

Ancient Greek Philosophy

Philosophy/CAMS 200
The Pennsylvania State University
Fall Semester, 28 Aug – 13 Dec 2012
TuTh 9.45-11a, Willard 105

Instructor: Christopher Moore

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Required Texts [these translations only]

McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates* ["PBS"] (Hackett)
Plato, *Five Dialogues* (Hackett)
Aristotle, *De Anima* (Focus)
Aristotle, *Ethics* (Hackett)
Sextus Empiricus, *Selections from the Major Writings* ["Skeptics"] (Hackett)

Course

By the end of the sixth-century BC, certain groups of Greek students had been called *philosophoi* ("philosophers") and certain proponents of abstract learning came to call themselves *philosophoi*. We don't know just what the name "philosopher" first meant, but it seems to have indicated an unusual interest in becoming a wise person, perhaps specifically in being acknowledged as a sage in one's community. The name lived on when people in the fifth- and fourth-centuries thought their or others' intellectual activities or daily routine were best referred to as "philosophizing" or engaging in "philosophy." At some points this may have meant engaging in structured but free-wheeling conversations; at other points, giving, listening to, and arguing about elaborated theoretical constructs. This class studies what activities and routines typified philosophy, and has us engage in those activities and routines ourselves at a high level of rigor.

This class is constructed for students puzzled about what distinguishes philosophy from any other habit of thought, academic discipline, or way of life; for students who want to think analytically and robustly about the most consistently troublesome aspects in living a decent life; for students who wish to read the most playful, searching, argumentatively-dense, and literarily-rich works about the human condition; and for students hopeful to practice the virtues of the examined life: curiosity, systematic reasoning, self-evaluation, and imagination.

Class time

We will spend our class-sessions in two ways. The more properly philosophical way is small-group discussion. In three-to-four-person groups, you will work methodically through distributed discussion-question guides. These guides require each group-member to listen to and voice his or her thoughts about a sequence of passages, questions, and statements. You will be, in effect, thinking out loud as a group. Philosophy is not principally about hearing authorities tell you what or how to think (though this is part of learning to be a student of philosophy); it is mainly about brainstorming ideas, evaluating those ideas, and giving reasons for your evaluations, and doing all this comfortably with other people. I will leave groups to work on their own, though I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Careful working-out of the discussion questions will be essential for your papers and your midterm exams.

In large-group discussion we will talk together about our assigned texts, most often through close reading of important or characteristic passages, though also through argument reconstruction and assessment, character analysis, summary at various levels of abstraction, and critical response. I will rarely give you an overview of an entire work; such grand-scale statements have little immediate benefit for us. We will ask questions like: "Why would the author say this?" "What total range of answers could we give to such a question?" "What does the fact that we find this claim completely implausible suggest about the text and about ourselves?" "Should we suspect that the Greeks would have the same perspective on this issue that we would?" "Under what conditions would we find this argument valid?"

You must take notes every day, about what your classmates or I say and what's written on the board. In-class use of your computer must be limited to note-taking. Any use of phones (looking at, touching) and any use of electronics other than note-taking software is forbidden during our 75-minute meeting time, and is grounds for a drastic decrease in your overall course grade.

Blog

By 6pm the evening before the days of class (thus, Monday and Wednesday) you are to submit an ANGEL blog-entry commenting on the reading. You are to demonstrate familiarity with the entire reading, probably in several paragraphs, and to manifest more-than-merely-superficial engagement with what you find most puzzling, difficult, interesting, or significant. Write clearly, fully, and vividly so that your peers may benefit from your insight. If you disagree with something, explain what it is you disagree with, why you disagree with it, how you think the author would respond, and the way in which this disagreement is important. You may form your blog post as a response to another student's post, as long as you meet the posting requirements just mentioned. You are expected to read all the other posts, and you are encouraged to talk about them during class discussion. Each blog entry will be scored on a 2-1-0 scale:

2 = thoughtful and thorough post

1 = does not meet the above requirements, including showing familiarity with entire reading, or is much briefer or weaker than the average post, or is not on time
0 = negligible effort.

