



PHIL 301 Ancient Philosophy Bridgewater  
State University  
Winter Session  
December 28, 2020 - January 22, 2021

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Course Credits: 3

**Description:** In this course, students will be introduced to the field of philosophy through the examination of fundamental questions and issues featured in Ancient Greek 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. Students will write a short reflection for every reading, and four weekly papers.

**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)

**Blackboard**

The entire course will be conducted here. Thus, a reliable internet connection is required. Apart from the text, all course material, assignments, and grades will be available here.

**Protocol**

Developing philosophical skills can happen in a variety of ways. One way is to observe and participate in intellectual discourse. We will pursue such discourse in this class through the discussion board and peer assessment assignments. Thus, the Blackboard course site (our 'classroom') will be an environment in which you can examine your views and the views of others in objective, reasonable, respectful discussions. Consistent attendance and participation is required. I will also be available for live chats using the Zoom so that we will have the opportunity for discussions.

**NOTE:**

*(From the Bridgewater State University Catalogue): Credit Hour and Grading System*

*An undergraduate academic credit hour is equivalent to one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks of each semester. Therefore, a three-credit class has an expectation of approximately three hours of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of six hours of out-of-class student work over that same time period.*

This means for a 15 week semester, students will spend 3 hours per week in class plus 6 hours doing homework. (9x15 =135) Thus, for this class, which meets on line for 4 weeks (instead of 15), students should plan to spend 10 hours per week “in class” and 23 hours “out of class” for **about 33 hours per week** working on this class.

(Okay, maybe 25 hours will be enough. But remember, we are completing an entire semester’s worth of work in about 1/4 of the regular time, so plan accordingly.) Please consider carefully whether you will be able to dedicate time for doing the work for this class.

**Assignments:** There are four kinds of assignments: readings, reflections, discussion responses, and papers.

**-Readings**

The texts you will be reading this semester are sometimes straightforward, and sometimes are among the most difficult and most controversial ever written. In all cases, 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. Very 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? Step 2 should take about 1 hour.

Ideally, there should be a break now of a few hours or overnight.

3) Finally, carefully read the text. Slowly. Do not use a highlighter. Instead make notes in the margins. Write summaries of passages. Write questions that occur to you. Note passages that you do not understand. Step 3 should take about 1 hour.

**-Reflections**

All students will submit a series of reflections on the readings. One reflection is scheduled to be due for every reading in the course - there two readings assigned each day on **5 DAYS of each week**. This means that you must read and write a reflection paper for the Hour 1 reading and for the Hour 2 reading on the days they are assigned. They are due by Midnight Boston time on the day listed.

You will write your reflection as a WORD document and save it in this format: "[your first name last initial] [Philosopher name] Reflection"; example: LauraM Plato Reflection. Then copy and paste the content to the discussion board. The reflections will not be graded, but I might comment on them if I see room for improvement.

The reflection is not a summary. No research may done – no outside sources may be used. The text and your own thoughts about the text are what I am interested in reading. 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 summary of the text is not sufficient. (However, you may want to write a brief summary for your own purpose in preparation for the reflection, but do not submit this.) Instead, 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 does the author mean? Why is the author talking about this? What questions and responses occur to you? Why are they important to you?

Then write the reflection. It should clearly contain the following, using paragraphs as indicators of each section.

**-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 (2 or 3 paragraphs)**

In the body of your reflection, try to explain what the author is saying, why they are saying it, and what you think the statement or idea means. 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.

**-Discussion Board Comments**

You will be required to post substantive comments (about 100 words) responding to other student's reflections or comments, at least 8 times a week. Normally, you submit a comment on two Reflections, but two comments as part of a discussion with another student are also acceptable, even encouraged. This is a minimum requirement, and you are welcome to contribute more. A substantive comment will be one that has three parts: i. describes the idea or context for your comment, ii. responds to a reflection entry submitted by another student (yes, naming the student), iii. raises a question \*or\* offers further explanation. A trivial comment, saying: "what you said is interesting. Nice reflection!" will not be granted credit. The goal is to offer a question or comment that will lead to further discussion, or to offer an answer to a question or comment.

Ideas for discussion entries can include: explaining the main issue, explaining a key point, explaining the supporting reasons, and commenting on the author's argument for their view. You can describe interesting passages, and/or puzzling passages and raise questions about them.

The purpose of the Discussion Board is to take the place of what would be our in-class discussion in a face-to-face class. Discussion board posts are only granted credit if posted within 24 hours of the due date of the reflection.

