

Ancient Philosophy

Instructor: István Bodnár

Teaching Assistant: Jamie Elliott

No. of Credits: 2

Status: Mandatory for two-yr MA students in their first year

Time: Monday 11:00-12:40

Description:

The course gives an overview of key issues of ancient philosophy from the Presocratics to the Hellenistic Age. The course does not require or build on any specific previous knowledge of ancient philosophy. We will read and discuss a selection of texts from different authors and periods, focussing on their argumentative methods and philosophical concepts, interpretative problems discussed in the contemporary literature and the major alternatives in trying to answer these problems.

Course goal:

The primary goal of the course is to help students to acquire the necessary skills to work with ancient philosophical texts. The course will provide guidance in the study tools, reference translations, bibliographies and online resources for the further study of ancient philosophical texts.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the course students will be expected to possess the skills to work with ancient philosophical texts on their own at an intermediate level. They are expected to be able to analyse the argumentative structure of a text and identify the main concepts (also in their different current translations) used by the author of the text. They should know where to find further literature and linguistic and other tools for a deeper analysis.

Weekly schedule

The course will consist of two parts of unequal length: the first part which covers the ethical theories of Democritus, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and a second part that turns to metaphysical and epistemological issues, leading to a discussion of selected themes in Hellenistic philosophy.

| Date | Theme | Readings |
|---|---|--|
| 11 Sep !!TUESDAY, ZERO WEEK WARM UP!! | What is ancient philosophy | Apology |
| 18 Sep | Democritus and his predecessors on moral philosophy | Fragments of Democritus and Heraclitus from McKirahan |
| 25 Sep | Plato: Socratic quest, Virtue as knowledge, the best life virtues as optimal working of dedicated parts of the soul <i>Gorgias</i> and <i>Republic</i> | <i>Apology</i> (again), selections from <i>Gorgias</i> ; <i>Republic</i> |
| 2 Oct | Plato: Virtues as optimal working of dedicated parts of the soul | Selections from <i>Gorgias</i> and <i>Republic</i> |
| 9 Oct | Aristotle: competing or complementary conceptions of the good life? | <i>Apology</i> , Selections from <i>NE</i> 1.1-10; 10.6-8 |
| 16 Oct | Parmenides & some Post-Parmenideans: 'what-is' and | Fragments of Parmenides and Anaxagoras from McKirahan |

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| | questions of monism | |
| 23 Oct PUBLIC HOLIDAY, WILL HAVE TO BE REPLACED | Plato: the Forms and the insufficiency of the physical world, the status of the soul | Selections from <i>Phaedo</i> ; <i>Republic</i> |
| 30 Oct | Plato: The knowledge of the physical world; Aristotle: nature and the four causes | Selections from <i>Timaeus</i> ; Aristotle, <i>Phys.</i> 2.1-3, 8-9. |
| 6 Nov WILL HAVE TO BE REPLACED | Aristotle: <i>Categories</i> | <i>Cat.</i> 1-5 |
| 13 Nov | Aristotle: soul and its functions | <i>De An.</i> 2.1-6; 11, 12; 3.45 |
| 20 Nov | Aristotle: Ontology beyond the categories | <i>Met.</i> 4.1, 7.1-6. |
| 27 Nov | Epicurus: empiricism, atomism, and responsibility | Selections from Long&Sedley |
| 4 Dec | Stoics: fatalism and responsibility | Selections from Long&Sedley |

Requirements:

- regular attendance
- regular preparation
- active participation in discussions
- 3 1-2-page informal position papers throughout the term
- for one-year MA students and for non-philosophy students for credit: 2000-word term paper

Assessment:

- For two-year MA students: in-class written examination as part of the History of Philosophy Final Examination at the end of the first year
- For one-year MA students, and for non-philosophy students: 20% class participation; 20% position papers; 60% term paper