

FIL2700 – History of Philosophy until 1600: Ancient Metaphysics and Epistemology

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Office Hours:
TBD

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What is philosophy? How did it develop? Why did it develop? In this course, we will look at the very first stirrings of philosophical inquiry in the Western tradition. We will survey the development of philosophical thinking in metaphysics and epistemology from its very beginning: we will be reading Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Anaxagoras and Empedocles, along with Plato and Aristotle. We will treat these philosophers as though they were participants in a long-standing, multigenerational dialogue, and trace the path of philosophical thinking in ancient Greece with an eye to its continuity. This continuity ought not be confused with agreement; we will be concerned with understanding the ways in which a philosopher's reflections are both consistent with and divergent from the thinking of his predecessors. For each class, you must endeavor to interpret and understand the positions articulated in the assigned readings, as well as evaluate the claims and arguments contained therein. The texts are *difficult*, often perplexing, and understanding them will require at least a second reading.

TEXTS:

Required

Aristotle. *Selections*. Trans. T. Irwin and G. Fine. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995.
Curd, P., ed. *A Presocratics Reader*. Trans. R. D. McKirahan, Jr. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995.
Plato. *The Theaetetus*. Trans. M. J. Levett. Rev. M. Burnyeat. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990.

Recommended

Guthrie, W. K. C. *The Greek Philosophers*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.
Kirk, G. S., J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
Lear, J. *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
Roochnik, D. *Retrieving the Ancients: An Introduction to Greek Philosophy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.

REQUIREMENTS:

There will be six one-page paper assignments, of which you must complete **five**, and one long final research paper. The questions for the one-page papers will focus on a significant philosophical and interpretive issue, and we will be discussing our responses in class. Attendance is also mandatory; if you miss more than 4 class meetings, you will not be allowed to hand in a final paper.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- read ancient philosophy texts critically and carefully
- explicate the meaning of these texts through exegesis and careful analysis
- understand the central philosophical concerns and problems that motivate ancient philosophical inquiries in metaphysics and epistemology
- understand and articulate the historical progression of these philosophical views
- express and critically assess the positions and arguments

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

	Topic/ Assignment	Required Reading	Recommended Reading
Week 1	Presocratics	The Milesians: Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes	Kirk et al., chs. 2-4
Week 2		Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism	Kirk et al., chs. 7, 11
Week 3	Paper 1	Heraclitus	Kirk et al., ch. 6
Week 4	Paper 2	Parmenides	Kirk et al., ch. 8
Week 5		The Pluralists: Anaxagoras and Empedocles	Kirk et al., chs. 10, 12
Week 6	Plato	<i>Republic</i> V.475b-480a; <i>Phaedo</i> 97b-100e; <i>Theaetetus</i> 142a-151d	Burnyeat, Part I
Week 7		<i>Theaetetus</i> 151d-168c	
Week 8	Paper 3	<i>Theaetetus</i> 168c-187a	Protagoras (in Curd)
Week 9	Paper 4	<i>Theaetetus</i> 187a-201c	Burnyeat, Part II
Week 10		<i>Theaetetus</i> 201c-210a	Burnyeat, Part III
Week 11	Aristotle	<i>De Generatione et Corruptione</i> I.1, 3-5; <i>Physics</i> I.1, 5-9	Lear, ch. 2
Week 12	Paper 5	Aristotle's <i>Physics</i> II.1-9, III.1-3	Lear, ch. 3
Week 13		Aristotle's <i>Metaphysics</i> I.1-3, 6, 9; IV.1-6	Lear, ch. 6
Week 14	Paper 6	Aristotle's <i>De Anima</i> I.1-4; II.1-6, 11-12, III.1-5, 10-11	Lear, ch. 4

