

# ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 316 (3 hrs; MWF 2:00-2:50; Academic Center 234)  
Manchester University, Fall 2017

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**Instructor:** Dr. Steve Naragon, Office: ACEN 233 (Phone — *office*: 982-5041; *home*: 982-6033)

**Online Syllabus** (more detailed): <http://users.manchester.edu/Facstaff/SSNaragon/Online/316-F17/Welcome.html>

## Required Texts

- (1) Cohen, Curd, and Reeve, eds., *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Hackett, 2011). [978-1-60384-462-8] (**NB:** Earlier editions are OK, but the 4<sup>th</sup> edition has updated material on the Presocratics.)
- (2) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book One: *God*, transl. by Anton Pegis (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1975). [0-268-01678-X]
- (3) Many brief selections, provided as handouts, from the works of Epicurus, Epictetus, Sextus Empiricus, Plotinus, Augustine, Anselm, Abelard, Ibn-Sina, Ibn-Rushd, Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, Meister Eckhart, and Pico della Mirandola, as well as some current secondary literature.

## Course Objectives

We will read philosophers from the very beginnings of the philosophical enterprise in the west, and then work our way through Plato, Aristotle, and the Hellenists, and end with various medieval thinkers (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim), with a special focus on certain doctrines of Augustine and Aquinas. These texts are quite challenging for most undergraduates — they certainly challenge me at times — but they will reward your sustained intellectual attention. The readings are multi-layered and well worth your best effort. If you do not try to understand them, of course, then they will strike you as obscure and pointless.

By the end of the course you should have: (1) become acquainted with the nature and early history of Western philosophy; (2) developed your skills for critically evaluating arguments and beliefs; (3) developed a sense of the historiography of philosophy; (4) found the source of a great many of our current beliefs; and (5) had ample opportunity to reflect on certain questions confronting us all: How can I know something to be true? What is the good life and how is it attained? What does it mean to be human?

**Some virtues** to bring with you into the philosophy classroom: **humility** when comparing your beliefs with those of others; **patience** for listening closely to views that seem foolish or misguided to you; **courage** to advance in the face of adversity what seems to be the correct view; **endurance** for following arguments to their conclusion; **humor** for those moments when you sense the utter futility of your efforts.

## Requirements and Grading

**Readings.** Read the assignments *closely* prior to class, and *always bring the text*. For those texts that are available on the website as pdf files, please print out the file and bring that paper copy to class. I've watched enough students trying to work through these texts on their computer (or worse: on their little phones). It doesn't work. I've never seen anyone do this successfully. Why should you be different. Take my advice, and work with paper texts. Use your pen or pencil and mark up the text with questions, small annotations, checkmarks, arrows, whatever helps you grasp the structure of the writing.

Class discussions and your success in this class depend upon you working through the various texts and arriving in class prepared to discuss them. If you are not willing to commit yourself to this, then it's entirely unclear to me why you are enrolled in the class.

**Attendance and Participation.** A course on philosophy is by its nature aimed at self-examination and discussion; consequently, taking the class requires being there. Being there is the first step, however, but it's not enough. Uninformed talk is worse than silence, so you need to arrive at class having worked through and reflected on the readings for the day.

**Daily Discussion Paragraphs.** To encourage us to keep up on the readings and to come prepared for class discussion, I would like you to discuss some passage in the reading (it can be any passage, so long as it doesn't overlap with the topic of the short essay for that day). This will also give me some sense of what points we should focus on during class. **These daily paragraphs are due by 9:00 AM** (type them up as a Word document then upload into the appropriate "Discussion Forum" post on Canvas).

**Discussion Forums.** There will be **four** discussion forums, and you will need to post one entry per forum (500 word minimum per post) as well as comment on two posts per forum (100 word minimum per comment) for full credit here. These posts and comments will be evaluated using these rubrics. Please consult these rubrics closely before writing your posts and comments. See the "Writing" page on the web syllabus for more information.

**Short Essays.** A one to two page (400-500 words) essay on the day's reading will be due roughly once every two weeks — **nine** in all, in honor of Plotinus's *Enneads* (upload these into the appropriate dropbox of Canvas before class that day). There are essay prompts for each day's reading; you have some discretion as to which essay prompts you choose to write on, but see the distribution conditions on the website (e.g., two of the essays need to be on Plato, and so on).

**Exams.** There will be three in-class short-essay exams.

**Grading.** The set of three exams is worth 30% (10% per exam), the set of discussion forums are worth 30%, the set of short essays are worth 30%, and the set of daily paragraphs is worth 10%.

**Plagiarism.** Avoid this or perish! *Plagiarism* consists of submitting the statements, ideas, opinions, or findings of another *as if they were your own*. It is *not* plagiarism to copy from or paraphrase a source as long as this is acknowledged and the source is properly cited. See the college *Catalog* for a fuller discussion.

**Cell Phones.** All cell phones must be silenced and put away. Thank you.

**Laptops.** I have yet to meet the student who took good notes on a laptop. Apart from that, various studies have shown that handwritten notes are much more conducive to learning, remembering, and synthesizing new information. Unless you have a documented disability that requires the use of a laptop or tablet, prepare to take notes the old fashioned way, with paper and pencil.

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## READING SCHEDULE

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(AGP = *Ancient Greek Philosophy*)

### Wed. Aug 30

Introduction to the class

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### *Presocratics & Plato*

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### Fri. Sep 1

#### **Miletians**

Read: AGP (selections from/about the Miletians); Curd, "Presocratic Philosophy" (online).

