

## **PHILOSOPHY 201: HISTORY OF ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY**

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### **COURSE SYLLABUS**

Catalog Description: Western philosophical thought from the pre-Socratics through Stoicism, including movements and figures such as Atomism, Plato, Aristotle, and Epicureanism. This is an approved General Education course for area C3.

Course Objectives:

- 1) to introduce the fundamental principles and assumptions of Ancient Western Philosophy.
- 2) to trace the influence of Ancient philosophy on modern western civilization.
- 3) to chart the fundamental differences between the Ancient Greek view of the world and subsequent cosmologies/philosophies.

In Philosophy 201, students will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the contributions of Plato and Aristotle to political thought and political institutions.
2. Demonstrate an awareness of the delineation of philosophical argument as central to western rationality through understanding of Plato's dialectic and Aristotle's logic of categories and explanation of scientific reasoning.
3. Investigate the use of myth in pre-philosophical writing and its persistence as a form of explanation in Plato's cosmology.
4. Clarify the interaction of epistemologies (theories of the nature of knowledge) with metaphysics (views of ultimate reality) and ethics (the nature of morality).
5. Compare and contrast basic philosophical views of knowledge and reality as views of the good life through example such as the family, friendship, prayer, and censorship.
6. Demonstrate knowledge of Plato's pivotal place in western philosophy through clarification of his views on the development of the forms.

Course Content: The course begins with a brief discussion of nature and the culture out of which the first philosophers bloomed. We will then discuss these presocratic philosophers, including the Milesians, Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Parmenides. The course will then proceed with detailed discussions of Plato and Aristotle. We will sample a broad cross-section of Plato's dialogues and Aristotle's works, touching on metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and any other topic we find interesting (perhaps, aesthetics, friendship, love – we are faced with an embarrassment of riches). We will conclude with the Stoics.

Texts: The following texts are required. They are available in the A.S. Bookstore.

Forrest E. Baird & Walter Kaufmann, eds., *Ancient Philosophy*, Prentice Hall.  
Catherine Osborne, *Presocratic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford Press

Course Requirements: There will be three exams and one term paper. The exams will be based on the reading assignments, lectures and discussions. The term paper will entail the selection of an issue of personal interest inspired by the material covered in class. Part of your task is to come up with a specific topic for your paper. Since potential paper topics will come up periodically in class, I will point them out to you as possibilities or as points of departure for your own musings. The paper is not to exceed 6 pages in length (typewritten and double-spaced).

Course grades will be determined on a straight percentage scale. If you accumulate 90% or more of the total points you will receive an 'A'. A 'B' will go to those who earn 89-80% of the total points, etc. The definition of each letter grade (A, B, C, D and F) is provided in the College catalog.

Points will be accumulated as follows:

3 exams	100 points each	300 pts.
1 term paper		<u>100 pts.</u>
		400 pts.

Notes and Suggestions: Come to class prepared for that day's discussion. The study of philosophy does not entail the mere learning of certain facts. One must learn to think, critique and argue in a certain way. That is, philosophy is not an academic subject; it is an intellectual activity. You will learn by doing. You must therefore be prepared for what we are doing each day.

It will be necessary for you to complete the assigned reading before class. But it will not be sufficient for you to do so. Allow time to think about what you've read. After completing an assigned reading, consider whether you agree or disagree with the philosopher's view. Come to class with a personal agenda - what do you want clarified?; what do you wish to say in support of a particular view?; what objections do you desire to make? You will find that, no matter how much time is allotted for a particular topic, many interesting avenues of argument and discussion will go unexhausted. (These avenues are often good indicators of potential term paper topics). I encourage you to continue discussions outside of class. Other class members are excellent candidates for honing your philosophical skills (again, by doing philosophy). I will also be available, as much as possible, for outside discussion.

In order to complete this course successfully, you must attend class. Attendance will not be directly rewarded. But active attendance will dramatically increase your chances of mastering the course material. This will most assuredly be reflected in the quality of your exams and paper. Should you miss a class meeting (for there may be a time when you will have a perfectly good reason for doing so) it is your responsibility to obtain notes and the next reading assignment from fellow class members. Do not call me for this information. Never ask me if you missed anything important; the answer is always "yes".

All written assignments must reflect standard English usage. Proper spelling, grammar, punctuation and syntax count because they are necessary for the accurate

expression of ideas. Philosophy is hard enough without the additional complexity of (easily correctable) imprecision.

Exams will not be rescheduled nor late papers accepted without extremely compelling reasons. Hospitalization is extremely compelling. Malfunctioning electronics is not.