

PHL 210: *ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY*

fall semester 2012, MW 12:40–14:00, Berkey 108
office hours: M & T 14:20–14:50
LON-CAPA <<https://loncapa.msu.edu>>

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381-4494 (home landline, 7:00–17:00 only)

Required texts (*always bring your book to class*):

Aristotle, *Selections*, tr. Terence Irwin and Gail Fine (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995).
Kirk, G. S., J. E. Raven, and Malcolm Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (KRS), 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)
Parmenides [fragments], tr. Stanley Lombardo (San Francisco: Grey Fox, 1979). PDF on LON-CAPA, with the permission of the copyright holder.
Plato, *The Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper with D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997).
Weston, Anthony, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, 4th edn. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009).

Course description and goals:

No period in the history of Western philosophy offers such breadth and depth of philosophical inquiry as the time from Thales of Miletus (±624–546 BCE) through the time of the Hellenistic schools (traditionally dated to 31 BCE), a period that witnessed the introduction and exploration of virtually all the fundamental philosophical issues that continue to exercise our intellects now: *the nature of reality, the possibility of certainty, human nature, and how one ought to live*. The academic subjects that we now call ‘physics’, ‘mathematics’ and ‘philosophy’ were then a single subject called ‘philosophy’. We will see the emergence of those now-separate disciplines. Because ancient Greek philosophy forms the essential foundation of all subsequent philosophy in the West, a central goal of this course is to provide you with a sound working knowledge of the most important figures, the most influential topics and methods, and the primary connections among them all. Another goal of the course is for you to improve your ability to express yourself concisely and clearly about complex issues, which requires *practice* at (i) evaluating the arguments of the philosophers, (ii) thoughtfully developing positions of your own, and (iii) rationally supporting or opposing others’ views. Your written work in the course should demonstrate that you have read and understood the texts, evaluated the class discussion critically, and thought beyond them.

About philosophy more generally (and how to do well in the course):

What is most valuable in philosophy is its form: rational argument, requiring higher-order thinking—analysis, valid inference, abstraction, et al. Unlike rote learning of information, philosophy does not lend itself to facile evaluation (e.g., computer grading). But higher-order thinking requires practice, and it requires facility at lower-order thinking that is usually mastered prior to university. Depending on background, some of you will fly through the early homework and exercises, others will fill in a few gaps along the way, and still others will learn new vocabulary and even new ways of thinking. All of it is propaedeutic to the intellectual activity we call ‘philosophy’. Success in the course is dependent on your *preparation* for class. You will need to read the texts as many times as it takes to understand them, and to peruse materials on LON-CAPA that I include to help you through the texts. Much learning happens outside the classroom, leaving classroom time free for the part that’s hard and fun: *practicing philosophy*. It is essential that you have the ready use of a

computer and access to the Internet (for access to LON-CAPA). Most of the exercises will be completed on-line on your own time. *Note that exercises on LON-CAPA work best with Firefox or Safari and worst with Chrome and Internet Explorer browsers.*

Schedule of readings (to be completed *before* class):

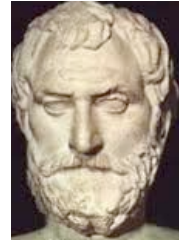
August 29: Introduction: philosophy, ancient Greek philosophy, the presocratics, and the course itself.

September 5: Milesians, KRS pp. 76–162: Thales, fr. 84–85, 89–91; Anaximander, fr. 101–111, 133–137; Anaximenes fr. 139–49. Whose position is most defensible? Meta-questions to think about for class: What *criteria* should be used to determine whose position is most defensible? Why? **EXERCISES 1, 4, 5** and **12** on LON-CAPA are ready; move through them at your own

