

Ancient Philosophy (PHL200H5F): Ancient Greek Philosophy as a Way of Life

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Lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 13:00 to 14:00 in IB 140. Tutorials on Fridays. Office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 14:00 to 15:00 in NB 6164. To meet with me outside of my regularly scheduled office hours (by text/voice/video chat via Bb Collaborate on Quercus), just send me an email with a few times that'd work for you.

Course description

'How should I live?' 'What should I pursue?' 'What will make my life a happy and good one?' As university students, these are questions that should be, and likely are, on your mind. They are also the questions that animated the ancient Greek philosophical tradition. From Socrates onwards, ancient Greek philosophers articulated bold new answers to these questions, in opposition to the conventional wisdom of the time. But even more distinctively, these thinkers conceived of *philosophy itself* as a way of life – as the means of discovering the truth about how to live and as an activity that is itself an essential component of the good and happy life.

This course is a survey of this ancient Greek philosophical tradition and an exploration of what it can still tell us about how to live our lives today. We will examine a number of different thinkers from this period: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes, Aristippus, Epicurus, Epictetus, and Sextus Empiricus. In doing so, we will seek not only to come to a deeper understanding of these thinkers' different views, but also to figure out how to apply their ideas to our lives and to investigate what relevance the ancient conception of philosophy as a way of life still has for us today.

Course learning objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to...

- **explain** the key **ideas & arguments** of our ancient philosophers
- **apply** these ideas to **real-life situations & present-day issues**
- **analyze & evaluate** the merits of these **ideas & arguments**
- **personally appreciate** what it means to adopt **philosophy as a way of life**

Course contract

This course is a collaboration between me, you, and your classmates. You will be regularly called upon to actively participate in class discussions and other activities, and your contributions will directly influence what we cover in class. **It is not necessary that you agree with everything I or anyone else says in this class, but it is necessary that you always listen and respond with respect.** With this in mind, I put forth the following “course contract”, applying to everyone in the class (students and instructor alike):

- we have the responsibility to **contribute** to the collective learning process (which includes asking questions when we’re not understanding something)
- we have the responsibility to **be receptive** to other points of view than our own
- we have the right to **dissent or differ** from the instructor and others in class
- we have the responsibility to **welcome challenges** to our own opinions, and to support our claims with further reasons or be honest when we don’t have any
- we have the right to **personal dignity**, which at no point should be infringed upon in any way by the conduct of others

Texts

You are required to procure your own (physical or digital) copies of Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Epictetus’s *Encheiridion*. I recommend the following editions (but if you find or already own a different edition, you may use that instead):

- C. D. C. Reeve, *Plato: Republic* (Hackett, 9780872207363) – \$20
- C. D. C. Reeve, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* (Hackett, 9781624661174) – \$30
- Nicholas P. White, *Epictetus: The Handbook* (Hackett, 9780915145690) – \$10

Evaluation

Your grade for the course will be determined by the following components: micro-assignments (informal reading exercises, done before each class meeting); entrance/exit tickets (informal writing exercises, done at the start or end of each class meeting); your engagement in weekly tutorials; 5 reflections (short, informal essays, reflecting on your own life and values); 3 explorations (an interview, a personal essay, and a journal); 2 argument analyses (short, formal essays, analyzing an argument from a text); and a final exam. The full grade breakdown is as follows:

COMPONENT	WEIGHT	DUE DATE
Micro-assignments	10%	before each class
Entrance/exit tickets	5%	at the start/end of each class
Tutorial engagement	10%	each tutorial
<i>Reflections</i>	(10%)	
Reflection: Socrates	2%	9/15
Reflection: Plato	2%	9/29
Reflection: Aristotle	2%	10/13
Reflection: Epicurus	2%	11/10
Reflection: Epictetus	2%	11/24
<i>Explorations</i>	(15%)	
Interview: "Be The Gadfly"	5%	9/22
Essay: "The Apology of [You]"	5%	11/3
Journal: "3 Days in the Life"	5%	12/1
<i>Argument analyses</i>	(20%)	
Argument analysis #1	10%	10/20
Argument analysis #2	10%	11/17
Final exam	30%	exam period

