PH 115 – History of Ideas: Western I (Ancient Philosophy)

Jesus Deogracias Principe, Ph.D.
2nd semester, 2015-2016
3-unit course

MWF 11:00-12:00  B-104

Course description

This is the first of four introductory surveys in the history of philosophy; the focus here will be the beginnings of Western philosophy in ancient Greece. There will be four “quarters” to this course. 1 – An introductory discussion and a broad survey. 2 & 3 – We then go deeper and discuss the two themes that were the main foci of concern: what makes up the cosmos and what comprises the good human life. We take selections from the texts of the ancient writers and discuss the diverse answers given to these questions. 4 – We end by engaging with what is arguably the greatest work from antiquity, Plato’s Politeia (The Republic).

Course objectives

It is hoped that by the end of this course, the student will be able...

- to expound on the necessity and the particularities of the study of the history of philosophy, with an emphasis on the ancient Greeks;
- to identify the ancient Greek philosophers: their backgrounds, texts, and concerns;
- and to demonstrate acuity and perspicacity in reading philosophical texts.

Course outline and readings

Weeks 1-3 Introduction
On studying the history of philosophy
Historical contexts and literary explorations
A brief survey

Required readings:
Alexander, Caroline – “Echoes of the Heroic Age”
Alexander, Caroline – “Ascent to Glory”
Furley, David – “Introduction” to The Routledge History of Philosophy, Vol. II

Suggested readings:
Kinzl, Konrad, ed. – A Companion to the Classical Greek World
Hall, Jonathan – A History of the Archaic Greek World
Rhodes, P.J. – A History of the Classical Greek World
Errington, R. Malcolm – A History of the Hellenistic World
Blackson, T. – Ancient Greek Philosophy: From the Presocratics to the Hellenistic Philosophers
Roochnik, David – Retrieving the Ancients: An Introduction to Greek Philosophy

**Weeks 4-7  The cosmos**

Required readings:
- Parmenides - the poem of Parmenides
- Heraclitus – “fragments”
- Plato – excerpt from The Symposium (the ascent passage)

Advanced readings
- Plato – excerpt from Phaedrus (the “Great” Speech)
- Aristotle – Metaphysics (Book 1)
- Heidegger, Martin – Early Greek Thinking

**Weeks 8-11  The examined life**

Required readings:
- Plato – The Apology
- Aristotle – from The Nicomachaean Ethics (Books 1 & 2)
- Epictetus – excerpts from The Discourses

Advanced readings:
- Aristotle – from The Nicomachaean Ethics (from Books 3 – 10)
- Plato – Crito
- Plato – Laches
- Marcus Aurelius – Meditations

**Weeks 12-16  The Republic of Plato**

Required reading:
- Plato – The Republic

Suggested readings:
- Pappas, Nickolas – Routledge philosophy guide to Plato and The Republic
- Santas, Gerasimos, ed. – The Blackwell guide to Plato’s Republic

**Weeks 17-18  Review classes and final exam**

**Requirements**

- Long tests (1 for each of the first three quarters) (15% each, or 45%)
- Short quizzes (2 or 3 per quarter) (20%)
- Group discussion and paper on a Topic from The Republic (15%)
- Comprehensive final oral exam (20%)

*(more detailed instructions on requirements to follow)*

**Grading system**

The following can be taken as a general guide on criteria used for assessing class performance:

A (4)  Excellent. Critical and comprehensive grasp of the subject matter, and showing original, profound insight that contributes to the philosophical discussion at hand.
B+ (3.5)  Commendable. Clear and comprehensive grasp of subject matter, and showing further personal insight that recognizes the lesson’s relevance.
B (3)  Good. Important issues are recognized and have been thought through; specific subject matter is understood with a grasp of the whole.

C+ (2.5)  Satisfactory. Rudimentary understanding of subject matter, presented in an orderly way.

C (2)  Sufficient. Rudimentary understanding of subject matter, but presentation tends to be vague and/or disordered; errors in the details and/or flaws in reasoning evident.

D (1)  Unsatisfactory. Little evidence of study; vague and/or disordered; errors in the details and/or flaws in reasoning very evident.

F (0)  Failing. Non-fulfillment of requirements; hardly any evidence of study; reasoning highly flawed; misses the question; answers in an incoherent and fragmentary way.

Computing for the final grade:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.70-4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>3.40-3.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2.90-3.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
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<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
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Note: In philosophy, we deal with, discuss, and are concerned about ideas; however, good articulation or presentation of one’s ideas is integral in order for discussion and understanding to be possible. Therefore, all aspects that touch on one’s expression (such as grammar, spelling, penmanship, presentation and organization of work, use of language, articulation and coherence) will be important when one’s class performance is assessed.

Some classroom policies

- The underlying principle to guide us is respect. Each one is enjoined to exercise prudential and sensitive judgment that exhibits one’s respect for others, and best promotes an atmosphere best conducive to thinking and learning.

- Given the previous statement, all material and activities that detract from our thinking and discussing are highly discouraged. The use of cellphones, laptops, netbooks, tablets, personal digital assistants (PDAs), iPads, MP3 players, and all similar devices is not allowed.

- Students are encouraged to be in possession of a print out or photocopy of the required reading as would be specified for a particular class day.

- You will be given access to a soft copy of all the required readings through the edmodo website. A hard copy will also be placed on the Reserve shelf of the library. Also, texts of the ancient Greeks can be accessed through: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/

- Nine absences are permitted for an MWF class. Any student who exceeds this will automatically receive a grade of W for the course. Attendance is checked at the start of class; those not present at this time will immediately be considered absent. I do not count for tardiness, or “half-cuts.” You can still enter the class and listen to the lecture and join in classroom discussion, but you already get a cut. However, you may not enter the classroom while a quiz is in progress. Keep in mind that you are permitted nine absences which covers all reasons for not being in class.

- Making-up for a major requirement is possible, but only under exceptional, grave circumstances; permission for such must be obtained. There is no making-up for a missed short quiz.
• Deliberately failing to take one of the long tests or the final exam, or submitting the final paper may result in a student automatically receiving an F for the course. In other words, one may not opt to simply forego fulfilling a requirement.

• Announcements and any change of plans will be made known to you either in class or through the edmodo website. You are going to be held responsible for knowing and keeping track of what is going on in this class.

Consultation

Students are strongly encouraged to approach me – either individually or in small groups – to discuss any aspect of the course, or particular concerns.

Consultation hours: MWF 1400-1600

Note: While I will be keeping these hours for consultation, please do not simply drop by the Philosophy Department unannounced and expect to then be immediately entertained. Let me know beforehand (maybe a day or two before) if you would like to see me, so I can set time aside for you. If you’re not free at these hours, let me know when you’d like to meet.

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Bibliography


