

History of Western Philosophy I
Philosophy 3023 01
Fall 2014

Instructor: Dr. David Spewak

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Web Page: Blackboard
Office Hours: MW 9:00AM–9:50PM, & TR 9:15AM–10:15AM, and by appointment
Lecture: TR 3:30–4:45, MCCOOL 113

Texts:

Required: Cohen, Marc S., Patricia Curd, and C.D.C. Reeve (2011). *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle* 4th edition. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. ISBN: 978-1-60384-462-8

Required: Hyman, Arthur, James J. Walsh, and Thomas Williams (2010). *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: The Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Traditions* 3rd edition. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. ISBN: 978-1-60384-208-2

Course Description: The aim of this course is to convey information about the doctrines of ancient Greek and Medieval philosophers, notably Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Anselm, Avicenna, Averroes, Thomas Aquinas, and William of Ockham. Others may be included if time permits. We shall study some of Plato's dialogues. In particular, we shall focus on the so-called Socratic Dialogues (usually considered to represent Plato's interpretation and development of the philosophy of his mentor Socrates), and also Plato's *Republic* and other works of Plato's transitional and middle periods. Topics to be discussed include the trial and death of Socrates, his attitudes towards traditional religion and the law, the socratic method, and the relation between knowledge and virtue, and the main themes of the *Republic*.

We shall discuss selected passages from Aristotle's writings on the philosophy of nature and on ethics. Issues to be covered include the doctrine of the four causes, the analysis of change, Aristotle's conception of virtue and happiness, and aspects of his philosophy of action.

As we move into the medieval period we shall begin with Augustine's rejection of skepticism and explanation of *a priori* knowledge. Next we consider if we are free given that God knows what we

will do next, i.e. the problem of divine foreknowledge. We will look at how Augustine and Boethius respond to this problem paying particular attention to Boethius' application of Aristotelian modality. We then turn to arguments for the existence of God. Next we will consider the nature of the human soul paying specific attention to how Aquinas applied the Aristotelian theory of the soul to explain how the soul can be immortal. Finally, we turn to the problem of universals and Ockham's nominalism.

Goals and Outcomes:

- Introduce students to a range of important philosophical issues in the history of philosophy.
- Show students the interconnectedness of apparently disparate philosophical questions.
- Show students reoccurring themes and attempts to answer similar questions through the history of western philosophy.

At the end of this course students should be able to do the following:

- Explain Socrates reasoning to his conclusion that human wisdom is worth little or nothing.
- State Meno's Paradox and the theory of recollection.
- Explain the story of the ring of Gyges.
- Summarize how Socrates defends the claim that the virtuous city will not be possible until a philosopher is king in light of his account of knowledge, opinion, and their respective objects.
- Summarize Aristotle's four causes.
- State the necessary and sufficient conditions for being the supreme good of a human according to Aristotle.
- Distinguish between Aristotle's conception of luck and chance.
- Present Aristotle's function argument and explain what it is meant to show.
- Describe the role of external goods in Aristotle's notion of happiness.
- State and evaluate divine illumination theory.
- Compare Boethius' response to the problem of divine foreknowledge with that Augustine.

- Define the following concepts as they relate to the Ontological Argument: *a priori*, *reductio ad absurdum*, parody, contingency, and necessity.
- Explain Aristotle's influence on the thought of Avicenna, Averroes, and Aquinas.
- Identify how Aquinas utilized Aristotelian ideas in his theory of the mind.
- State the problem of universals.
- Compare nominalist and realist theories of universals.

Grading:

Participation	5%
Paper 1 (3-4 pgs.)	15%
Paper 2 (7-8 pgs.)	30%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam (12/10)	30%

Grade A represents exceptionally high achievement as a result of aptitude, effort, and intellectual initiative. Grade B represents a high achievement as a result of ability and effort. Grade C represents average achievement. Grade D represents the minimum passing grade. Grade F represents unsatisfactory performance and indicates failure in the course.

Reading and Attendance: You are expected to attend lectures prepared, i.e. having done the reading and ready to discuss the material. You should always bring your book to class. The nature of this class is such that we will be closely reading passages in class. In preparing for class it will not be enough to skim the readings prior to lecture. Philosophical texts require careful and critical reading. When reading you should be asking yourself *what* the author is claiming, *why* he or she is making that claim, and you should be attempting to determine *whether that claim is justified*. Bring your book to class because many days we will be closely looking at the text.

Papers: You will be writing two essays of differing lengths. The first, and shorter paper, will be based on a prompt of my choosing. The second is longer and is more open-ended with respect to what you are writing. For the second paper you will be given a list of prompts to choose from, and you will be free to modify them to fit your own interest *with the approval of the instructor*.

Final Exam: The final exam is scheduled for **Wednesday Dec. 10, 2014** from **3-6PM**. It will comprise short essay questions on topics from the last two topics of the course.

MSU Writing Center: If you need assistance, especially as it relates to basic writing skills, I encourage you to contact the Writing Center at <http://www.writingcenter.msstate.edu>. They can help you with grammar, structure, or simply how to approach writing an essay. There is more to writing a paper than content; conveying your ideas in a clear manner is equally important.

Students with Disabilities: If you need accommodations, please speak to me in advance and make arrangements with Disability Support Services at <http://www.sss.msstate.edu/disabilities/>.

Cheating: The *minimum penalty* for cheating or plagiarism is a *failure in the class* with the grade of *XF*. Cheating or plagiarism can lead to expulsion from the University. You are expected to make yourself familiar with what plagiarism and how to make proper citation in your work. The Student Honor Code Operational Procedures are available at <http://www.honorcode.msstate.edu/resources/>, which includes information on cheating, plagiarism, and penalties. It's not worth it, so don't do it. If you have any questions, please ask me, I'm here to help.

Expectations: I expect that everyone will maintain a classroom conducive to learning. I like an informal atmosphere, but it must be orderly. Thus, everyone is expected to behave with basic politeness, civility, and respect for others. In particular, talking in class is ok if it's part of a class discussion or with me. Private communications are not, especially during quizzes and tests. Neither are reading extraneous materials, using cell phones, or sleeping.

Use of Electronics: As a matter of policy, I do not allow the use of electronic devices in class. This includes, but is not limited to, cellphones, tablets, and computers. Any unauthorized use of one of these devices in class will result in a quiz on the most recent reading for the entire class.

Suggestions: Suggestions for improvement are welcome at any time. Any concern about the course should be brought first to my attention.

Tentative Schedule:

This is subject to change at any time at the discretion of the instructor. Additional readings may be assigned.

Topic 1: Plato–Socratic Dialogues

Euthyphro

Apology

Crito

Topic 2: Plato–Transitional Dialogues

Meno

Republic I-VII

Topic 3: Aristotle

Physics

Categories

De Anima

Nicomachean Ethics

Topic 4: Knowledge and Free Will

Augustine

- *The Teacher*
- *On Free Choice of the Will*

Boethius

- *The Consolation of Philosophy* Book 5

Topic 5: The Existence of God

Anselm

- *Proslogion*

Thomas Aquinas

- *Summa Theologiae*, Selections from the “Treatise on God” Question 2 Articles 1-3

Topic 6: The Soul

Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna)

- *The Salvation*, “Psychology”
- *The Cure*, “The Soul”

Ibn Rushd (Averroes)

- *Long Commentary on “The Soul”*

Thomas Aquinas

- *Summa Theologiae*, Selections from the “Treatise on Human Nature”

William of Ockham

- Selections from *Summa logicae*, Part 1
- Universals and Individuation
- Intuitive and Abstractive Cognition