- pace. During class I will distribute materials necessary for exercise 2 (on which you should not spend more than thirty minutes).
- 10: Milesians, KRS pp. 163–80: Xenophanes, fr. 163–74 (fr. 173 is in a note), 184, 186–89. **EXERCISE 2.** It is sometimes said that Xenophanes used the gods as metaphors. Metaphors for what? Why? Bring to class a draft of the assignment due Wednesday. Besides KRS, bring Weston 2009, Guidelines for Written Work, and RUBBER STAMPS. In-class, peer-review exercise.
- 12: Heraclitus. KRS pp. 181–212: fr. 194–96, 199–204, 207–9, 211–12, 214, 217–19, 227–28, 241–44, 246–50. **EXERCISE 3** (it's quite *difficult* but important for doing well on the writing assignments and thus the exams). Is there anything that Heraclitus would say is *not* subject to change? Is there anything *you* would say is not subject to change? If you answered “yes” to either question, say also *what* does not change and *why* not. **Writing assignment 1 due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment.**
- 17: Pythagoreans. KRS pp. 214–38: fr. 252–53, 260–61, 271, 277, 280, 284–85); Philolaus, KRS pp. 322–50: fr. 424–29, 434–35, 438, 446. Galileo wrote that mathematics is the language in which the *Book of Nature* is written. Is mathematics (a) the expression of form (structure, order) in nature which humans *discover* and describe, or (b) a *human convention* that *imposes* human categories (of form, structure, and order) on nature? Justify your view.
- 19: Parmenides. Print and bring to class the introduction and translation of Parmenides' fragments from LON-CAPA. When citing it, use the translator's roman numerals for fragment numbers, and page numbers if you cite anything from the introduction. If you prefer to use KRS, the pages are 239–262, and all the fragments are important (use KRS numbers for the fr. you cite). Consider how we should use such terms as 'is', 'is not', 'real', 'unreal', 'being', 'non-being', 'true', 'false'; be ready to defend your views.
- 24: Parmenides writes that “to think and to be are one and the same” (fr. iii, cf. fr. 292 in KRS). This part of the course is about ontology, not psychology, so don't confuse Parmenides' claim with Descartes' famous statement, “I think, therefore I am.” Try to put Parmenides' claim into words of your own.

“Philosophers can easily gain wealth if they wish, but they have no interest in it.”

—Thales, fr. 73



- 26: Bring to class a draft of the assignment due tonight. Besides KRS, bring Weston, Guidelines for Written Work, and RUBBER STAMPS. In-class, peer-review exercise. **Writing assignment 2 due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment.**

INTERLUDE

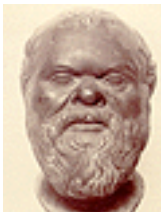
- October 1: Conversation: surnames M-Z of section 001.
3: Conversation: surnames A-L of section 001.

PLATO

- 4–7: International Plato Society meeting in Ann Arbor, co-sponsored by MSU and U. Michigan: Plato's Moral Psychology.
- 8: **Presocratics test and introduction to Socrates and Plato.** As you study for the test, recall its purpose: as we read and discuss Plato and Aristotle during the remainder of the semester, it is very important that you be able to recognize the names of the presocratics and their major claims.
- If it takes you too long to recall who they are and the important aspects of their positions when they are *mentioned*, you'll fall behind. No tricks! Plan for a straightforward test of what is most important. Note, however: no credit for misspelled philosophers' names and key terms.
- 10: Plato, *Parmenides* (excerpt, 126a–137c). The young Socrates is trying, like his predecessors, to solve the problem of the one and the many. He posits intermediaries, *forms*--but Parmenides finds fault with all Socrates' efforts. Even if you disagree with all Socrates' arguments, pick the one you think is most defensible and try to determine where Socrates might have answered Parmenides' question differently and made a better defense of his position.
- 11: *Thursday Special Event: the Philosophy Club is sponsoring a workshop on philosophical writing 6:30–8:00 p.m.*
- 15: Plato, *Republic* (excerpt, 5.475e–7.517c). **EXERCISE 6.** This is one of the best efforts Plato's Socrates is able to make toward arguing for the existence of forms. Its use of the notions of necessity and contingency will be important throughout ancient philosophy and beyond. Try to identify the precise place in the text where the divided line argument goes wrong, if it does. **Writing assignment 3 due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment.**
- 17: Plato, *Meno*. There's a controversy over what the dialogue is really about. Think hard about whether something is going on below the surface, and be ready with an argument to defend your view of what the *Meno* is about. NB: There are odd things about this dialogue that you need to know to make sense of it (e.g., how the Greeks understood teaching). See the file



Socrates: Our first assumptions—even though you think they are certain—should be examined more carefully.



—Plato, *Phaedo* 107b

“*Meno* Information.”

22: Plato, *Meno*. Consider the argument, sometimes called the *paradox of inquiry*:

P1 For any x, either one knows x or one does not know x.

P2 If one knows x, then one cannot inquire into x.

P3 If one does not know x, then one cannot inquire into x.

C One cannot inquire into x.

