take advantage of this free resource?

#### *Important dates*

Please consult the UVic Calendar’s Academic Year Important Dates for information about last possible dates to withdraw from courses without penalty, examinations period start/end dates, etc.

#### *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 UVic CAPP report, please visit Undergraduate Advising or make an appointment with an adviser.

#### **Schedule of lectures and tests**

Please note that the schedule is *subject to changes*. Weekly reading assignments will be confirmed during class periods, so please be attentive to announcements in class and on *Coursespaces*. Class time will be

divided between lectures and discussion. *Informed* participation in class discussion will be expected, assigned texts should be read *in advance*. Readings are from our textbook unless indicated otherwise.

Week 1 6-12 Jan	<b>Introduction</b> Readings: Maps and Timeline (as found in our Reeve, Miller and Gerson textbook), Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes
Week 2 13-19 Jan	<b>Early Greek Philosophy</b> Readings: Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides
Week 3 20-26 Jan	<b>Early Greek Philosophy</b> Readings: Zeno, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus <b>**Friday 24 January GUEST LECTURE: Dr. Geoffrey Kron, on Ancient Greece. Attendance required**</b> *21 Sept, last day for adding courses*
Week 4 27 Jan-2 Feb	<b>Socrates and Plato</b> Readings: Euthyphro, Apology, Symposium (selections) <b>** Thursday 30 January, 13:30-14:20, FIELD TRIP to Greek and Roman Studies guided by Dr. Alejandro Sinner. ATTENTION: Meet at Clearihue B409**</b>
Week 5 3-9 Feb	<b>Plato on love and justice</b> Readings: Symposium (selections), Republic (selections)
Week 6 10-16 Feb	<b>Plato, review and midterm</b> No new readings <b>**14 February: Mid-term**</b>
Week 7 17-23 Feb	<b>**READING WEEK**</b> No new readings *17 February: Family Day* <b>**22 January: Last day for adding courses**</b>
Week 8 24 Feb- 1 Mar	<b>Plato on justice</b> Readings: Republic (selections) <b>**29 February: Last Day for Withdrawing without Penalty**</b>
Week 9 2-8 Mar	<b>Aristotle on the good life (ethics)</b> Readings:: Nichomachean Ethics (selections)
Week 10 9-15 Mar	<b>Aristotle on what there is (metaphysics)</b> Readings: Metaphysics and Physics (selections)
Week 11 16-22 Mar	<b>Aristotle on what there is (metaphysics)</b> Readings: Metaphysics and Physics (selections)
Week 12	<b>Later schools of philosophy and Course Experience Survey</b>

23-29 Mar Readings: Epicurus, Lucretius, Greek Stoics (selections)

Week 13 **Review, and summary-conclusion**

30 Mar-5 Apr **\*\*Friday 3 April: Last day of classes and Final take-home exam questions handed out\*\***

Week 14 **Exams hand-in and online submission**

6-12 Apr **\*\*\*By NOON Wednesday 8 April: Final exam submission (hardcopy AND on Coursespaces)\*\*\***