

PHILOSOPHY 31: Introduction to Ancient Philosophy

Fall 2023

Professor Monte Ransome Johnson

Teaching Assistants: Julia Greig, Zachary Brants

Course Description: We will introduce Greek philosophy to students with no presumed background through close readings (in English translations) of some Socratic dialogues of the Athenian philosopher Plato, some letters and maxims of the Athenian philosopher Epicurus, and some discourses of the Roman Stoic philosopher Epictetus. Topics to be discussed include: the purpose and method of philosophical inquiry; the relationship between persuasion and reason; the role of pleasure, emotion, virtue, and knowledge in the good life; what is up to us (or in our power to do); the causes of vice and wrongdoing; and philosophy as a way of life and a preparation for death.

Objectives:

- Learn to read, interpret, cite, recite, paraphrase, discuss and criticize classical and Hellenistic works of Greek philosophy in English translation.
- Explore the diverse genres of ancient philosophical prose: dialogues, maxims, letters, pedagogical discourses, and handbooks.
- Discover the origin and early development of elementary and germinal philosophical and scientific concepts.

In-Person Lectures, Discussion Sections, and Oral Exams:

- In-person lectures with the Professor will meet MWF 11-11:50am in PETER 103.
- In-person discussion sections with Teaching Assistant Julia Greig will meet M 3-3:50pm at HSS 2150.
- In-person discussion sections with Teaching Assistant Zack Brants will meet F 12-12:50pm at SOLIS 109.
- Office hours with the Professor will be open for drop-by consultation on Wednesdays 4-5pm at A&H Building 1, RWAC 0451.
- Office hours with Teaching Assistant Julia Greig will be open for drop-by consultation on W 2:15-3:15pm at the Che Café.
- Office hours with Teaching Assistant Zack Brants will be open for drop-by consultation on Th 12-1pm at Art of Espresso.
- Oral Exams during weeks 5 and 10 will occur in the normal lecture and discussion section time frames. Oral Exams held during week 11 will happen in the time frame scheduled for the final exam (Tuesday 11:30am-2:30pm).

Required Textbooks (available at the UCSD bookstore):

- Plato, *Complete Works*. Edited by J. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. Indianapolis and Cambridge, Mass., 1999.
- *The Epicurus Reader*. Translated and edited by B. Inwood and L. P. Gerson. Indianapolis and Cambridge, Mass., 1994.
- Epictetus, *Discourses* and *Select Writings*. Translated and edited by R. Dobbin. London and New York, 2008.

Evaluation Scheme:

1. Grading scale: 90-100 points = A; 80-89 points = B; 70-79 points = C or P; 60-69 points = D or NP; <60 points = F or NP. All + and – scores are at the discretion of the teaching assistants.
2. Attendance. Attendance at the lectures, and at one of the two discussion sections is required. Two absences will be automatically excused. 3-5 absences will result in a reduction of the final grade by one letter grade (10 points); 6-8 absences by two letter grades (20 points), and 9-11 absences by three letter grades (30 points). More than 11 absences will result in an automatic F/NP.
3. Participation and In-Person Discussion Sections (up to 10 points total). You will be graded based on how consistently you show up prepared for class, having done the assigned readings, and thought about questions pertaining to the readings and earlier lectures. You will be rewarded for participating in the live discussion by asking questions or giving answers, either during the lectures and discussion sections, or both. Up to 10 points will be awarded at the teaching assistants' discretion based on performance in the discussion sections. Plus and Minus scores in addition to letter for final grades (e.g. B+ or B-) will be given at the discretion of the Professor and Teaching Assistants on the basis of participation at lectures or discussion sections, or additional participation on the Weekly Discussion Boards beyond the graded work (see below).
4. Oral Examinations (up to 20 x 2 points; 40 points total). Individual 10-minute oral examinations will be scheduled and conducted by the Professor and Teaching Assistants during weeks 5, 10 and 11. These will consist of questions about the assigned readings and topics discussed during lectures and discussion sections.
5. Weekly Discussion Boards (up to 5 x 10 points; 50 points total). Each week it is possible to earn up to 5 points by posting an **initial comment** (up to 3 points) and a **response** (up to 1 point) and a **reply** (up to 1 point) to the Weekly Discussion board. You must post a 200–300-word **initial comment** to the Weekly discussion board by 11:59pm on Tuesday, the **response** by 11:59pm on Thursday, and the **reply** by 11:59pm on Saturday. The **initial comment** may be in the form of a question, an example or counterexample, a summary, outline or symbolization of the argument, support or criticism of the argument, a comparison with another text, etc. Your post must correctly cite the reading from this week's reading at least once—and there may be other requirements, specified in the weekly discussion board prompt. You will not be able to see any other posted comments until you post your 200–300-word comment.

Note: The Weekly Discussion board will be available weeks 1-11. If you miss contributing to week 1 (or any other week), you may make it up by posting to week 11; and if you posted to weeks 1-10, you can skip posting to week 11.

You may always continue posting to earlier weeks' discussion boards but will not be awarded points for any posting later than that week's due date (Tuesdays for **initial comments**; Thursdays for **responses**; Saturdays for **replies**).

DO NOT ASK IF YOU MAY POST ADDITIONAL REPLIES LATE FOR MAKE-UP CREDIT OR EXTRA-CREDIT. You are being evaluated partly on the consistency of your performance throughout the class, including in the first weeks. Late arrivals suffer a penalty for lack of participation early in the term.

Schedule of Readings and Exams:

For further details, see the weekly to-do lists posted in the weekly modules on Canvas, which also indicate the deadlines for discussion posts.

Week 0: Greetings and Introduction. Note: discussion sections do not meet during week 0.

Week 1: Plato, *Gorgias*.

Week 2: Plato, *Gorgias*.

Week 3: Plato, *Euthyphro* and *Apology*.

Week 4: Plato, *Apology* and *Crito*.

Week 5: Oral Exam 1. Note: neither lectures nor discussion sections meet during week 5. You must show up for the midterm examination at the time and place specified on the midterm exam schedule.

Week 6: Epicurus, *Letters to Herodotus, Pythocles, and Menoeceus*.

Week 7: Epicurus, *Principle Doctrines*.

Week 8: Epictetus, *Discourses, Book I*.

Week 9: Epictetus, *Discourses, Book II*.

Week 10: Oral Exam 2. Note: neither lecture nor discussion sections will meet on Friday of week 10. You must show up for the final examination at the time and place specified on the final exam schedule.

Week 11: Oral Exam 2, continued. Note: neither lecture nor discussion sections meet during week 11. You must show up for the final examination at the time and place specified on the final exam schedule.