24: Plato, *Meno*. Can *aretê* (virtue/excellence) be taught—as the Greeks understood “teaching”? If the dialogue is about learning through philosophical inquiry, what specific pointers does it provide? **Writing assignment 4 due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment.**

29: **Mid-term exam.** Instructions appear on the handout “Assignments 1-7.”

31: Plato, *Euthyphro* and *Apology*. As the *Meno* considered the question, What is virtue?, the *Euthyphro* considers what one of the virtues, piety (reverence), is. In preparation for the exercise and class, look at the material on the *Euthyphro* on LON-CAPA, determine a good reason, based on the dialogue, to support Allen (1970), Penner (1973), or Guthrie (1975).

November 5: Plato, *Apology* and *Crito*. **EXERCISE 7** (which is difficult). In the form of a thesis statement, defend a position on Socrates and the law that takes into account the historical episodes of 406, 404, and 399; locate in the texts a single, fundamental, ethical principle stated by Socrates from which his actions on all three occasions could be derived and explained *consistently*. (Of course you need not agree that the principle is a dispositive one.)

7: *Plato’s birthday, as celebrated in the Renaissance*. Plato, *Crito* and *Phaedo* 114d-end. When, if ever, might the duty to disobey a law be greater than the duty to obey it? What distinguishes civil disobedience from simple lawbreaking?

ARISTOTLE



“Education adapted to an individual is actually better than a common education for everyone.”

—Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1180b7–8

12: *Special class with Emily Katz on what makes Aristotle special*. Introduction to Aristotle. **Writing assignment 5 due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment.**

14: Aristotle, *Categories*. **EXERCISE 8—bring your completed exercise to class with you.** How useful is Aristotle’s scheme? Does it apply to *all* things or only to some particular sort of

thing?

- 19: Aristotle, *Physics* 194b17–195b29 and *Metaphysics* I 980a21–993a11. Before you read the *Physics* passage, jot down a few instances of something's being the cause of something (I'm being vague deliberately). Then, when you read the text, determine whether Aristotle has captured the particular senses of 'cause' you have identified. For the *Metaphysics* passage, determine whether Aristotle is being fair to such predecessors of his as you have read.
- 21: Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII 1028a10–32a12, 1038b1–39a24; XII 1072b13–30. **EXERCISE 9.** Today's reading shows that Aristotle had second thoughts about his category of *substance*. In *Categories*, he proposed that there are both primary and secondary substances; but now in *Metaphysics*, he comes to an incompatible conclusion. Note in your text the exact passage (using Bekker numbers) where Aristotle shows that he has reached a new understanding of what qualifies as a substance; you'll need that information during class. **Writing assignment 6 due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment.**

Happy Thanksgiving holiday!

- 26: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) I. Using the principles of philosophical inquiry that you have already learned, jot down what happiness is, according to you and according to Aristotle.
- 28: Aristotle, *NE* II–III (to 1113a14); and III 6 1115a7–16a16. **EXERCISE 10.** In this section of the *NE*, we return to *aretê* (excellence or virtue, as you recall from Plato's *Meno*). Jot down 2–3 examples of what you would regard as courageous (or brave) action. Consider the individual virtue of character we call 'bravery' in relation to Aristotle's description of the characteristics of virtues of character in general.
- December 3: Aristotle, *NE* VI 1138b18–41b9 and VII 1144a12–47b18. **EXERCISE 11.** Here we have a new beginning for Aristotle's ethics (cf. the top half of the diagram of the soul). Be able to answer the following question in a single sentence without using your book or notes: *Why*, according to Aristotle, is it easier to cure the intemperate than the incontinent person? Propaedeutic to formulating your answer (and doing the exercise), you'll need to list the distinguishing qualities of the two types.
- 5: Aristotle, *NE* X. It has long been claimed that the two different "beginnings" of Aristotle's *NE* must be reconciled. If the life of theoretical contemplation is the best life, would the contemplator leave his theorizing to help a neighbor in need? If he would, would he want to help his neighbor, or would he help from a sense of obligation, or to ensure reciprocity, or from what motive? **Writing assignment 7 due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment.**
- 12: **FINAL EXAM, 10:00–noon, regular classroom.** You are required to *take* the final exam to pass the course, regardless of your grade going into the exam.

Observations, advice, and policies:

1. **Don't worry, but work:** I'm asking you to coordinate a number of different tasks and to develop a number of different skills all at once, from the beginning. Just as you have to get wet to learn to swim, you have to *do* philosophy to learn to do philosophy well—and no one expects you to be an expert when you start out.