You may score up to 2 points per class session, and your final blog grade will be out of 40; any blog participation thereafter counts as bonus. [40pts]

Papers

Several writing assignments, constituting nearly a third of your course grade, will give you a chance to work on the skills learned in class, to strengthen your familiarity with our texts, to engage in a deliberate manner with your peers and your instructor, and to develop your ability to articulate your reactions to the conversations and claims we read about. I expect that you will take each paper seriously: it should be started early (you will receive the prompts about one week in advance), edited, and carefully proofread for mechanical, organizational, and argumentative perfection. All papers should be typed in 12 point Times New Roman font, with 1.5 line-spacing, standard margins, page-numbers, and a heading (full name, course, name of the assignment, and the date it is due). Assignments will always be due in class at the beginning of class. I will accept assignments only by hardcopy, never by email, unless you are explicitly told on the prompt to email them. I will simply ignore any non-requested emailed papers. Late assignments will not be accepted more than once, and only by my discretion, if you have a good faith reason, and if the hardcopy is turned in within 24 hours. You will lose the equivalent of one letter grade. This includes cases of broken printer or missed bus.

Paper I (10 pts)

An experiment in concise, precise, and clear argument-analysis. This must be on exactly one side of one sheet of paper. In drafting this assignment, you will discover what is essential and should therefore be foregrounded, what is inessential and thus left out, and what cannot be assumed and so should be fully articulated. Though philosophizing requires much besides cogent argument-analysis, this skill is for many students the most unfamiliar. Fortunately, it is also the easiest to acquire with a little practice, and done well it is the surest sign of worthwhile philosophical writing.

Paper I-R (5 pts)

A revision of the first paper. Your grade will be determined almost exclusively by the completeness, thoughtfulness, and ingenuity with which you improve your paper in accordance with my written comments on your previous draft, our in-class discussions, and your continued reflection on the prompt. You must staple your original paper with my comments to the rear of your revised version.

Paper II (15 pts)

A two-page paper, combining argument-analysis (of your choice of several from Plato's *Phaedo*) and your own evaluation or criticism of that argument. On 06 October, bring three (3) copies of your paper. You will give one to me and one to each of two classmates. Receive a paper from each of those two classmates. You will schedule a time to meet in your group of three; you must meet in person. Before that meeting, read and

mark up (after the fashion I marked up your Paper I) those two papers (making sure to put your name as “reviewer” on those papers). During the meeting, talk about how to improve each of the three papers. Keep the two marked-up versions of your paper. Turn in your revision on 11 October. Staple the two marked-up versions to the back of the revision. Your Paper II grade will take into account your first draft, your revision efforts, and your reviewing of your classmates’ papers.

Final Paper (30 pts)

A five-page paper, responding to your choice of one of the puzzles in Sextus’ writings. Your efforts should bring to bear all the skills, knowledge, and familiarity acquired in our readings, class sessions, papers, exams, and office-hour meetings. This paper is preceded by a one-page outline emailed to me by 8am, Thursday 13 December.

Grading for papers

To get a C on an assignment, your work must be mostly responsive to the prompt, acknowledge relevant portions of the texts in question, have relatively clear exposition, and show some personal reflection. Getting a B takes complete responsiveness to the prompt, fully substantiated claims and citations, good structural organization, and demonstrated serious thoughtfulness about the issue. Getting an A- requires the above, plus excellent command of the reading, multiple modes of argument and preemptive counter-argument, crystalline structural organization, and both rigor and imagination in confronting the issues in question. An A paper exceeds an A- especially in its rigor (analytic sharpness and systematicity) and imagination (creative, exploratory, and comprehensive ways of answering the prompt).

Revision meetings

At some point during this semester your paper may not receive credit the first time I read it. I will return it to you with comments and a request to meet in office hours by a certain date. You will think about the comments, we will talk in detail about problems with your old draft and your plan for reworking it, and then you will resubmit a revised version or section of the original paper by another specified date. After reading this revision, I may require yet another sequence of revisions; refusing or failing to try to make adequate revision will prevent your paper from receiving credit.

