Phil 200 (Fall 14): Ancient and Medieval Philosophies

This class will introduce you to the central figures, problems, and schools of Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy and the subsequent development of Medieval philosophy. The influence of Ancient Greek Philosophy on the course of western thought and culture has been deep, broad and lasting. (The twentieth century philosopher Alfred North Whitehead declared that the entire history of western philosophy is ‘a series of footnotes to Plato’.) We begin with a brief examination of the beginning of philosophy among the so-called ‘Pre-Socratics’, and then look more closely at the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. We next consider the Epicurean, Stoic and Skeptical schools, which take classical philosophy in dramatically new directions. Finally, we will explore some major concerns of Medieval Philosophy, which combines Ancient wisdom with scriptural monotheism (Jewish, Christian and Muslim).

Our focus will include the following problems, since they were of central concern to the Ancients and the Medievals and continue to be studied by philosophers to this day:

- **Origin and Structure of the Universe**: Did the Universe begin to exist? If so, was it the product of ‘intelligent’ design”? How many, and what kind of, beings comprise reality? What accounts for change and diversity? What are time, space and matter?

- **Knowledge and Opinion**: What is difference between knowledge and mere belief? How does one distinguish reality from appearance? Is knowledge derived from the intellect or the senses? What is the relation between science and philosophy; between reason and faith?

- **The State**: What is the purpose of the state? Are human beings equal? Is democracy better than aristocracy or monarchy? Are justice and virtue merely conventions?

- **Love, Sex and Friendship**: What are the different kinds of love? Are some kinds better than others? What is the nature and value of sexual love (eros)? What is true friendship?

- **The Soul**: What is the relation between the soul or mind and the body? Is the soul immortal? What are emotions, perceptions and intelligence?

- **Happiness and the Good Life**: What makes a human life good, happy or meaningful? Are there objective standards of human excellence? Is pleasure the highest good? How should we view our own death and the death of others?

- **Freedom of the Will**: Is the future fated? Are freedom and responsibility compatible with God’s foreknowledge of everything we will do? Can human freedom explain the existence of evil and suffering?

- **Existence and Nature of God**: Can we prove (or disprove) the existence of God? Are the notions of divine omniscience, omnipotence and omnibenevolence compatible? Is God a person? Is God transcendent or immanent? We will also frequently discuss fundamental ‘meta-philosophical’ questions: How is philosophy distinct from science and religion? Why did philosophy happen? Is philosophy the key to happiness? Is it still ‘relevant’? Is it worth dying for?

**Class meetings**: MWF 1:10-2:10, OM 011. **Office Hours**: MW: 11:00 – noon; Th: 2:00-2:50, and by appointment.

**Instructor**: Dr. Geoffrey Gorham; **Email**: ggorham; **Office**: Old Main 100; **Phone**: 6048

**Required Texts**: 
2. Frequently, readings will be sent by email or posted to moodle. (E/M)

**Note**: Although you may already own other editions or translations of some of the works we will read, it is crucial that we all use the same (above) edition/translation in this class.
Course Requirements

1. Three Papers: Three analytical papers. Paper One: 5 pages and focused on a single important passage with no secondary research. Paper Two: 6 pages and must include discussion and analysis of at least one significant secondary source (a book or a substantial article in a philosophical journal) along with detailed discussion and analysis of the relevant primary sources. Paper Three: 8 pages, similar to paper two. Students may design their own topics (with my approval) or choose from topics that I will propose. A complete draft of one of the papers must be submitted to me one week in advance of the due date for review and writing suggestions (including a 15-minute meeting with me). 5 points will deducted from final grade for failure to meet this requirement.

2. Two Take-Home Examinations: The mid-term and final take-home exams will be distributed and due (by email) on the days listed in the class schedule below. Each exam will be based on readings, lectures and discussions. The exams will consist mostly of short-essay style questions. The exams are open-text/notes but absolutely no internet or other outside sources may be consulted (enrollment in this class implies a promise to follow this exam-taking rule).

3. Conversation Starters. Every student will prepare a 'convo' for 15 separate classes. These are provocative critical analyses of one of the readings for the class on a given day. A successful combo demonstrates close analysis of relevant content and raises an interesting and significant problem for class discussion. Some ‘convos’ may be read in class as a basis for discussion. Questions for a given day must be emailed to me by 1:00 PM on the day the relevant reading will be discussed. These will be graded from 0-2 (including half-grades). Here are some illustrations;

   Example of grade 0: I really didn't understand Aristotle's proof of an unmoved mover. Aristotle &%$ sucks!

   Example of grade 1: Aristotle say that when possible there will be one unmoved mover, rather than many or an infinite number. He seems to assume that it’s ‘better’ for there to be one rather than more than one. But why? Can we discuss this?

