

**Philosophy 201**  
**Ancient Philosophy (in the West)**  
**Fall 2007**  
**MWF 1pm—1:50pm, Palmer 210**

Philosophy 201, Ancient Philosophy, is a discussion/lecture course that surveys some of the main issues discussed by ancient Greek philosophers. Among the questions these philosophers examined were: What is the basic structure of reality? How is change possible? What is the nature of knowledge? What is the nature of the good life for human beings? What is virtue? What is justice? Why should an individual be just? After a brief look at the so-called Early Greek Philosophers and Socrates (as represented in Plato's early dialogues), we turn to a critical examination of Plato and Aristotle. The emphasis throughout will be on understanding, analyzing and evaluating the arguments of these philosophers. Minimal attention will be given to cultural and historical setting. The course will not presuppose any familiarity with ancient Greek philosophy or with philosophical methodology.

**Instructor:**

Professor: Brendan O'Sullivan

Office: Clough 405

Office hours: W 3pm-4pm, Th. 2:30pm-4pm

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**Textbooks:**

Cohen, Curd and Reeve (eds.) *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

**Assignments:**

**Value:**

**Due Date:\***

Paper 3 pgs.

15%

Th, Sept. 20 @5pm

Midterm

25%

F, Oct. 12

Paper 5 pgs.

30%

T, Nov. 13 @5pm

Cumulative Final

30%

W, Dec. 12 @1pm

\*Due dates are subject to change.

**Late Policy and Extensions:**

For each day a paper is late, 1/3 of a letter grade will be deducted.

All days count, i.e., week-ends, holidays, etc. You can always e-mail me your paper.

I do not grant extensions. However, each of you is allotted three days of grace. E.g., say your first paper is two days late. You could choose to use one of your grace days to reduce the late penalty from 2/3 to 1/3 of a grade. You need to tell me to apply your grace days. I will not apply them automatically. Once your grace days are exhausted, the late penalty will apply in full force.

**Attendance:**

Attendance is required. I will use class attendance and participation to decide borderline course grades. E.g., if you are borderline between a B+ and A-, you'll receive an A- with good attendance and participation, a B+ otherwise. Students with excessive absences may have their grades lowered by as much as a full letter grade, even if they are not on a borderline.

**Papers:**

I will do my best to hand out suggested paper topics two weeks before the paper is due. If you want to write on a topic of your own, you are required to clear it with me beforehand.

The two cardinal virtues of undergraduate philosophy papers are CLARITY and STRENGTH OF ARGUMENTATION. In the suggested paper assignments, you will usually be asked to articulate and assess an ancient philosopher's argument for a particular thesis. In writing such a paper, you must (1) show that you understand the argument in question and (2) state, as clearly and as convincingly as possible, your criticisms of the argument or your reasons for thinking that the argument is a good one.

A helpful web site on writing philosophy papers, put together by James Pryor, a professor of philosophy at Princeton (but try not to hold that against him) is:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

We shall talk more about how to write a philosophy paper as they are assigned. Please feel free to come and talk with me if you would like further guidance.

**Philosophy 201  
Reading Schedule  
Fall 2007**

All readings are in Cohen, Curd and Reeve (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). The following corresponds to my best guess concerning what we will cover. Be aware that it is subject to change and I may add readings.

**Week 1**, Aug. 22-25: Introduction; Presocratics

Reading: Introduction (pp. 1-7), Thales, Anaximenes, Xenophanes

**Week 2**, Aug. 27-31: More Presocratics

Reading: Heraclitus (1, 2, 5, 11, 38, 41, 43, 45, 46, 49, 60-63, 68, 70), Parmenides, Empedocles, Democritus

**Week 3**, Sept. 5-7: The sophists; Socratic definition, the gods and the good.

Reading: The Sophists (pp. 80-88); *Euthyphro*

**Week 4**, Sept. 10-14: The 'Socratic Mission', Socrates on civil disobedience

Reading: *Apology*, *Crito*

**Week 5**, Sept. 17-21: Socrates and the idea that all wrongdoing is the result of ignorance, unity of the virtues, weakness of will

Reading: *Protagoras* 317e-334c, 348c-362a

**Paper#1, DUE, Thursday, 9/20, @5pm.**

**Week 6**, Sept. 24-28: The hunt for definition, learning as recollection; defense of justice  
Reading: *Meno*, *Republic I*

**Week 7**, Oct. 1-5: Tripartite soul, Platonic definition of the virtues  
Reading: *Republic* II.367e-376e; III.399e-405d, 413c-417b; IV

**Week 8**, Oct. 8-12: The distinction between knowledge and opinion; the sun, divided line, allegory of the cave; Plato's Theory of Forms  
Reading: *Republic* V, VI, VII.514-521b, 537e-541b

**Midterm, In Class, Friday, October 12**

**Fall Break, No Class, Monday, October 15**

**Week 9**, Oct. 17-19: Deterioration of city and soul, defense of justice, myth of Er  
Reading: *Republic* IX-X

**Week 10**, Oct. 22-26: Objections to the Theory of Forms  
Reading: *Parmenides* 127b-135d

**Week 11**, Oct. 29-Nov. 2: Aristotle on happiness, function, virtue, and the doctrine of the mean  
Reading: *Nicomachean Ethics* I.1-5, 7-9, 13; II.1-6; \*III.6-9

**Week 12**, Nov. 5-9: Aristotle on voluntary action and weakness of will  
Reading: *Nicomachean Ethics* III.1-5, VII.1-3

**Week 13**, Nov. 12-16: Aristotle's conception of substance, his criticism of Plato's theory  
Reading: *Categories* 1-5; *Metaphysics* I.1, 6, 9; IV.1-3

**Paper#2, DUE Tuesday, 11/13 @5pm**

**Week 14**, Nov. 19: Distinction between matter and form; analysis of change; natural objects  
Reading: *Physics* I.5-9; II.1-2

**Thanksgiving Break, No Class, November 21-23.**

**Week 15**, Nov. 26-30: The four 'causes'; natural teleology; Aristotle's analysis of the structure of demonstrative sciences  
Reading: *Physics* II.1-9; *Posterior Analytics* I.1-6, 10; II.8-10, 19

**Week 16**, Dec. 3-5: Aristotle's conception of soul  
Reading: *De Anima* I.1, 4; II.1-6, 11-12; III.3-5, 10-11

**Cumulative Final Exam, Wednesday, December 12, 1pm**