Small Exams

The four out-of-classroom small exams together constitute half your course grade (each is worth 25 pts). Their function is to encourage you to review all lecture-notes, readings, hand-outs, homework prompts and comments, and to reflect and expand on what you have learned and thought about. Your grade will reflect the detail and accuracy with which you show your familiarity with, internalization of, and development of our course materials. It will also reflect the care with which you have prepared for the exams. You will receive a study guide at least a week before the exams. You will have 60 minutes to take the ANGEL exam, at your choice of times between 6am and noon on Fridays. [100 pts]

Logistics

Attendance

Much of the activity and value of the class comes through our twice-weekly discussions. Accordingly, frequent absences may lower your grade up to two letter grades, at my discretion. Repeated tardy arrivals and insufficient participation may count as absences. You must submit appropriate paperwork to excuse any absence.

Grades

Your course grade will represent the precision, accuracy, comprehensiveness, care, thoughtfulness, and effort demonstrated by your participation in the course activities.

Points

A 187-200 – Extraordinary	C+ 154-159
A- 180-186	C 140-153 – Acceptable
B+ 174-179	D 120-139 – Minimal pass
B 167-173 – Good	F 000-119 – Fail
B- 160-166	

Technology

Please check class-related emails each weekday, and respond promptly. I will do the same. I will email you additional readings and assignments if I do not distribute paper copies. Please check with fellow students to ensure you have not missed any handouts, which include paper-prompts and notes.

Accessibility

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) located in Boucke Building Room 116 at 814-863-1807(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit their web site at www.equity.psu.edu/ods/. I should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable academic adjustments.

Cheating

Academic dishonesty in any portion of the academic work for this course shall be grounds for failing the entire course and communication of dishonesty to the College. This includes, but is not restricted to, any plagiarism on any paper, or cheating on any portion of the homework or exams. Plagiarism includes, among other things, not citing text, paraphrases, or ideas taken from any assigned or unassigned reading, or other students' comments or papers. Please ask about any case you're concerned about. For details on the PSU policy, see www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/G-9.html.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

August

- Tu 28 Origins of the “philosophos.” Introductions
Th 30 Pythagoras: *PBS* 79-111

September

- Tu 04 Xenophanes: *PBS* 58-69
Th 06 Heraclitus: *PBS* 112-144

Tu 11 Parmenides: *PBS* 145-173
Th 13 Anaxagoras: *PBS* 193-229
Fr 28 **SMALL EXAM I (ANGEL)**

Tu 18 Plato, *Euthyphro*
Th 20 Plato, *Meno* 70a1-79e5

Tu 25 *Meno* 80a1-86d2. **PAPER I due**
Th 27 *Meno* 86d3-100b8

October

- Tu 02 Plato, *Apology*
Th 04 Plato, *Crito*. **Paper I-R due**
Fr 05 **SMALL EXAM II (ANGEL)**

Tu 09 Plato, *Phaedo* 57a1-69e4
Th 11 *Phaedo* 69e5-84b6

Tu 16 *Phaedo* 84c1-107a2.
Th 18 *Phaedo* 107a3-118a7.

Tu 23 Aristotle, *De Anima* I. **PAPER II draft due (3 copies)**
Th 25 *De Anima* II.1-7

Tu 30 *De Anima* II.12, III.1-8 **PAPER II revision due**

November

- Th 01 *De Anima* III.9-13
Fr 02 **SMALL EXAM III (ANGEL)**

Tu 06 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.1-10
Th 08 *Nicomachean Ethics* II

Tu 13 *Nicomachean Ethics* III.10-12, IV.4-9
Th 15 *Nicomachean Ethics* VI

[THANKSGIVING]

Tu 27 *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.1-6, IX.3-12
Th 29 *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.11-14, X.1-8

December

Tu 04 Sextus Empiricus, *Skeptics* ix-xii, 31-72
Th 06 *Skeptics* 73-111
Fr 07 **SMALL EXAM IV (ANGEL)**

Tu 11 *Skeptics* 112-128
Th 13 *Skeptics* 131-171. **Final Paper Outline due**

Finals Period

TBA FINAL PAPER due