Due dates & lateness policies

- » **Micro-assignments** must be submitted online by 13:00 before each class. No late submissions. You can skip 4 micro-assignments without penalty.
- » **Entrance/exit tickets** must be completed and submitted in class, at the start/end of each class. No late submissions. You can skip 4 entrance/exit tickets without penalty.
- » **Reflections** must be submitted online by the end of the night on their due date. (“By the end of the night” means by 8 A.M. the following morning.) Late submissions will be docked 50% for each 24 hour period after the due date.
- » **Explorations** must be submitted online by the end of the night on their due date. Late submissions will be docked 20% for each 24 hour period after the due date.
- » **Argument analyses** must be submitted online by the end of the night on their due date. Late submissions will be docked 10% for each 24 hour period after the due date.

That being said, I’m sensitive to the fact that life doesn’t always cooperate with deadlines. If you feel you are in a situation where you should be granted an extension on an assignment, please get in touch with me as soon as you can. (I will be much more sympathetic towards extension requests that are made well in advance of the assignment deadline.)

Further information on course assignments

- » **Micro-assignments:** Before each class you are to complete an exercise relating to the day’s required reading – a “micro-assignment”. The purpose of these micro-assignments is: (a) to deepen your appreciation of the readings; (b) to enhance our discussions of the readings; and (c) to prepare you for the other assignments.

Each micro-assignment counts for 0.5% of your final grade, up to 10%. You will have, in total, 24 opportunities to submit micro-assignments over the course of the term (1 for each class). This means that **you can skip 4 micro-assignments without penalty.** (You do not need to tell me when you’re choosing not to submit a micro-assignment.)

- » **Entrance/exit tickets:** At the start or end of each class you will be asked to write a short reflection relating to the day’s material – an “entrance ticket” when it’s at the start of the class, an “exit ticket” when it’s at the end. Your reflections can be written and submitted either through Quercus or on an index card that will be provided to you in class. The purpose of these tickets is: (a) to provide you an opportunity to gather your thoughts before our in-class

discussions begin / to review and reflect on what you've learned after our discussions have ended; and (b) to maintain a record of class attendance.

Each entrance ticket counts for 0.25% of your final grade, up to 5%. You will have, in total, 24 opportunities to hand in tickets over the course of the term (one for each class meeting). This means that **you can skip 4 entrance/exit tickets without penalty.** Each class will include either an entrance or an exit ticket, but you will not know in advance which it will be.

- » **Reflections:** Over the course of the term you will complete five “reflection” assignments – short, informal essays asking you to reflect on your own life and values in light of our philosophers’ ideas. You will be given specific prompts to follow for each reflection.
- » *For micro-assignments, entrance/exit tickets, and reflections, full credit will be awarded when the student has made an honest attempt to respond to the assigned prompt; determination of this criterion is at the discretion of the instructor.*
- » **Explorations:** Over the course of the term you will complete three “exploration” assignments. These assignments will ask you to put our philosophers’ ideas into practice in your own life and observe the results. The explorations will be as follows:
 1. **Interview: “Be The Gadfly”** Record a conversation between you and someone else, where you ask them what they think matters in life and examine their opinions Socratically.
 2. **Essay: “The Apology of [You]”** Write your own (much shorter) version of Plato’s *Apology*, where you defend your own conception of what matters in life.
 3. **Journal: “3 Days in the Life”** Follow the principles of Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Scepticism for one day each, and keep a journal documenting and reflecting on your experiences.
- » **Argument analyses:** Over the course of the term you will complete two “argument analysis” assignments. These assignments will ask you to look at a given excerpt from a text, analyze the argument in that excerpt into a series of numbered steps, explain how each step derives from remarks in the excerpt, and (in the case of the second assignment) present an objection to one of the argument’s steps. You will have a choice of topics for each assignment. The purpose of these analyses is: (a) to deepen your understanding of some of the key ideas and arguments of our philosophers; and (b) to hone your skills in argument reconstruction, textual analysis, and philosophical evaluation.
- » **Final exam:** Your final exam will consist of a series of questions assessing your ability to apply the ancient philosophical ideas we’ve looked at to novel real-life situations and issues. We will practice answering this kind of question each week in class.

