

# Bridgewater State University

## Philosophy 301 Ancient Philosophy

Summer 2019

Professor McAlinden

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**Description:** In this course, students will be introduced to the field of philosophy through the examination of fundamental questions and issues featured in Ancient Philosophical texts. We will read pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, and Hellenistic thinkers, with a focus on their metaphysical and epistemological views. During this important time, many of the foundations of philosophical problems were developed. Although philosophical developments occurred in many areas, we will focus on the metaphysics and epistemology of some of the more prominent figures of this period. Much of this material is difficult, but hopefully you will find it rewarding. The format of the class will be small group and instructor lead whole class discussion. Students will produce 4 short papers and lead class discussion once per week.

**Objectives:** In this course, students will learn some foundational issues in ancient philosophy. By critically assessing the views and arguments of historical and contemporary philosophers, students will develop and strengthen skills to identify, evaluate, and construct arguments. In written work and discussion, students will employ the theory, tools, and methods of philosophical texts. In addition, students will produce a papers utilizing the methods of philosophical analysis.

### **Required Text:**

*Ancient Philosophy (Philosophic Classics: Volume I)*. Sixth edition. Forrest E. Baird, ed. (e-text available)

**Assignments:** There are four kinds of assignments: readings, reflection papers, discussion leading, and short papers.

### **-Readings**

The texts you will be reading this semester are among the most difficult and most controversial ever written. Current philosophers make their careers by arguing with one another about what a text means. Thus, i) there is no right answer, only good, bad, and better guesses, and ii) I do not expect you to understand anything you read, but I do expect you to try hard. The best way to approach a philosophical text is by following these steps:

- 1) First skim a text, turning pages quickly, reading headings and looking briefly at the fine print. Now, close the book, and ask yourself: what is this about? What is the BIG question being explored here. Do you have a sense of where the author might be headed? Even if

you not sure, keep your first thoughts in mind. You are probably on the right track. Step 1 should take about 10 minutes.

2) Next, read the whole text assigned. Quickly. Don't stop to consider puzzling aspects. Now, close the book, and ask yourself: what is this about? What is the BIG question being explored here. Do you have a sense of where the author might be headed? Do you think differently than you did before about what is going on in the text? This should take about 1 hour.

3) Finally, carefully read the text. Slowly. Take notes. Write summaries of passages. Write questions that occur to you. Note passages that you do not understand.

### **-Reflections Journal**

All students will keep a reflections journal. It can be any group of pieces of paper, or a series of electronic documents. In it you should have a series of dated, titled entries for EVERY reading throughout the semester. They will not be graded. You receive 1 point per entry, when attendance is taken at the beginning of class. After attendance is taken, no late journal entries will ever be given credit.

In your journal, you may also include pages for class notes, etc., as long as each journal entry begins on its own page and is clearly marked.

Prepare to write the reflection by following the instructions for reading above. Then, after the last reading, take a few minutes to think. Note that this is not like a book report, and thus a is not sufficient. However, you may want to write a brief summary for your own purpose in preparation for the reflection. Now, choose a single statement or paragraph or key idea from the reading that interests or puzzles you most. Think about how you might describe or explain it within the context of the reading, what the author means. What questions and responses occur to you? Why are they important to you?

Then write the reflection. First, quote the key idea. Then, write a summary of it and what you think it means. It should be about a half page long. This is what you will bring to class, and it will serve as the draft for the reflection you will write in class during the second hour, after we have reviewed the text in the first hour. During the second hour, you will complete a more formal reflection paper. It should have the following format.

#### **-Introduction**

In the introduction, identify the text, its overall topic, and the author's conclusion, even if the conclusion is only implied. Then, identify a statement or key idea from the text and explain (briefly) its role in the text. You may quote the passage, but only if it is brief. Your introduction should have only about 4 or 5 sentences.

#### **-Main text**

In the body of your reflection, try to explain what you think the statement or idea means. What is the author trying to say. You might want to consider one (not all) of the following: explain why you think it is interesting or important or puzzling; explain why the author is discussing this, i.e. what problem is the author attempting to solve; do you think the author is taking the best approach? Do you think the author has offered a coherent solution? Try to apply concepts and vocabulary introduced in the corresponding and preceding readings. Be sure to define the terms you use, and use them correctly.

#### **-Conclusion**

In the conclusion try to give a brief overall assessment.

## **- Papers**

Students will write a 3-page paper for each Part of the course, due immediately after the end of each Part of the course. Each paper will be of a rewritten and expanded version of one of the reflections in that Part. Writing a philosophy paper is different from writing papers in any other discipline. You will be learning how to write and how to improve your writing skills throughout the semester. Refer to the handout “How to Write a Philosophy Paper”. This document suggests a writing process and indicates the grading rubric. Final drafts submitted late will receive a grade reduction penalty of 1 point each calendar day. Exceptions will be granted only if I receive the request for late submittal with a valid reason (such as a doctor’s note indicating injury or illness) the day before the due date.

