

PHIL/GRS 379 A01 (23676/21677) – EARLY GREEK THOUGHT

Spring 2025, University of Victoria

Department of Philosophy

Course websites: <https://bright.uvic.ca/d2l/home/370275> (PHIL)

<https://bright.uvic.ca/d2l/home/365218> (GRS)

Instructor & Contact Information

Dr. Clifford Roberts (cliffordroberts@uvic.ca)

Office hours: Tue-Wed 2:30-3:30pm (or by appt.)

Office: CLE B318

Class Times & Location

Tuesday-Wednesday-Friday 1:30-2:20pm – Location TBA

Course Description & Intended Learning Outcomes

This course surveys the ideas of a group of ancient Greek thinkers who inaugurated a new method of investigating and explaining the natural world. Ranging geographically in the Mediterranean from Turkey to Sicily and historically from the 6th to the 5th centuries BCE, they were united by the Greek language and a shared methodology of rationally explaining the world by means of its own inherent natural principles. These thinkers, sometimes misleadingly called ‘Presocratics’ (some were contemporaries of Socrates), were the first recognizable natural scientists and philosophers in the Western tradition. By originating naturalistic, rational and explanatory accounts of the world, these thinkers shaped the kinds of questions, answers and methods employed in subsequent philosophical and scientific inquiry up to and including the present day. Among the thinkers whose views we will examine are: Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Democritus and Leucippus, Anaxagoras, and Empedocles. We will read both primary texts by these thinkers as well as a scholarly commentary on them. Our focus will be on their physical and metaphysical views and our goal will be the articulation of a clear and precise account of their views and their methods of argument and inquiry.

Course Texts

Required: [PB] Richard D. McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 2nd ed. (Hackett, 2010).

Course Evaluation

Students’ grades will be based upon:

(1) Take-Home Tests

Value: 1st = 30%, 2nd = 33%, 3rd = 34% (= 97%)

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

Due dates: *see course schedule.*

(2) 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.

In order to be eligible to pass the course, students must complete all three take-home tests.

Course Grading

Grade s	GP V	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 September 2023 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

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 January 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/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

Dates	Assignments
<u>Week 1</u> : Jan 6-10	<i>Sources & Beginnings</i> Readings: [PB] pp. 1-20
<u>Week 2</u> : Jan 13-17	<i>The Early Ionians I: Thales & Anaximander</i> Readings: [PB] pp. 18-47
<u>Week 3</u> : Jan 20-24	<i>The Early Ionians II: Anaximenes & Xenophon</i> Readings: [PB] pp. 48-78
<u>Week 4</u> : Jan 27-31	<i>The Pythagorean Tradition</i> Readings: [PB] pp. 79-111 Take-Home Test #1: Feb 1-2

<u>Week 5:</u> Feb 3-7	<i>Heraclitus of Ephesus</i> Readings: [PB] pp. 112-145
<u>Week 7:</u> Feb 10-14	<i>The Monists I: Parmenides</i> Readings: [PB] pp. 145-173
<u>Week 8:</u> Feb 17-21	Reading Break
<u>Week 9:</u> Feb 24-28	<i>The Monists I: Parmenides</i> (cont'd) Readings: [PB] pp. 145-173
<u>Week 10:</u> Mar 3-7	<i>The Monists II: Zeno & Melissus</i> Readings: [PB] pp.174-192, 293-303 Take-Home Test #2: Mar 8-9
<u>Week 11:</u> Mar 10-14	<i>The Pluralists I: Anaxagoras</i> Readings: [PB] pp. 193-229
<u>Week 12:</u> Mar 17-21	<i>The Pluralists II: Empedocles</i> Readings: [PB] pp. 230-293
<u>Week 13:</u> Mar 24-28	<i>The Early Atomists: Leucippus & Democritus</i> Readings: [PB] pp. 303-342
<u>Week 14:</u> Mar 31-Apr 4	<i>Beyond the Natural World: The Sophists</i> Readings: [PB] pp. 365-404 Take-Home Test #3: Apr 5-6