

## INTRODUCTION TO ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

EMILY KRESS (YALE SUMMER SESSION A)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The aim of this class is to introduce students to the writings and ideas of the major ancient Greek and Roman philosophers and to help students develop the philosophical skills to engage with them. It is organized around three guiding questions about the nature of agency: What is it to act virtuously, and what role does virtue play in the best human life? What is it for one thing to act on another, and more generally, how can we make sense of the phenomena of change and causation? What kind of thing is the soul, and what is its role in psychological phenomena such as perception and motivation? In answering our three guiding questions, we will touch on important themes in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, philosophical methodology, moral psychology, ethics, and metaethics.

This is a class in the history of philosophy. It will invite you both to interpret the views of ancient philosophers in their historical contexts and to engage philosophically with the arguments for them. Lectures, class discussions, and written assignments are all designed to help you learn how to work with the arguments found in our readings. For this reason, the class is accessible both to beginners and to students with some prior exposure to philosophy.

### COURSE MATERIALS

Plato, *Complete Works* (eds. Cooper and Hutchinson)

Aristotle, *A New Aristotle Reader* (ed. Ackrill)

Additional readings will be made available on Canvas.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

10% Attendance, Preparation, Participation

10% Responses to Canvas Questions

20% Writing Assignment

30% Paper #1

30% Paper #2

**ATTENDANCE, PREPARATION, AND PARTICIPATION:** Attendance is mandatory. If extenuating circumstances require you to miss class, please contact me in advance. You are expected to come to class having done the readings and prepared to discuss them. Since the readings are difficult, you might have to read parts of them more than once. I've tried to choose readings that are short enough to leave you the time to do this. When reading, pay attention to the *structure* of the passage. If the author seems to be making an argument, ask: what is the argument's *main conclusion* and *how does the author support it*? If the author seems to be sketching a position, ask: what are the *main claims* of this position, *why does the author accept them*, and *how do they fit together*? Make a note of places where the argument or view is confusing, or where you disagree. Good in-class participation will draw on this preparation. It can involve asking thoughtful questions, listening carefully to your classmates' ideas, asking for or introducing

clarifications, or making objections. Civility and respect are essential. I invite you to meet with me if you have any questions about what good participation looks like or to develop strategies for participating.

**RESPONSES TO CANVAS QUESTIONS:** Responding to these questions will help you get ready to participate in class discussion. You are required to post *short* (no more than a paragraph) replies to questions posted by the instructor on Canvas, with *one reply for each class*. You may skip up to 3 replies without penalty. If you are not the first student to answer a question, feel free to respond to other students' responses.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT:** This assignment is designed to help you practice identifying, interpreting, and evaluating arguments in historical texts. (While this assignment focusses on short arguments with fairly explicit premises and conclusions, this shouldn't give you the impression that these kinds of arguments are the only important parts of the texts we will be reading. These texts contain plenty of other philosophically interesting material, including sketches of positions, longer arguments, and myths. You'll have the opportunity to focus in on these in the longer papers.) To complete this assignment, read the assigned passage. Identify what *conclusion* the author is trying to establish. Then, identify what *premises* they use to support this conclusion. Since this isn't always obvious, it might take a few tries. Sometimes, you might have to explain why you think the author is appealing to a particular premise, or why you think the conclusion is something other than it might initially seem to be. Then, say whether you think the argument does or does not establish the intended conclusion, and why. Are all the premises true, or are some false? If some are false, explain why. If all the premises are true, is the argument valid? If not, why not? Can you add additional premises to make it valid? Are these premises plausible? If all the premises are true and the argument is valid, explain where someone might disagree and how you would respond. Further instructions will be distributed in class. *This assignment should be 3 pages, double-spaced.*

**PAPERS:** This assignment builds on the critical reading and writing skills developed by the first writing assignment. You will be asked to give both an interpretation and a critical assessment of an argument or position from our readings. Further instructions will be distributed in class. *Papers should be 4-6 pages, double-spaced. Students should meet with the instructor while working on the paper.*

