

# PHIL 390 A01 (22301) – Epicureans, Stoics & Skeptics

Spring 2021, University of Victoria

Department of Philosophy

Course website: available at <https://bright.uvic.ca/d2l/home/56558>

## Instructor & Contact Information

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

Office hours: Mon-Tue 3-4pm (or by appt.; sign-up is required)

## Course Description

From the death of Aristotle (322BCE) to Plotinus' development of Neoplatonism (c. mid-3<sup>rd</sup> Century CE), Western philosophical reflection was dominated by several schools: Stoicism, Epicureanism, Academic skepticism, and Pyrrhonian skepticism. Together these comprised the larger part of the intellectual tradition now known as "Hellenistic philosophy." The goal in this course is to rationally reconstruct, examine and assess the basic metaphysical, epistemological and ethical views of each of these schools, making use, where necessary, of contemporary philosophical concepts, methods of analysis and modes of evaluation.

## Course Texts

**Required:** Sedley, D. & Long, A. A. (ed. & trans.) The Hellenistic Philosophers, Vol. 1 (Cambridge)

## Course Logistics

This will be an *asynchronous* online course. This means that there are no particular times of day when you need to listen to the course lectures, since they will be uploaded to the website and available for playback. There are still regular deadlines for completing your assigned work, however, so you will still be expected to keep up with what we are covering on any given week.

## Course Evaluation

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

### (1) Weekly Questions

**Value:** 6% per assignment, 10 assignments, 5 lowest grades dropped (total value = 30%)

**Assignment:** At the beginning of each week, beginning in week 2 and for 10 weeks in total, students will be assigned short answer questions on the forthcoming week's readings. The answers must be submitted online. The questions will be assigned a few days before the due date. Only the 5 highest grades received will count towards the total value of the assignments. Late submissions will automatically receive a "0."

**Due dates:** each Sunday for 10 weeks (beginning in week 2)

### (2) Quote and Comments

**Value:** 1<sup>st</sup> = 20%; 2<sup>nd</sup> = 25% (total value = 45%)

**Length:** ≥700 words (per assignment)

**Assignment:** Students will be assigned several passages from the text, of which they

must pick one and submit their explanation of the passage online. The assignment will be made available 1-2 weeks before the due date.

**Due dates:** *see course schedule.*

**(3) Essay**

**Value:** 25%

**Length:** ≥1500 words

**Assignment:** Students will be assigned several essays questions, of which the must pick one and submit an essay on it online. The assignment will be made available 3-4 weeks before the due date.

**Due dates:** *see course schedule.*

**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.
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 the most recent 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.

#### *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. For the policy, see the most recent 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**

**With the exception of the Weekly Questions**, all assignments submitted **on or before** the specified due dates will be adjudicated and returned with written comments. Assignments submitted **within one week after** the specified due dates will be adjudicated without penalty; however, they will be returned **without** written comments. Lastly, any assignment submitted **more than one week after** the specified due date will be adjudicated and returned without comments, and a penalty of **6%** per day will be assessed, 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.

#### **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/services/cal/>

### **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://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**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
<u>Week 1</u> : Jan 11-15	<i>An Impossibly Brief History of the Hellenistic Period</i>
<b><i>Epicureanism</i></b>	
<u>Week 2</u> : Jan 18-22	<i>Physics</i> , I Reading: §§4-9
<u>Week 3</u> : Jan 25-29	<i>Physics</i> , II Reading: §§11-14
<u>Week 4</u> : Feb 1-5	<i>Epistemology</i> Reading: §§15-19

<u>Week 5</u> : Feb 8-12	<p><i>Ethics</i>  Reading: §§20-21, 23-25  <b>**1<sup>st</sup> Quote &amp; Comment Due Feb 8<sup>th</sup>**</b></p>
<b><i>Stoicism</i></b>	
<u>Week 6</u> : Feb 15-19	<p><i>Ontology</i>  Reading: §§27-30</p>
<u>Week 7</u> : Feb 22-26	<p><i>Semantics &amp; Epistemology</i>  Reading: §§33, 39-42</p>
<u>Week 8</u> : Mar 1-5	<p><i>Physics, I</i>  Reading: §§43-47  <b>**2<sup>nd</sup> Quote &amp; Comment Due Mar 1<sup>st</sup>**</b></p>
<u>Week 9</u> : Mar 8-12	<p><i>Physics, II</i>  Reading: §§49, 53-55</p>
<u>Week 10</u> : Mar 15-19	<b><i>Reading Break</i></b>
<u>Week 11</u> : Mar 22-26	<p><i>Ethics, I</i>  Reading: §§56-60</p>
<u>Week 12</u> : Mar 29-Apr 2	<p><i>Ethics, I</i>  Reading: §§61-63, 65</p>
<b><i>Academic &amp; Pyrrhonian Skepticism</i></b>	
<u>Week 13</u> : Apr 5-12	<p>Reading: §§68-72  <b>**Essay Due Apr 12<sup>th</sup>**</b></p>