**- Papers**

Students will write a 3-4 page paper for each week of the course, due immediately after the end of each week. Each paper will be a rewritten and expanded version of one or two of the reflections in that Part. Again, no outside sources may be used. 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, submit the reflections, and comment on peer posts. 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.

I will also be available for Zoom sessions to assist you talking through the ideas in your papers. I know that many students find these discussion helpful. I look forward to meeting you there.

Sometimes when students are unsure, they seek outside sources to 'help'. This is dangerous. 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.

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Reflection Post to Discussion Board (40 @1 for each reading)	40
Responses to Discussion posts (40 @ .5 per post)	20
Papers: (4 papers @ up to10 points)	<u>40</u>
Total	100

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

### Assignment Schedule

*The schedule is based on a 2 hour meeting per day, 5 days per week, 4 week schedule*

	Date	Hour 1	Hour 2
M	12/28	1. Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes (pp. 8-13)	2. Pythagoras and Xenophanes (pp. 14-18)
T	12/29	3. Heraclitus (pp. 18-21 )	4. Parmenides (pp. 22-26)
W	12/30	5. Zeno of Elea (pp. 26-30)	6. Empedocles (pp. 31-36)
R	12/31	7. Anaxagoras (pp. 36-38)	8. Democritus/Leucippus (pp. 39-42)
F	1/1	9. Socrates I: <i>Euthyphro P1</i> (pp. 70-76; 2a-9e)	10. Socrates I: <i>Euthyphro P2</i> (pp. 76-82; 10a-16a)
S	1/2		
S	1/3	Paper Due at Noon	
M	1/4	11. Socrates II: <i>Apology P1</i> (pp. 82-90 : 17a-27d)	12. Socrates II: <i>Apology P2</i> (pp. 90-99 : 27d-42a)
T	1/5	13. Socrates III: <i>Crito</i> (pp. 99-107)	14. Plato I: <i>Theaetetus</i> (pp. 297 - 307)
W	1/6	15. Plato II: <i>Symposium P1</i> (pp. 177-184)	16. Plato II: <i>Symposium P2</i> (pp. 184-193)
R	1/7	17. Plato III: <i>Republic, Book I</i> (pp. 210-216 [end at 343a])	18. Plato III: <i>Republic, Book I</i> (pp. 216-219) [end at 347b])
F	1/8	19. Plato III: <i>Republic, Book I</i> (pp. 219-221)	20. Plato III: <i>Republic, Book I</i> (pp. 221-225)
S	1/9		
S	1/10	Paper Due at Noon	
M	1/11	21. Plato III: <i>Republic, Book II</i> (pp. 225-228) ( <i>Gygyes ring</i> )	22. Plato III: <i>Republic Book VII</i> (pp. 283-288; 514a-521b) (the cave)
T	1/12	23. Plato III: <i>Republic (Book) VI</i> (pp. 274-277: [504e-507])	24. Plato III: <i>Republic (Book) VI</i> (pp. 277-282) (divided line)
W	1/13	25. Aristotle I: <i>Categories</i> (pp. 319-324)	26. Aristotle II: <i>Posterior Analytics</i> (pp. 330-334 )
R	1/14	27. Aristotle III: <i>Physics II.3</i> (pp. 337-338); <i>Metaphysics</i> (pp. 344-347)	28. Aristotle III: <i>Metaphysics</i> (pp. 353-360)
F	1/15	29. Aristotle IV: <i>On the Soul</i> (pp. 371-377)	30. Aristotle V: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (pp. 378-386 I.1-11)
S	1/16		
S	1/17	Paper Due at Noon	
M	1/18	31. Aristotle V: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (pp. 386-391)	32. Aristotle V: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> 391-397 / II.1-6
T	1/19	33. Epicurus I: <i>Letter to Herodotus</i> (pp. 469-477)	34. Epicurus I: <i>Letter to Herodotus</i> (pp. 477-483)
W	1/20	35. Epicurus II: <i>Letter to Menoceus</i> (pp. 483-487)	36. Epicurus III: <i>Principal Doctrines</i> (pp. 488-490)
R	1/21	37. Epictetus I: Handbook (Enchiridion) (pp. 519-530)	38. Epictetus I: Handbook (Enchiridion) (pp. 519-530)
F	1/22	39. Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Pyrrhonism (pp. 541-545)	40. Plotinus II: <i>Enneads</i> V.1.6-12; V.3.12-17 (pp. 557-561)
S	1/23		
	1/24	Paper Due at Noon	