

PHIL 201-01, Ancient Philosophy (in the West), Fall 2006

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Philosophy 201
Ancient Philosophy (in the West)
Fall 2006
TTh 2pm—3:15pm, Kennedy 207

Philosophy 201, Ancient Philosophy, is a discussion/lecture course that surveys some of the main issues discussed by three ancient Greek philosophers: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Among the questions these philosophers examined were: What is the nature of the good life for human beings? What is virtue? What is justice? Why should an individual be just? From these broadly ethical concerns both Plato and Aristotle were led to advance substantive accounts of the nature of knowledge and of reality. After beginning with a look at Socrates' philosophy as represented in Plato's early dialogues, we turn to a critical examination of Plato and Aristotle. Secondary attention will be paid to Plato and Aristotle's predecessors, the so-called Early Greek philosophers. 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: MW 1:30pm—2:30pm, Th 3:30pm—4:30pm and by appointment

Phone: 843-3096

Email: osullivanb@rhodes.edu

Textbooks:

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

Assignments:

Value:

Due Date:*

Paper 3 pgs.

15%

F, Sept. 15

Midterm

25%

Th, Oct. 12

Paper 5 pgs.

30%

F, Nov. 3

Cumulative Final

30%

W, Dec. 13

*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 2006**

All readings are in Cohen, Curd and Reeve (3rd 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. 24: Introduction

Week 2, Aug. 29-31: Socratic definition, the gods and the good, the sophists
Reading: *Euthyphro*, *The Sophists* (pp. 80-88)

Paper Topics for Paper#1, Friday, September 1

Week 3, Sept. 5-7: The 'Socratic Mission', Socrates on civil disobedience
Reading: *Apology*, *Crito*

Week 4, Sept. 12-14: 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 Friday, September 15 @ 5pm, my office door

Week 5, Sept. 19-21: The hunt for definition, learning as recollection; defense of justice
Reading: *Meno*, *Republic I*

Week 6, Sept. 26-28: Tripartite soul, Platonic definition of the virtues
Reading: *Republic II-IV*

Week 7, Oct. 3-5: The distinction between knowledge and opinion; the sun, divided line, allegory of the cave; Plato's Theory of Forms
Reading: *Republic V-VII*

Week 8, Oct. 10-12: Deterioration of city and soul, defense of justice, myth of Er
Reading: *Republic VIII-X*

Midterm, In Class, Thursday, October 12

Fall Break, No Class, Tuesday, October 17

Week 9, Oct. 19: Objections to the Theory of Forms
Reading: *Parmenides* 127b-135d

Paper Topics for Paper#2, Friday, October 20

Week 10, Oct. 24-26: Aristotle on happiness, function, virtue, and the doctrine of the mean
Reading: *Nicomachean Ethics* I.1-5, 7-9, 13; II.1-6; ***supplement with his account of courage***

Week 11, Oct. 31-Nov. 2: Aristotle on voluntary action and weakness of will
Reading: *Nicomachean Ethics* III.1-5, VII.1-3

Paper#2, DUE Friday, November 3 @ 5pm, my office door

Week 12, Nov. 7-9: Aristotle's conception of substance, his criticism of Plato's theory
Reading: *Categories* 1-5; *Metaphysics* I.1, 6, 9; IV.1-3

Week 13, Nov. 14-16: Aristotle's analysis of the structure of demonstrative sciences; distinction between matter and form, four kinds of 'cause'

Reading: *Posterior Analytics* I.1-6, 10; II.8-10, 19; *Physics* I.5-9

Week 14, Nov. 21: Natural teleology

Reading: *Physics* II

Thanksgiving Break, No Class Thursday, November 23.

Week 15, Nov. 28-30: 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 13, 1pm