### Mon. Sep 4

#### **Heraclitus and Xenophanes**

Read: AGP (selections).

### Wed. Sep 6

#### **Pythagoras**

Read: AGP (selections).

### Fri. Sep 8

#### **Parmenides and Zeno**

Read: AGP (selections).

### Mon. Sep 11

#### **Pluralists and Atomists**

Read: AGP (selections from Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Leucippus, and Democritus).

### Wed. Sep 13

#### **Sophists**

Read: (editor intro + selections from Protagoras, Gorgias, and Antiphon).

### Fri. Sep 15

#### **Plato: Introduction and Apology**

Read: AGP (editor introduction + *Apology*).

### Mon. Sep 18

#### **Plato's Euthyphro**

Read: AGP (*Euthyphro*)

### Wed. Sep 20

#### **Plato's Meno**

Read: AGP (*Meno*, 70a-86c)

### Fri. Sep 22

#### **Plato's Meno**

Read: AGP (*Meno*, 86c-100b)

### Mon. Sep 25

#### **Plato's Republic, Bk. I**

Read: AGP (*Republic*, Bk. 1).

### Wed. Sep 27

#### **Plato's Republic, Bk. II**

Read: AGP (*Republic*, 357a-362c, 368c-376e)

### Fri. Sep 29

#### **Plato's Republic, Bk. III-IV**

Read: AGP (*Republic*, 357a-362c, 368c-376e, 412b-417b, 427d-445e).

### Mon. Oct 2 – Fall Break

### Wed. Oct 4

#### **Plato's Republic, Bk. VI-VII**

Read: AGP (*Republic*, Bks. 6-7).

<u>Fri, Oct 6</u>	<u>Exam #1</u>
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### *Aristotle & Hellenism*

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### Mon. Oct 9

#### **Aristotle's Categories and De Interpretatione**

Read: AGP (*Categories*, chs. 1-5; *On Interpretation*, chs. 1-4, 7, 9).

### Wed. Oct 11

#### **Aristotle's Topics and Posterior Analytics**

Read: AGP (*Topics*, Bk. 1, chs. 1-2, 5; *Posterior Analytics*, Bk. 1, chs. 1, 3; Bk. 2, ch. 19).

### Fri. Oct 13

#### **Aristotle's Physic**

Read: AGP (*Physics*, Bk. 1, chs. 1, 5-9; Bk. 2, chs. 1-3, 7-8; Bk. III, ch. 1).

### Mon. Oct 16

#### **Aristotle's Generation and Corruption**

Read: (*Generation and Corruption*, Bk. 1, chs. 1, 3-4; Bk. II, chs. 3-5).

### Wed. Oct 18

#### **Aristotle's Metaphysics**

Read: AGP (*Metaphysics*, Bk. 1; Bk. 4, ch. 1).

**Fri. Oct 20****Aristotle's *De Anima***

Read: AGP (*On the Soul*, Bk. 2; Bk. 3, chs. 4, 5, 10).

**Mon. Oct 23****Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics**

Read: AGP (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 1).

**Wed. Oct 25****Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics**

Read: AGP (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Bks. 2-3).

**Fri. Oct 27****Epicureanism**

Read: Epicurus, "Letter to Herodotus" (online) and "Letter to Menoeceus" (online).

**Mon. Oct 30****Stoicism**

Read: Epictetus, *Handbook* (online).

**Wed. Nov 1****Skepticism**

Read: Sextus Empiricus, selection from *Outline of Pyrrhonism* (online)

<b>Fri, Nov 3</b>	<b>Exam #2</b>
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***The Middle Ages***

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**Mon. Nov 6****Neo-Platonism — On the Real and Beauty**

Read: Gerson, "Plotinus" (SEP) (online); Plotinus, "On Beauty" (a selection from the *Enneads*) (online).

**Wed. Nov 8****Augustine — Basic Doctrines**

Read:

**Fri. Nov 10****Augustine — On Creation and Time**

Read: Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. 11 (online).

**Mon. Nov 13****Ibn-Sina (Avicenna) — On the Soul**

Read: Ibn-Sina, *Concerning the Soul* (selection) (online).

**Wed. Nov 15****Ibn-Rushd (Averroes) — On Reading Scripture**

Read: Ibn-Rushd, *The Decisive Treatise* (online).

**Fri. Nov 17****Moses Maimonides — On Negative Theology**

Read: Moses Maimonides, *A Guide for the Perplexed* (selection) (online).

**Mon. Nov 20****Anselm — On God's Existence**

Read: Anselm, *Proslogion* (selection) (online).

**--- Thanksgiving ---****Mon. Nov 27****Peter Abelard — On Universals**

Read: Peter Abelard, *On Universals* (selection) (online).

**Wed. Nov 29****Aquinas — Faith and Reason**

Read: Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Bk. I, chs. 1-9.

**Fri. Dec 1****Aquinas — On Proving God's Existence**

Read: Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Bk. I, chs. 10-13.

**Mon. Dec 4****William of Ockham — On Divine Will**

Read: R. J. Snell, "Overcoming Omnipotence" (online).

**Wed. Dec 6****Meister Eckhart — On Mystical Awareness of God**

Read: Meister Eckhart, "Sermon #1" (online); Reiner Schürmann, "Meister Eckhart" (online).

**Fri. Dec 8****Pico della Mirandola — On Human Beings**

Read: "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola," in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (online); Pico, "Oration on Man" (selection) (online).

<b>Finals Week</b>	<b>Exam #3</b>
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