

PHIL16a: Introduction to Ancient Philosophy
Spring 2022 – M/WTH 11-11:50am

Instructor:

Larisa Svirsky

Email: larisasvirsky@brandeis.edu

Office: Rabb 311

Office Hours: Mondays and Thursdays, 12-1:30pm or by appointment

Course Description:

This course will involve careful study of the works of ancient Greek philosophers. We will begin by discussing some Pre-Socratic philosophers, including Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Zeno. Our main focus, however, will be the works of Plato and Aristotle. In particular, we will discuss their responses to questions about what constitutes a good life, the nature of our minds and their relation to the world, what we can know, and what the structure of a just human society might be. Classes will proceed primarily by lecture, but there will be a significant discussion component as well.

Learning Goals:

1. Understand and be able to explain the views of ancient Greek philosophers from the Pre-Socratics, Plato, and Aristotle.
2. Identify and charitably interpret arguments from the assigned texts and be able to critically assess their merits.
3. Present philosophical ideas clearly and concisely, both orally and in writing.
4. Synthesize the above skills in papers that summarize a philosophical argument, compare it with alternative perspectives, introduce possible objections, and assess whether the objections are successful.

Assigned Text:

S.M. Cohen, P. Curd and C.D.C. Reeve (eds.), *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy* (From Thales to Aristotle), Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge. Fifth edition.

(In the course schedule, CCR refers to the page numbers in this volume.)

Course Website:

This course will have a website in which I will post the syllabus, all readings and course assignments, and any supplemental readings. All students enrolled in the course should have access to this website already, but if you have any difficulties with this, let me know. You will submit your responses to course readings on the course LATTE page, as described in more detail below.

Additionally, the course website will also have a forum, where you should feel free to post any questions you have about the course readings or class discussions. These forum posts count as a form of participation in the course, and I will reply to them regularly, schedule permitting.

Course Requirements:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1) Four short writing assignments | 40% (10% each) |
| 2) Ten responses to course readings | 10% (1% each) |
| 3) Final exam | 40% |
| 4) Participation | 10% |

1) Short writing assignments:

There are four papers that need to be handed in during the semester. They must be 2-3 pages (double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1" margins, Times New Roman). Topics will be posted two weeks before the due date.

Rewrites: Students are free to submit one rewritten and corrected version from among the first three papers for a higher grade. The rewrite, with the original, graded version attached to it, must be turned in by the last day of classes at the latest.

2) Responses to course readings:

In preparation for the class, you will need to post a short response to the readings for that week on LATTE (under 'Response to [assigned reading]') before 5 pm on the day before the class meets, for a total of ten posts. These responses should be short (100-150 words) and include, regarding a passage/chapter of your choice: 1. A question (explained if necessary), 2. A critique (a short paragraph), and 3. Something you liked about the reading (a sentence or two).

3) Final Exam:

The final exam will be a combination of multiple-choice and short essays. This exam will primarily test your ability to understand and write clearly about the works that we have studied.

4) Participation:

One earns a high participation grade in this course by attending class regularly, carefully preparing thoughts on the readings, and speaking in class and/or posting on the LATTE forums. Reading philosophy can be quite difficult, especially if you haven't done much of it before. This is compounded by the fact that the reading for this course was written over two thousand years ago, and we are reading it in translation. I recommend taking notes and reading the required texts multiple times.

Grading:

I will grade all assignments from this course (aside from the reading responses) anonymously. What this means is that **you should not include your name anywhere on your course assignments, but rather include your Sage ID number as identifying information.** Grading anonymously is one way of correcting against certain kinds of bias, and ensuring that every student is graded fairly.

Below is a list of criteria that will be used to evaluate your papers (note that the % only give a rough indication of how important these aspects are, and that not all of the criteria will apply equally to each of the different assignments; this is not a mathematical scale):

a. Quality of ideas (50%)

Range and depth of argument; fair representation of the position of the philosopher; logic of argument; quality and/or originality of thought; appropriate sense of the complexity of the topic; appropriate awareness of opposing views.

b. Organization and Argumentation (40%)

Clarity of thesis statement in the introduction; logical and clear arrangement of ideas; effective use of transitions; unity and coherence of paragraphs; good development of arguments through supporting details and evidence.

c. Clarity, style, and grammar (10%)

Ease of readability; appropriate voice, tone, and style for the assignment; clarity of sentence structure; grammatically correct sentences; accurate spelling; careful proofreading.

If you have any questions about these policies, please feel free to ask me about them.

Credit Hours:

Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of nine hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, presentations, papers, exam preparation, etc.)

Late Work Policy

I will provide a 24-hour extension, no questions asked, if you contact me before a paper deadline and send me what you have written so far. Otherwise, late work will be graded down a third of a letter grade for each full day that it is late. In other words, if a paper were due on Monday, and you didn't contact me, handing in the paper on Tuesday would bring an A paper down to an A-, etc. If you fall behind on work for this class for whatever reason, please come talk to me so that we can figure out a plan to help you get back on track.

