

ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 316 (3 hrs; MWF 2:00-2:50; Academic Center 232)
Manchester University, Fall 2019

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*, 4th ed. (Hackett, 2011). [978-1-60384-462-8] (**NB**: Earlier editions are OK, but the 4th 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) Brief selections, provided as handouts, from the works of Epicurus, Epictetus, Plotinus, Anselm, Abelard, Ibn-Sina, Ibn-Rushd, Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, 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, work our way through Plato, Aristotle, and the Hellenists, consider several medieval thinkers, and end with a brief peek into the coming Renaissance. These texts are quite challenging for most undergraduates — they certainly challenge me at times — but they will reward your sustained 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 a necessary condition of success, however, but not a sufficient condition. Uninformed talk is worse than silence, so you need to arrive to 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 40% (15%, 13%, and 12%), the set of discussion forums are worth 20%, the set of short essays are worth 30%, and the set of daily paragraphs is worth 10%.

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.

Cheating and Plagiarism. See the “Course Requirements” page of the web syllabus.

Title IX reporting requirements / Student disability and reasonable accommodation statement / Medical emergency evacuation schedule: See the “Course Requirements” page of the web syllabus.

READING SCHEDULE

(AGP = *Ancient Greek Philosophy*)

Wed, Aug 28

Introduction to the class

Presocratics & Plato

Fri, Aug 30

Miletians

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

Mon, Sep 2

Heraclitus and Xenophanes

Read: AGP (selections).

Wed, Sep 4

Pythagoras

Read: AGP (selections).

Fri, Sep 6

Parmenides

Read: AGP (selections).

Mon, Sep 9

Zeno of Elea

Read: AGP (selections).

Wed, Sep 11

Pluralists and Atomists

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

Fri, Sep 13

(Camp Mack make-up day)

Mon, Sep 16

Plato: Introduction and *Apology*

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

Wed, Sep 18

Plato's *Euthyphro*

Read: AGP (*Euthyphro*)

Fri, Sep 20

Plato's *Meno*

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

Mon, Sep 23

Plato's *Meno*

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

Wed, Sep 25

Plato's *Gorgias* [or *Phaedo*]

Read: AGP (*Gorgias*)

Fri, Sep 27

Plato's *Republic*, Bk. I

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

Mon, Sep 30

Plato's *Republic*, Bk. II

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

Wed, Oct 2

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

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

Fri, Oct 4

Plato's *Republic*, Bk. V

Read: AGP (*Republic*,)

Mon, Oct 7 – Fall Break

Wed, Oct 9

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

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

Fri, Oct 11	Exam #1
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Aristotle & the Hellenists

Mon, Oct 14

Aristotle: On Things and Words

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

Wed, Oct 16

Aristotle: On Argumentation

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

Fri. Oct 18**Aristotle: On Natural Objects**

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

Mon. Oct 21**Aristotle: On Change**

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

Wed. Oct 23**Aristotle: Metaphysics**

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

Fri. Oct 25**Aristotle: On Living Things**

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

Mon. Oct 28**Aristotle: On the Good**

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

Wed. Oct 30**Aristotle: On Human Flourishing**

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

Fri. Nov 1**Epicureanism**

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

Mon. Nov 4**Stoicism**

Read: Epictetus, *Handbook* (online).

Wed, Nov 6**Exam #2****The Middle Ages****Fri. Nov 8****Neo-Platonism — On the Real and Beauty**

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

Mon. Nov 11 — No Class**Wed. Nov 13 — No Class****Fri. Nov 15****Ibn-Sina (Avicenna) — On the Soul**

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

Mon. Nov 18**Ibn-Rushd (Averroes) — On Reading Scripture**

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

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

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

Fri. Nov 22**Peter Abelard — On Universals**

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

Mon. Nov 25**Aquinas — Faith and Reason**

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

— Thanksgiving —**Mon. Dec 2****Aquinas — On Proving God's Existence**

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

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

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

Fri. Dec 6**Pico della Mirandola — On Human Beings**

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

Finals Week**Exam #3**