



Bridgewater State University

Philosophy 301 Ancient Philosophy

May 31– June 25, Summer 2021

Instructor: Prof. Gao Yuan
Email: gaoshanyuanquan@hotmail.com
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 Philosophical texts. We will read pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, Hellenistic philosophers, Patristics as well as Augustine, with a focus on their metaphysical and epistemological views. Therefore, the course can be naturally divided into four units: (1) Pre-Socratics: Natural Greek Philosophy; (2) The Splendid of Ancient Philosophy: Classical Greek Philosophy; (3) Ancient Philosophy Baptized: The Patristic Period; (4) The Transformation of Ancient Philosophy: Augustine and his Spiritual Heritage. The duration of the content covers the time period from the birthplace of Greek philosophy to early Middle Ages, in which 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 most prominent figures of these periods. Much of these material are 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 paper utilizing the methods of philosophical analysis.

Required

Text:

1. *A History of Philosophy: Socrates to Sartre and Beyond* (Peking: Peking University Press, 2006). Sixth edition. Samuel Enoch Stumpf and James Fieser. (e-text available); or, *Socrates to Sartre and Beyond: A History of Philosophy* (Beijing: McGraw-Hill Education (Asia) and Beijing World Publishing Company, 2013). Eighth edition. Samuel Enoch Stumpf and James Fieser. (e-text available).
2. *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017). Sixth edition. Alister E. McGrath. (e-text available).
3. *Freedom from Passions in Augustine* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017). First edition. Gao Yuan. (e-text available).

Assignments: There are three kinds of assignments: presentations, reflection papers, and final course 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.

-Daily Summary

All students will keep a daily summaries 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 .5 point for each one, when attendance is taken at the beginning of class. After attendance is taken, no late 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 general overall 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. 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/description of it (one paragraph) and what you think it means/why it might be important/interesting. 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.

- Papers

Students will write a 2-3 page paper for each Part of the course, due immediately after the end of each Part of the course. Each paper will be 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 (can be a preparation for your presentation) and one final article during the paper workshop. 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, 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. 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.

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Attendance @.5 for each Hour of class, 40 hours	20
Presentation and 4 short thematic papers (@20 for presentation, and each paper 5 points)	40
Final Paper: (@ up to 40 points)	<u>40</u>
Total	100

Grade	Description	4-point Equivalent	100-point
A	Superior	4.0	95-100
A-	Superior	3.7	90-94
B+	Good	3.3	87-89
B	Good	3.0	83-86
B-	Good	2.7	80-82
C+	Satisfactory	2.3	77-79
C	Satisfactory	2.0	73-76
C-	Satisfactory	1.7	70-72
D	Poor	1.0	65-69
F	Failure	0.0	0-64

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

Date		Hour 1	Hour 2
5/31	Lecture, reading and discussion	Unit 1: Pre-Socratics: Natural Greek Philosophy 1. Main lines of Ancient Philosophy 2. The birthplace of ancient philosophy 3. The ideal of philosophy and the mission of philosophers 4. The ideal of the Philosopher-King	The metaphysics and epistemology Examples: 1. Plato's theory of cave 2. Plato's theory of divided line 3. Plato's theory of forms
6/1	Lecture, reading and discussion	1. Socrates' Predecessors 2. Thales 3. Anaximander 4. Anaximenes 5. Discussion	1. Mathematical Basis: Pythagoras 2. Heraclitus 3. Parmenides
6/2	Lecture, reading and discussion	1. Zeno of Elea 2. Zeno's four paradoxes	1. Empedocles 2. Anaxagoras
6/3	Reading and Writing Paper Due	1. The Atomists 2. Atoms and the Void 3. Theory of Knowledge and Ethics 4. Leucippus 5. Democritus	Writing workshop: Paper 1
6/4	Presentation and Discussion	1. Presentation on the metaphysics and epistemology of Early Greek Philosophy 2. Discussion	1. Presentation on the metaphysics and epistemology of Early Greek Philosophy 2. Discussion
6/5			
6/6			
6/7	Lecture, reading and discussion	Unit 2: The Splendid of Ancient Philosophy: Classical Greek Philosophy 1. The Sophists: Protagoras 2. Gorgias 3. Socrates	1. Socrates' theory of knowledge 2. Socrates' moral thought
6/8	Lecture, reading and discussion	1. Plato 2. Moral psychology 3. Political philosophy	1. Ideal State 2. Philosopher-King
6/9	Lecture, reading and discussion	1. Aristotle 2. Metaphysics	1. Psychology 2. Ethics and virtues 3. Politics
6/10	Reading and Writing Paper Due	Classical philosophy after Aristotle 1. Epicureanism 2. Skepticism 3. Stoicism 4. Neoplatonism 5. Plotinus	Writing workshop: Paper 2
6/11	Presentation and Discussion	1. Presentation on Classical Greek Philosophy 2. Discussion	1. Presentation on Classical Greek Philosophy 2. Discussion
6/12			
6/13			
6/14	Lecture, reading and discussion	Unit 3: Ancient Philosophy Baptized: The Patristic Period 1. Main issues of the Patristic philosophy 2. Overview of the Patristic philosophy	1. The emergence of early Christian philosophy 2. Discussion

6/15	Lecture, reading and discussion	1. Key philosophers in the Patristic Period 2. Justin Martyr 3. Irenaeus of Lyons	1. Origen 2. Cappadocian fathers 3. Athanasius of Alexandria 4. Tertullian
6/16	Lecture, reading and discussion	The True Israel: The Early Christian Dispute with Jewish Tradition	The Early Christian Dispute with Classical Greek Philosophy
6/17	Reading and Writing Paper Due	1. The formation of the doctrine of the Trinity and the Council of Nicaea 2. The baptism of Ancient Philosophy	Writing workshop: Paper 3
6/18	Presentation and Discussion	1. Presentation on Patristic philosophy 2. Discussion	1. Presentation on Patristic philosophy 2. Discussion
6/19			
6/20			
6/21	Lecture, reading and discussion	Unit 4: The Transformation of Ancient Philosophy: Augustine and his Spiritual Heritage 1. Augustine's Life 2. Augustine's works 3. Augustine and ancient philosophy	1. Augustine and his predecessors on the psychology of passions 2. Discussion
6/22	Lecture, reading and discussion	1. Augustine's theological anthropology 2. Augustine's political theory 3. Augustine's spiritual heritage	1. Augustine's moral philosophy 2. Passions in political and social life
6/23	Reading and Writing Paper Due	1. Reading <i>Confessions</i> 2. Reading <i>De civitate Dei</i> 9.4 and 14.9 3. Discussion	Writing workshop: Paper 4
6/24	Presentation And Discussion	1. Presentation on Augustine and the transformation of ancient philosophy 2. Discussion	1. Presentation on Augustine and the transformation of ancient philosophy 2. Discussion
6/25	Presentation and Final paper workshop	1. Group discussion on main issues of ancient philosophy 2. Final paper workshop	1. Group discussion on main issues of ancient philosophy 2. Final paper workshop
6/26	Final Paper Due		