2. **I keep office hours** from long practice, warning you in advance if I anticipate some unusual commitment that will keep me away; but I *enjoy* office hours when students visit, so please don't hesitate to *drop in*. You are welcome to walk with me after class, but I cannot linger long in the classroom. If posted hours are inconvenient, please make an appointment by email. I answer email daily when I am in town.
3. **Return of written work:** I return your work within ten days of its submission (except when illness or travel interferes). You will receive an additional .5 on the assignment for each class period that I fail to return your work at the end of the ten-day period.
4. **Do your own work cooperatively:** Do not submit for credit in this course work completed for another course; and do not submit work that is not your own—ever. You are strongly encouraged to study, discuss, and dispute with others everything we do in this course. Over the years, the students who performed best were those who met together outside of class and shared their ideas and written work with one another.
5. **Mid-term and final exams are personalized.** Your *own* previous writing assignments, revised and re-typed for exam day, will constitute the basis for the midterm exam and for 50% of the final exam. On exam day, you will write one complete argument without texts or notes. The Greek gods will choose *which* of your previous arguments to extend. Short answers will make up the other 50% of the final exam.
6. **Why there are no make-ups:** It is your responsibility to find out whether *ad hoc* assignments have been made during classes you miss (study groups can help); in-class work cannot be made up because the circumstances cannot be reconfigured. There are no make-ups for anything submitted on-line because they should *not* be last-minute work in any case. If *serious illness or an emergency* prevents your turning something in by the time the class meets, you have 48 hours from the time of your recovery to make up the work for full credit (I do *not* want to see documentation).
7. **Academic Freedom and Integrity.** Article 2.3.3 of the *Academic Freedom Report* states that “the student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” In addition, the Department of Philosophy adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in *General Student Regulations 1.0*, Protection of Scholarship and Grades, and in the All-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades, which are included in *Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide*. Students who commit an act of academic dishonesty may receive a 0.0 on the assignment *or in the course*.
8. **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities.** Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodation.

Evaluation: Your grade in the course will have the following components:

sec. 001		sec. 002
—	6 oral grades for tutorials	25%
40%	best 4 of 7 writing assignments	75%
10%	presocratics test	
5%	<i>ad hoc</i> assignments (participation, homework, unannounced quizzes, etc.)	
15%	mid-term exam	
30%	comprehensive final exam	
100%	total	100%

Assignments 1–7 and the Midterm and Final Exams: Thesis Statements

One’s first step after reading a text as many times as it takes to understand it is to determine what one supports and what one opposes, and *why*. A thesis statement should demonstrate that you have read and understood the text, taken into account class discussions, and thought about both enough to develop a defensible philosophical position on some aspect of the *text*. Because each thesis statement is potentially a philosophical argument (i.e., one will become *actual* on the midterm, and at least one other on the final), each must be as much like the *beginning* of an actual philosophy paper as possible. Learning to write a thesis statement that accurately and concisely communicates what it must takes *understanding* and *thought*, but it also takes *practice*. Be sure your thesis statement

- (a) is on a *philosophically* controversial issue,
- (b) tells the reader *what* you argue, and *how* or *why*,
- (c) correctly identifies the author, text, and passage that it supports or opposes,
- (d) is word-processed (not a mere text file),
- (e) is a single, grammatical sentence, and
- (f) is clearly written in present tense.

Don’t forget to embed your surname in the *filename* that you assign to your email attachment. E.g.,
Ann_Jones_WA1

Writing assignments 1-7:

Write a single philosophical thesis statement based on an assigned text, and considering class discussion. You must submit at least four because your top four grades count, but it is in your interest to submit all seven. Because the exams require you to write arguments based on your thesis statements, I will supply an additional thesis statement on each topic. If you prefer mine to your own, you are welcome to use mine or use amended versions of mine instead.