   Example of grade 2: Around 258b 20 -- 259b 32, Aristotle argues that the cause of an ‘everlasting and continuous’ sequence cannot be many things or things that ‘do not always exist’. Rather, he says, ‘there is something that embraces them all and is apart from each of them’ (259a 3-4). He seems to think a single everlasting cause is needed to explain the existence of an everlasting sequence of things. But this doesn’t seem obvious to me. We can explain the existence of a non-everlasting sequence of family members by referring to the parents of each member; we don’t have to also explain also who or what caused ‘the whole family’. Why should it be any different for an ‘everlasting family’: each member could be caused by earlier parents without any ‘first parent’ or any parent ‘that embraces them all’? How would Aristotle respond to this objection?

4. Attendance/Absence, Participation, etc.: Class will normally begin with brief introductory comments or a lecture followed by class discussion. It is very important for students to complete all assigned readings in advance of the classes in which those readings will be discussed, attend all class meetings, and participate in class discussion. I will keep track of these factors and assign a grade of 0 - 10 at the end of the year. If you always attend class, do the readings in advance, and regularly contribute to discussion in a thoughtful way, you will receive 10; otherwise, you will receive less than 10.

Grading:

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<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>Paper One</td>
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<td>Convos</td>
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Disabilities. I am happy to make appropriate accommodations for documented disabilities, as provided by College policy. Please make contact with Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, and then let me know how I can help.

Religious Holidays. I am happy to make accommodations for you to observe religious holidays and practices, as provided by College policy. I appreciate advance notice of absences.

Academic Misconduct such as cheating and plagiarism will be dealt with in accordance with College policy and procedures. Please talk to me if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism.
Class Schedule (subject to revision)

Note: The first 5-10 minutes of most Friday classes will be devoted to writing instruction.

Wednesday, September 3: Introduction

I. Pre-Socratics

Friday, September 5: Milesians (1-3)

Monday, September 9: Pythagoreans, Xenophanes, Heraclitus. (5-11)


II. Socrates and Plato

Friday, September 12: Euthyphro (47-57)

Monday, September 15: Apology (57-73)

Wednesday, September 17: Meno (86-106)

Friday, September 19: No class meeting – snow day!

Monday, September 22: Phaedo I (107-119)

Wednesday, September 24: Phaedo II (119-138)

Friday, September 26: No class meeting – work on first papers

Monday, September 29: Symposium (138-147). First Paper Due

Wednesday, October 1: Republic: Book I (147-155)

Friday, October 3: Republic: Books II and III (155-165)

Monday, October 6: Republic: Book IV (166-178)

Wednesday, October 8: Republic: Book V (178-192)

Friday, October 10: Republic: Books VI and VII, (192-211)

Monday, October 13: Republic: Books VIII and IX, (211-224)

Wednesday, October 15: Republic: Book X (225-232)

III. Aristotle

Friday, October 17: De Interpretatione (254-257)

Monday, October 20: Physics (266-276); Mid-Term Distributed

Wednesday, October 22: Review; Mid-Term due 6 AM, October 23.

Friday, October 24: Fall Break – No Class

Monday, October 27: Metaphysics I (286-294)

Wednesday, October 29: Metaphysics II (294-304)

Friday, October 31: De Anima (276-286)

Monday, November 3: Nicomachean Ethics: Books I, II, III (305-325)

Wednesday, November 5: Nicomachean Ethics: Friendship and Death; selections from Books I, VIII, IX (E/M)

Friday, November 7: Nicomachean Ethics: Books 6, 7, 10 (325-339).


IV. Epicureans

Wednesday, November 12: Letter to Herodotus and Principal Doctrines (353-365)

Friday, November 14: Lucretius: On the Nature of Things (391-403)

V. Stoicism

Monday, November 17: Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus (366-374); Cicero (381-385)

Wednesday, November 19: Seneca and Epictetus (404-422)
VI. Skepticism

Friday November 21: Pyrrho (375-378)
Monday, November 24: Sextus Empiricus (434-442)
Wednesday, November 26: No Class-Thanksgiving Break
Friday, November 28: No Class-Thanksgiving Break

VII. Medieval Philosophy

Monday, December 1: Augustine on Freedom of the Will (E/M)
Wednesday, December 3: Augustine on Time (E/M)
Friday, November December 5: Al-Ghazali and Maimonides on Creation (E/M)
Monday December 8: Aquinas’ ‘Five Ways’ (E/M)
Wednesday, December 10: Aquinas on Sin (E/M). Third Paper Due. Final Exam distributed.
Monday, December 15, 6AM: Final Exam due by email.