

Intro to Ancient Philosophy: Rhetoric, Virtue, Knowledge, and Reality

Instructor: Jake Rohde (jake.rohde@yale.edu)

Yale University, Summer 2024 Session B (July 1-August 2)

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:00 am-12:15 pm online EST

Description:

This course presents an introductory survey of the philosophical thought of the key Greek and Roman philosophers in classical antiquity. We will read extensively from the extant writings of these philosophers, particularly Plato and Aristotle and learn how to read, interpret, and intelligently critique these philosophers. Some of the key questions we will tackle in this class include:

- 1) What is the power of speech and argument?
- 2) How can we come to have knowledge?
- 3) Why be good?
- 4) What is the nature of a happy life?
- 5) How can we understand the natural world and our place in it?
- 6) What is the fundamental nature of being?

We will consider the answers to these questions posed by the Greek philosophers before Socrates, Sophists, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoic Seneca. Readings will be organized by topic rather than chronology. The first half of the course will be dedicated to questions around how to attain the good life, the power of argument, and the nature of justice. Halfway through Week 3 we will turn our attention to the possibility of knowledge, the nature of the world, and the possibility of causation. Students will learn some of the key works and ideas of the Classical Greek philosophers while at the same time developing skills in argument analysis, criticism, and developing original philosophical insights. Class will be a mixture of lecture and group discussion.

Textbook: *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy From Thales to Aristotle* [RAGP] (5th Edition) edited by S. Marc Cohen, Patricia Curd, and C.D.C. Reeve (2016, Hackett Publishing)

Other readings to be posted on Canvas as noted in the schedule of readings.

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated on the basis of three papers. The lowest paper grade will be dropped and replaced with the second-lowest grade.

Paper 1 (2-4 pages) due at the end of week 2, will require students to reconstruct an argument formally and assess it for validity. If the argument is valid, present a criticism of the argument. If it is invalid, suggest how it may be changed so as to become valid (20% of overall grade)

Paper 2 (3-5 pages), due at the end of week 3, will require students to present an argument or philosophical position, object to it, and then respond to this objection. A formal reconstruction may be helpful but is not required. (25% of overall grade)

Paper 3 (5-7 pages), due at the date of the final, will require students to develop and defend a clear, arguable scholarly thesis about a text. They will then defend this thesis against potential objections, both philosophical and interpretative. A proposal for the thesis of the paper will be due in week 5. (Thesis proposal 5% of overall grade; Final paper 30% of overall grade)

Participation will be based on not only volume but quality of insights and coming to class having prepared by having carefully read and considered all of the assigned readings. (20% of overall grade)

Schedule of Readings

Week	Monday reading	Wednesday reading	Friday reading
Week 1 July 1-5 Socrates and other(?) Sophists	Helen in Homer and Tragedy Gorgias, <i>Helen</i> Other Sophistical Texts On Canvas	Anaxagoras of Clazomenae Socrates Readings on Canvas Plato, <i>Apology</i> ; <i>Euthyphro</i> ; <i>Crito</i> RAGP 48-50; 80-113	Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> 462a-481b <i>Protagoras</i> 317e–334c; 348c–362a RAGP 114-144
Week 2 July 8-12 Virtue, Justice, and Knowledge	Plato, <i>Meno</i> Aristotle, <i>Posterior Analytics</i> I.1-4 RAGP 145-166, 464-469	Plato, <i>Republic</i> I-II RAGP 235-71	Plato, <i>Republic</i> IV; V 471c-480a; VI 504a-VII 521c; VII 537d-541b RAGP 293-311; 327-333; 346- 356; 366-368
Week 3 July 15-19 Soul, Life, and Afterlife	Pythagoreanism on Canvas Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> up to 96a Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> I.1-2, 4 RAGP 166-90; 512-5	Greek Afterlives on Canvas Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> 96a-end —, <i>Republic</i> X RAGP 190-201; 401-18	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.1-5, 7-9, 13; II.1-7, 9; X.6-9 RAGP 577-593; 618-623
Week 4 July 22-26 From Nature to Ethics, From Ethics to Nature	Democritus and Leucippus RAGP 52-59 Epicurus, <i>Principal Doctrines</i> —, <i>Letter to Menoecus</i> Seneca, <i>Letters</i> 66, 71 & 120 On Canvas	Parmenides and Zeno of Elea Melissus of Samos Gorgias, <i>On What Is Not</i> Plato, <i>Parmenides</i> 127a-135d RAGP 27-33; 59-61; 67-69; 419-424	Empedocles of Acragas Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> I.1, 5-9; II.1-9 RAGP 35-47; 475-92
Week 5 July 29-August 2 The Science of Everything	Plato, <i>Timaeus</i> 27e-58c Aristotle, <i>Meteorologica</i> IV.12 —, <i>On the Heavens</i> I.2; III.3-6 —, <i>On Coming-To-Be and Ceasing- To-Be</i> I.1, 3, 4; II.1-5 RAGP 425-445; 497-511	Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> II.1-5 —, <i>Parts of Animals</i> I.1, 5 —, <i>Metaphysics</i> I.1–4, 6, 9; IX.6, 8; XII.4-7, 9-10 RAGP 515-21; 530-46; 569-76	Aristotle, <i>Categories</i> 1-5 —, <i>Metaphysics</i> IV.1-3; VI.1-2 RAGP 453-456; 546-552 Seneca, <i>Letters</i> 58, 65 & 117 On Canvas

Academic Integrity Policy:

Students are to read and abide by [Yale's academic integrity policy](#). All course readings will be primary sources in this class. However, if any other sources are used, they must be cited. Consultation or use of chatbots, including Chat-GPT, is not permitted. While philosophical discussion among students is encouraged, all work must be entirely written by each student.

Accommodation Policy:

The instructor will make all attempts to accommodate any reasonable requests for accommodations.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is required for all class meetings. Each student will be granted one unexcused absence; after this absence has been used, the final letter grade will go down a step (e.g. from an A- to a B+) for each class missed. Excused absences will be granted in certain extenuating circumstances. Please be on time; students may be considered absent if they are excessively late.