THE 7 WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:	4. Plato: <i>Meno</i>
1. frr. of Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Heraclitus	5. Plato: <i>Euthyphro, Crito, Apology, Phaedo</i> 114d-end
2. frr. of Pythagoreans (including Philolaus) and Parmenides	6. Aristotle: <i>Categories, Physics</i> 194b17–195b29, <i>Metaphysics</i> 980a21–993a11, 1028a10–1032a12, 1038b1–1039a24, 1072b13–30
3. Plato: <i>Parmenides</i> 126a–137c and <i>Republic</i> 5.475e–7.517c	7: Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I-III, VI, VII, and X

What you’ll do with your thesis statements on the midterm and final exams:

On exam day, you will submit a single sheet of paper on which you have corrected, revised and retyped all your thesis statements to date, in order (including any of mine you want to use). Fate will decide *which* thesis statement you will transform into a complete philosophical *argument*. You will elaborate and defend the the-

sis statement in your first paragraph. In your second paragraph, you will defend an objection to your thesis or to some aspect of it, enabling you, in a third paragraph, either to refine your original claim in light of the objection, or (less often) to defend your thesis against the objection. You may keep improving your theses right up to the date of the final exam; and you can get help with the other parts of your argument as soon as the thesis statement itself is error-free (see below).

Four *different* examples of a thesis statement on the *same* topic:

1. Xenophanes appears inconsistent by both denying anyone can have complete truth (fr. 186) while affirming that inquiring enables one to learn (fr. 188), but the inconsistency is only a superficial one because the former concerns *all* knowledge and the latter only some.
2. If what humans find out or learn (Xenophanes, fr. 188) is knowledge, then humans can have knowledge, though not complete knowledge (fr. 186), i.e., not omniscience.
3. Xenophanes' fragment 186 appears inconsistent with his fragment 188, but the two are compatible if one does not confuse gaining knowledge (fr. 188) with justifying knowledge (fr. 186).
4. Although fragment 186 represents Xenophanes as a skeptic about human knowledge, the philosopher allows that scientific knowledge can be achieved through human investigations (fr. 188), and scientific knowledge is not *omniscience*, so the former fragment is misleading.

Getting help:

from the texts: Weston 2009 is a touchstone text: read it right away and consult it often to keep yourself on the right track. I consider it propaedeutic to all university-level work, not just to philosophy. While we study the presocratics, Kirk-Raven-Schofield 1983 should be a terrific source of information about the assigned fragments. Their comments often point to the most controversial aspects of the fragments. Keep in mind that the fragments we know only from Aristotle usually appear in your Aristotle text (*Selections*) as well, enabling you to read the fragments in context if you wish. While we study Aristotle, remember that the material in italics and square brackets was added by the translators, so you can safely treat it as commentary on Aristotle; don't confuse it with what Aristotle himself says.

from LON-CAPA:

1. The quizzes are designed to help you lay a firm foundation for philosophical engagement or to fill gaps in your existing foundation.
2. RUBBER STAMPS is a file coded to help you improve your thesis statements when I return them with comments. Students in past classes have often said they wished they had looked through the RUBBER STAMPS *before* writing the first assignment.
3. *Guidelines for Written Work* has a number of pointers, including sample papers. Note that there are matters of convention (margins, typeface, et al.) to which your assignments must conform that are listed — checklist style — at the beginning of the guidelines.
4. For each major section of the course (presocratics, Plato, and Aristotle), there is a folder with a number of files to help you identify and clarify major ideas from the assigned readings.

from one another: It is always good to read your thesis statement *aloud* to a classmate (because it's a good way to catch errors), and always good to ask a classmate to read it for clarity and coherence. When you take your statement back, ask your classmate such questions as: What view am I supporting or opposing? Why? How might you disagree with my claim? Is there anything I wrote that you don't understand or that you think is incorrect?

from the philosophy department tutors: Students in past semesters have said the department's tutors are brilliant at helping them (i) to figure out whether their claims are *philosophically* controversial, (ii) to clarify what they really want to argue, and (iii) to find effective support for what they argue.

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT TUTORING
MONDAY EVENINGS, BEGINNING 10 SEPTEMBER 2012
with
JENNY CARMICHAEL & JORDAN UEBERROTH
time: 6:00–8:00 p.m.
place: 134 South Kedzie

from me: When you have one proper thesis statement (not two, and not merely some thoughts toward one—for which office hours are available), you may send it to me in advance—not on the day it is due—as an e-mail *attachment* (in MS Word or rtf) for feedback. I reply to e-mails in the order in which they arrive, so don't put off checking with me if you want comments in advance of submitting the assignment for a grade. *Besides embedding your surname in the filename you assign to the attachment, embed the word 'draft'.* Later, when your thesis statement is error-free and polished, you may *then* send me your objection as an attachment; when the objection has been approved and is error-free, I am willing to read and make suggestions about a whole argument (*if you send it to me as an attachment, up to a maximum of 400 words*). That way, you can get substantial feedback.