## **Grades**

Students are expected to submit four short papers, keep a reflections journal, and lead class discussion four times. Neglecting to complete any of these will result in an F as a final grade. I expect that all assignments will be completed independently by each student. Any work you represent as your own must actually be your own. If you cheat or plagiarize, an F will be given on the assignment and possibly (depending on the nature of the violation) for the course. For more information, consult your style manual for correct citation procedures, see [http://www.plagiarism.org/research\\_site/e\\_what\\_is\\_plagiarism.html](http://www.plagiarism.org/research_site/e_what_is_plagiarism.html), or ask me if you have any questions.

Most of the term, we will be meeting to discuss a text. For each of these days, every student will receive 1 point for attendance and 1 point for the reflection journal entry. There are no ‘make-ups’ for attendance points. If you miss class for ANY reason, no “attendance” credit will be granted – no exceptions. There is some built in forgiveness for missing 2 of the class hours and assignments.

Reflections not submitted in class may be submitted by email, but only on the day it is due, or before. That is: No credit will be given for any journal entry unless it is: a) submitted in class, or b) emailed to me by the end of the day (midnight) it is due. Credit may be granted for such e-submissions only three times during the term.

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Attendance @.5 for each Hour of class, 40 hours	20
Reflection @.5 for draft brought to class, and .5 for final draft written during second hour) 40	
Papers: (4 papers @ up to 10 points)	40
Total Points possible:	<hr/> 100

***The syllabus for this course, including the attached course schedule, is subject to change at my discretion.***

***Tentative Schedule***

Date		
28-May	Reading	1. Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes (pp. 8-13)
29-May	Reading	2. Pythagoras and Xenophanes (pp. 14-18)
30-May	Reading	3. Heraclitus (pp. 18-21)
31-May	Reading	4. Parmenides (pp. 22-26)
1-Jun	Reading	5. Zeno of Elea (pp. 26-30)
2-Jun		
3-Jun	Paper Due	
4-Jun	Reading	6. Empedocles (pp. 31-36)
5-Jun	Reading	7. Anaxagoras (pp. 36-38)
6-Jun	Reading	8. Democritus/Leucippus (pp. 39-42)
7-Jun	Reading	9. Socrates I: <i>Euthyphro</i> (pp. 70-82: 2a-16a)
8-Jun	Reading	10. Socrates II: <i>Apology</i> (pp. 82-99: 17a-42a)
9-Jun		
10-Jun	Paper Due	
11-Jun	Reading	11. Socrates III: <i>Crito</i> (pp. 99-107) & <i>Phaedo</i> (only pp. 148-150; 115b-end)
12-Jun	Reading	12. Plato I: <i>Phaedo</i> (pp. 111-128: 63a-84b)
13-Jun	Reading	13. Plato II: <i>Phaedo</i> (pp. 128-143: 84c-107a)
14-Jun	Reading	14. Plato III: <i>Symposium</i> (pp. 184-193: 201a-212a)
15-Jun	Reading	15. Plato IV: <i>Republic (Book) VI</i> (pp. 276-282: 504e-511e)
16-Jun		
17-Jun	Paper Due	
18-Jun	Reading	16. Plato V: <i>Republic VII</i> (pp. 283-288: 514a-521b)
19-Jun	Reading	17. Aristotle I: <i>Categories</i> (pp. 319-324)
20-Jun	Reading	18. Aristotle II: <i>Posterior Analytics</i> (pp. 330-334) & <i>Physics II.3</i> (pp. 337-338)
21-Jun	Reading	19. Aristotle III: <i>Metaphysics</i> (pp. 344-347: I.1-2; pp. 353-360, I.6-9)
22-Jun	Reading	20. Aristotle IV: <i>On the Soul</i> (pp. 371-377)
23-Jun		
24-Jun	Paper Due	
25-Jun	Reading	21. Aristotle V: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (pp. 378-386 I.1-11; 391-397 / II.1-6)
26-Jun	Reading	22. Epicurus I: Letter to Herodotus (pp. 469-483)
27-Jun	Reading	23. Epicurus II: Letter to Menoceus (pp. 483-487); and Principal Doctrines (pp. 488-490)
28-Jun	Reading	24. Epictetus I: Handbook (Enchiridion) (pp. 519-530)
29-Jun	Reading	25. Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Pyrrhonism (pp. 541-545)
	Paper Due	

**Grade****Quality Points**

A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1.0
D-	0.7
F	0.0