

PHILOSOPHY 31: Introduction to Ancient Philosophy

Fall 2024

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Teaching Assistant: Jacob Zellmer (zellmer@ucsd.edu)

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:

- Mandatory In-person lectures will meet TTH 11am-12:20pm in RWAC 0103.
- Mandatory In-person discussion sections will meet M 2-2:50pm and 3-3:50pm at CENTER 220.
- Office hours with the Professor will be open for appointments and drop-by consultation on Wednesday 3:30-5pm at A&H Building 1, RWAC 0451.
- Office hours with Teaching Assistant Jacob Zellmer will be open for appointments and drop-by consultation on Friday 10-11am at RWAC 0440.
- Oral Exams during weeks 4 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 (Wednesday December 11, 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: Points may be accumulated by contributing to the weekly discussion boards (including week 11) according to the posted deadlines on Canvas, and by completing oral examinations according to the posted deadlines during weeks 5, 10, and 11.

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.
2. Attendance. Attendance at both of the weekly lectures, and at one of the two weekly 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 Professor's and Teaching Assistants' discretion based on performance in the lecture and discussion sections.
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 Assistant during weeks 4, 10 and 11. These will consist of questions about the assigned readings and topics discussed during lectures and discussion sections. The lectures and discussion sections will demonstrate the kind of questions that will be discussed in the oral examinations. The accuracy and depth of answers to the questions will be graded by the Professor and Teaching Assistant.
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 own 200–300-word comment.

Note: The Weekly Discussion boards will be made available each week 1-10. 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**; Fridays for **replies**). *You may post one additional initial comment, one additional response, and one additional reply on a single later week to make up any earlier missed comment, response, or reply.* 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 this week.

Week 1: Plato, *Gorgias*.

Week 2: Plato, *Gorgias*.

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

Week 4: Oral Exam 1. Note: neither lectures nor discussion sections meet during week 4. You must show up for the midterm examination at the time and place specified on the midterm exam schedule.

Week 5: Epicurus, *Letters to Herodotus, Pythocles, and Menoeceus*.

Week 6: Epicurus, *Principle Doctrines*.

Week 7: Epictetus, *Discourses*, Book I.

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

Week 9: Thanksgiving Break.

Week 10: Oral Exam 2. Note: neither lecture nor discussion sections will meet during 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.