

Pre-Socratics to Plato Study Guide

The exam will consist of four essays, drawn from ideas and themes found in the below. You will be given a choice of essay prompts to answer (e.g., four out of eight, or some such combination). You may use one sheet (8 ½ x 11 inches) of notes while writing the exam (both sides, of course), and I expect you to cite relevant passages using the proper citation method (DK numbers for Presocratic fragments, Stephenaus pagination for Plato).

1. If you had to choose a single problem that motivated the various Presocratic theories, what problem would that be? Defend your choice as exhaustively as you can (e.g., by illustrating its influence on the various philosophers).
2. Who were the Milesians and what characterized their philosophy? Be able to compare and contrast their views.
3. Explain Heraclitus' views in the context of his predecessors. What does he mean by *logos*?
4. Who were the Pythagoreans, and what did they believe?
5. Briefly describe Parmenides' account of reality, and the reasons he gave to support his account.
6. Critically discuss (describe and evaluate) two of Zeno's paradoxes of motion.
7. Discuss the void from the perspectives of both Parmenides and Democritus.
8. Compare the positions of Empedocles and Anaxagoras, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each. What intuitions seem to be motivating these different forms of pluralism? Which view do you find the most convincing? Why would you abandon either of these positions for atomism?
9. Were there any *significant* differences between Socrates and the Sophists? If so, explain the differences and why they were significant.
10. What is the Socratic *elenchus*? Be able to provide an example from the dialogues, as well as the basic logical structure. How did Socrates defend the use of this method? Where do we see this method being questioned?
11. Describe the pre-Socratic influences on Plato.
12. *Apology*: Why was Socrates brought to trial? How did he defend himself?
13. *Apology*: What do you make of Socrates' claims of ignorance? How does he understand the role of the philosopher?
14. *Euthyphro*: Understand the different kinds of definition described in the dialogue, as well as what necessary and sufficient conditions are. Understand why various definitions of piety suggested by Euthyphro failed.
15. *Euthyphro*: Explore the themes of religious epistemology that arise in this dialogue.
16. *Meno*: Be able to discuss the learner's paradox, theory of recollection, and the method of hypothesis.
17. What are the best arguments for and against Plato's Forms? (Be sure to describe the theory itself.)
18. *Republic*, Bk. 1: What does Thrasymachus say about justice, and how is his view supported, and then rejected?
19. *Republic*, Bk. 2-4: Be able to discuss "the ideal city." Why does Socrates discuss such a city?
20. *Republic*, Bks. 6-7: Describe the four causes of knowledge in Books VI-VII (including, of course, the discussion of education).