Excused Absences

If you have special needs, or plan to be absent from class on a particular date, please send me an e-mail (preferably at least one day in advance) to explain your situation. Otherwise I expect you to attend each and every class and take the exams as scheduled.

Class Conduct

I consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability – and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Accommodations

If you have a learning or physical disability, or if you learn best utilizing a particular method, please discuss with me how I can best accommodate your learning needs. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all learning styles. I can do this most successfully if you discuss your needs with me in advance. I will maintain the confidentiality of your learning needs.

Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, please talk with me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as you can. I want to support you.

In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult [Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities](#) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be

required to submit work to [TurnItIn.com](https://www.turnitin.com) software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the director of academic integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. [Citation and research assistance](#) can be found on the [university library website](#).

Note: I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, including paper due dates and test dates, when unforeseen circumstances occur. These changes will be announced as early as possible so that you can adjust your schedule. If you want to read further on any of the topics listed below, I am happy to recommend additional readings.

Course Schedule:

Section 1: Pre-Socratic Philosophy

Week 1:

W – 1/19: Introduction to the Pre-Socratics and Sophists (CCR pg. 1-6)

TH – 1/20: The Milesians (CCR pg. 7-11),

“The Origins of Greek Science and Philosophy” handout (LATTE)

Week 2:

M – 1/24: Heraclitus and Parmenides (CCR pg. 19-30)

W – 1/26: Zeno (CCR pg. 31-33)

TH – 1/27: Empedocles (CCR pg. 33-47)

Week 3:

M – 1/31: Anaxagoras (CCR pg. 47-50)

W – 2/2: Leucippus and Democritus, (CCR pg. 51-59)

TH – 2/3: The Sophists: Intro, Protagoras, Gorgias (CCR pg. 63-69)

First short paper due

Week 4:

M – 2/7: The Sophists: Antiphon (CCR pg. 70-73)

W – 2/9: Socrates mocked: selections from Aristophanes, The Clouds (LATTE)

TH – 2/10: Plato, Apology (CCR pg. 90-106)

Section 2: Plato

Week 5:

M – 2/14: Plato, Crito (CCR pg. 106-114)

W – 2/16: Plato, Euthyphro (CCR pg. 80-90)

TH – 2/17: Plato, Meno (CCR pg. 145-166)

Week 6:

M – 2/28: Plato, Meno (continued)

W – 3/2: Plato, Republic I (CCR pg. 234-254)

TH – 3/3: Plato, selections from Republic VI (507a-511e, CCR pg. 348-351)

Second short paper due

Week 7:

M – 3/7: Plato, selections from Republic X (595a-608b, CCR pg. 402-410)

W – 3/9: Plato, Gorgias (CCR pg. 131-144)

TH – 3/10: Plato, selections from Symposium (198a-219d, CCR pg. 218-231)

Section 3: Aristotle on ethics and politics

Week 8:

M – 3/14: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics I 1-8 (CCR pg. 577-583)

W – 3/16: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics II (CCR pg. 585-593)

TH – 3/17: Aristotle, Politics I 12-13, III 9, VII 7 (LATTE)

Third short paper due

Week 9:

M – 3/21: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics III 1 (CCR pg. 593-595), III 5 (598-599)

W – 3/23: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics VIII 1-3, IX 8-9 (LATTE)

TH – 3/24: Aristotle's Ethical Theory discussion (no new reading)

Section 4: Aristotle on the science of nature**Week 10:**

M – 3/28: Aristotle, Physics II 1-3 (CCR pg. 481-485), 7-9 (CCR pg. 488-492)

W – 3/30: Aristotle, On the Soul I 1 (CCR pg. 512-514), II 1-4 (CCR pg. 515-520)

TH – 3/31: Aristotle, On the Soul (readings continued from previous class)

Week 11:

M – 4/4: Aristotle, Meteorologica IV 12 (CCR pg. 510)

W – 4/6: Aristotle, Parts of Animals I 1, I 5 (CCR pg. 530-535)

TH – 4/7: Aristotle, Parts of Animals II 10-16; IV 10; 14 (LATTE)

Fourth short paper due**Week 12: Philosophy and The Good Life**

M – 4/11: Plato, selections from Phaedo, (57a-85b, CCR pg. 166-183)

W – 4/13: Plato, selections from Republic X (609d-621d, CCR pg. 411-418)

TH – 4/14: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics X 1, 4-9 (CCR pg. 616-623)

Week 13: Course wrap up and review

M – 4/25: Pre-Socratics

W – 4/27: Plato

TH – 4/28: Aristotle

M – 5/2: Course wrap-up

All paper rewrites due

Final exam