Technology in the classroom

During our class meetings, **portable electronic devices** (laptops, smartphones, tablets, etc.) **may only be used for the purposes of taking notes or completing in-class assignments and activities.** You may also use an electronic device to reference points from the day's readings; but if you choose to do so, please keep the device closed or off when not in use. Whenever you are using your device, remember to be sensitive to the fact that the use of such devices can be distracting to those around you.

Academic Integrity

One of the aims of this (and really, *any* university-level) course is to develop your ability to express yourself intelligently and responsibly. Part of what expressing yourself intelligently and responsibly involves is situating your own views in relation to others'. Plagiarizing others' views, or failing to acknowledge views you are drawing on, runs counter to this aim. Because of this, plagiarism and all other forms of academic dishonesty will be treated with the greatest severity in this course. Students should make themselves familiar with the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters; see utoronto.ca/academic-integrity/students.

Turnitin

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability and/or health consideration that may require accommodation, please approach me and/or Accessibility Services at 905-569-4699 or utm.utoronto.ca/accessibility.

Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READING
Introduction		
9/5	Ancient Greek philosophy as a way of life	<i>Protagoras</i> 313a–314b [online] Deresiewicz, “What Is College For?” [online]
Socrates: The examined life		
9/10	How to become good: Socrates’ mission	<i>Laches</i> 178a–190e [online]
9/12	How to find the truth: Socrates’ method	<i>Laches</i> 190e–201c [online]
9/17	How to defend yourself: Socrates’ philosophy of life	<i>Apology</i> 17a–35e [online]
9/19	How to get what you want: Philosophy vs. power	<i>Gorgias</i> 466b–474b [online]
Plato: The life of reason		
9/24	What is the soul? The soul vs. the body	<i>Phaedo</i> 63e–67e, 80d–84b [online]
9/26	The divided soul: The soul vs. itself	<i>Republic</i> IV.436a–445b, IX.588b–592b
10/1	How souls go wrong: Corrupt souls	<i>Republic</i> VIII.544d–569c, IX.571b–583a
10/3	How souls go right: The philosopher’s soul	<i>Republic</i> V.474b–480a
Aristotle: The life of virtue		
10/8	The good life, happiness, & virtue	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.1–2, 4–5, 7–8
10/10	Virtue of character	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.13; II.1–2, 5–7
UNIVERSITY READING WEEK; NO CLASSES OR TUTORIALS		
10/22	Virtue of thought	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> VI.1–7
10/24	Happiness & contemplation	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> X.6–8

*Online readings are available via Quercus. All other readings are in the required course texts.

DATE	TOPIC	READING
Interlude: Two alternative Socratic legacies		
10/29	Diogenes the Cynic: The iconoclastic life	historyofphilosophy.net/cynics
10/31	Aristippus the Cyrenaic: The sensual life	historyofphilosophy.net/cyrenaics
Epicurus: The pleasant life		
11/5	Freedom from experiential disturbance	<i>Letter to Menoeceus</i> [online]
11/7	Natural, necessary, & groundless desires	<i>Principal Doctrines</i> [online]
11/12	How to live like an Epicurean	(no required reading)
Epictetus: The life of freedom		
11/14	Freedom from external disturbance	<i>Encheiridion</i> 1–22
11/19	Living in agreement with nature	<i>Encheiridion</i> 23–53
11/21	How to live like a Stoic	(no required reading)
Sextus Empiricus: The unexamined life		
11/26	Freedom from philosophical disturbance	<i>Outlines of Scepticism</i> I.i–xiii [online]
11/28	How to live like a Sceptic	(no required reading)
Wrap-up		
12/3	The future of ancient Greek philosophy	(no required reading)