### **LATE PENALTY**

Late papers and writing assignments will be penalized one "step" (e.g. from a B+ to a B) per day, beginning *immediately* after the midnight deadline. They will not be accepted more than one week after they are due, and not at all after the last day of the course. Please contact me with any questions.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. One of the most severe violations of academic integrity is plagiarism, which is the use of someone else's work, words, or ideas as if they were your own. Thus, if you use a source for a paper, you must acknowledge it. There is no reason to hide the fact that you have relied on others, for the very idea of writing in a university is to trace your participation in a conversation of scholars. Showing how your ideas derive from and comment on the ideas of others is one of the high achievements of mature academic writing. It would be a mistake to downplay this achievement in an attempt to suggest greater originality. What counts as a source and requires citation is a delicate matter. Some things are clear. For instance, anything derived from readings (including those found on-line), either from the syllabus or outside sources, must be cited. What is not

clear is whether ideas presented in lecture, discussed in section, or derived from conversations with faculty, TFs, or other students must be cited. If you are unsure, consult with your instructor or TF. In general, it is better to err on the side of caution and cite sources too much rather than too little. Penalties for plagiarism are severe. Students caught plagiarizing can be subject to lowered or failing grades, as well as suspension or expulsion from the University. For more information, please consult Yale's Academic Integrity Policy.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

If you require any special accommodations or if there is anything I can do to make you more comfortable in class, please let me know. I will be happy to help.

### SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

PLATO		
<b>1</b> <b>M</b>	SOCRATES AND THE SOPHISTS Gorgias, <i>Helen</i> ; selections from Plato, <i>Apology</i> (distributed in class)	
<b>2</b> <b>W</b>	VIRTUE Plato, <i>Protagoras</i>	
<b>3</b> <b>F</b>	WEAKNESS OF WILL Plato, <i>Protagoras</i>	
<b>4</b> <b>M</b>	THE PHILOSOPHICAL LIFE AND THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL Plato, <i>Phaedo</i>	Writing Assignment Due
<b>5</b> <b>W</b>	CAUSATION AND EXPLANATION Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> ; selections from Barnes, <i>Early Greek Philosophy</i> (incl. Anaxagoras)	
<b>6</b> <b>F</b>	JUSTICE AND GOODS Plato, <i>Republic</i> I, II	
<b>7</b> <b>M</b>	CITIES AND SOULS; KNOWLEDGE Plato, <i>Republic</i> IV, 427-445; V, 471-80; VII, 514-21; Selections from Barnes, <i>Early Greek Philosophy</i> (incl. Parmenides and Heraclitus)	
ARISTOTLE		
<b>8</b> <b>W</b>	CHANGE Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> I.7, 9	
<b>9</b> <b>F</b>	CAUSATION AND NATURAL TELEOLOGY Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> II.1-3, 8-9	Paper #1 Due
<b>10</b> <b>M</b>	THE SOUL Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> I.1, I.4, II.1-3	
<b>11</b> <b>W</b>	HAPPINESS AND THE HUMAN FUNCTION Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.1-2, I.7, X.7-8	
<b>12</b> <b>F</b>	VIRTUE AND WEAKNESS OF WILL Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , II.1-9; VII.1-3	

<b>HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY</b>		
<b>13</b> <b>M</b>	STOICISM Epictetus, <i>Enchiridion</i> (selections); Cicero, <i>De Fato</i> (selection)	
<b>14</b> <b>W</b>	EPICUREANISM Epicurus, <i>Principal Doctrines</i> (selections); Lucretius, <i>De Rerum Natura</i> II, III.1-829	
<b>15</b> <b>F</b>	SCEPTICISM Sextus Empiricus, <i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i> (selections); Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives of the Philosophers</i> (selections)	Paper #2 Due