



East China Normal University International Summer Session

PHI 17

Introduction to Ancient and Medieval Western Philosophy

Term: July 5th – August 8th, 2018

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Course Overview

Our goal in this course is to study some key aspects of ancient and medieval ethical thought in the western tradition. More specifically we will look at the ways in which a number of different philosophers thought about knowledge, God, the cosmos, ethical choice and human happiness.

- (1) What sorts of things can human beings know, and how can they know these things?
- (2) Does God exist? Can we prove whether God exists or doesn't exist?
- (3) Has the universe always existed or did it come into being?
- (4) What is the nature of human choice, are we free in choosing how to act, and do we ever act against our beliefs about what is best?
- (5) What counts as a good human life?
- (6) What is the relationship between reason and religion?

We will begin the course by looking at some key works in ancient Greek philosophy. In addition to studying Plato and Aristotle, we will look at the works of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus and the hedonistic philosopher Epicurus. We will see a wide range of fundamental disagreement between these philosophers and we will attempt to understand and evaluate their arguments. We then turn our attention to medieval philosophy and will examine some attempts by Jewish, Islamic and Christian thinkers to reconcile the philosophical tradition inherited from the Greeks with their faith traditions.



Course Goals:

A student who satisfactorily completes this course should:

1. Learn how to present and analyze arguments in historical texts;
2. Become familiar with key aspects of ancient and medieval thought and gain some appreciation of the history of ideas in the western tradition;
3. Improve his or her critical thinking skills;
4. Come to appreciate some of the ways in which ancient and medieval thought remains relevant;
5. Realize that philosophy is both deep and fun!

Required Texts:

The following texts are from the Amazon Kindle store. You don't actually need a Kindle: you can download a Kindle app for free from Amazon and then read it on any computer platform. It is very important that you get the translation indicated. I have provided the ISBN Number. In the past, some students have found it easier to obtain the book before they returned to China.

Plato, *Five Dialogues*, 2nd Edition, Hackett Publishing, 2002. Edited by John Cooper. Translation by G. M. A. Grube. ISBN: 978-0-87220-633-5. PRC ISBN: 978-1-60384-179-5.

Plato, *The Republic*, translated by G. M. A. Grube Revised by C. D. C. Reeve, Hackett Publishing, 1992. ISBN: 978-0-87220-136-1. PRC ISBN: 978-1-60384-659-2

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by C. D. C. Reeve, Hackett Publishing, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-62466-117-4. PRC ISBN: 978-1-62466-167-9.

In addition to these texts, there will be a number of texts available online.

Course Hours

The course has 25 class sessions in total. Each class session is 110 minutes in length, for a total of 2750 minutes of in-class time. The course meets from Monday to Friday. ECNU awards 4 credits for this course. Different universities may count course credits differently. Consult officials at your own home institution.

Attendance

Summer school is very intensive and to be successful, students need to attend every class. Occasionally, due to illness or other unavoidable circumstance, a student may need to miss a class. ECNU policy requires a medical certificate to be excused. Any absence may impact on the student's grade. Moreover, **ECNU policy is that a student who has more than 3 absences will fail the course. Arriving late or leaving early will count as a partial**



absence.

In addition to attending every class, students will be expected to complete the reading assignments prior to class and to arrive ready to participate in class discussion. I will hold a number of evening review sessions over the course of the semester. Your performance in the class will be greatly aided by attending these review sessions.

Grading Policy

ECNU awards grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, D, and F. Most colleges and universities do not award transfer credit for grades of D or F.

In this course, grading will be based on the following:

- 30% First and Second Exam (July 13 and July 27)
- 30% Papers (Due July 18 and August 3)
- 25% Final Exam (August 8)
 - 15% Short papers, quizzes, preparation, participation.

General expectations:

Students are expected to:

Attend all classes and be responsible for all material covered in class and otherwise assigned. Any unexcused absence may impact a student's grade. Moreover, ECNU policy is that a student who has more than 2 absences will fail the course. Arriving late or leaving early will count as a partial absence.

Complete the day's required reading and assignments before class.

Make sure that you bring your book to class every day.

Review the previous day's notes before class; make notes about questions you have about the previous class or the day's reading

Participate in class discussions and complete required written work on time.

Refrain from texting, phoning or engaging in computer activities unrelated to class during class. Students using electronic devices in a way unrelated to class will be asked to leave and will be marked absent. Repeated offenses will result in penalties to your final grade.

Refrain from private conversations during the class period.



Tentative Course Schedule

The planned schedule sketched out below may be modified to suit the interests or abilities of the enrolled students or to take advantage of special opportunities or events that may arise during the term.

WEEKS ZERO and ONE (July 5 – July 13):

Socrates and Plato

- July 5 (Th): Introduction & Overview
Read: No Reading
- July 6: (F) Virtue and Happiness. Persuade or Obey.
Read: *Apology* and *Crito*.
- July 9 (M): Knowledge and Virtue.
Read: Selections from *Meno* and *Protagoras*.
- July 10 (T): What is justice and why be just?
Read: *Republic* Books I to III
- July 11 (W) Justice and psychic health. Ideal and degenerate cities.
Read: *Republic* Book IV, *Republic* Books VIII-X
- July 12 (Th) Work on First Paper. Topic TBA.
Read: No new readings.
- July 13 (F) First In-Class Exam.
Read: No new readings.

WEEK TWO (July 16 – July 20):

I will be away on July 16 and 17. You should use these days to get ahead on your reading and to complete your first paper.

- July 16 (M) Continue to work on first paper. Get ahead on your reading.
Reading: *Republic* Books V-VII.
Selections from *Timaeus* and *Phaedo*.
Selections from Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Metaphysics* Book Lambda.
- July 17 (T): Continue to work on first writing assignment. Get ahead on reading.
Reading: Plato: *Republic* Books V-VII; Selections from *Timaeus* and *Phaedo*.



Selections from Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Metaphysics* Book Lambda.

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Books I-III, VI-VII, X

July 18 (W): **First Paper Due.**

Plato on knowledge and the Forms.

Aristotle on knowledge and demonstration.

Reading: Plato: *Republic* Books V-VII.

Aristotle: Selections from *Posterior Analytics*

July 19 (Th): Plato and Aristotle on the human soul.

Reading: Plato: Selections from *Phaedo*

Aristotle: Selections from *De Anima*

July 20 (F): Plato and Aristotle on the nature of God and the Universe.

Reading: Plato: Selections from *Timaeus*

Aristotle: Selections from *On the Heavens* and *Metaphysics* L.

WEEK THREE (July 23 - July 27): Aristotle's Ethics, Stoicism, and Epicureanism.

July 23 (M): **Second Paper Assigned.**

Virtue and the Human Function. Virtue and the Mean.

Reading: Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* Books I - III

July 24 (T): Intellectual Virtue and Weakness of Will.

Reading: Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* Books VI and VII

July 25 (W): Virtue and Contemplation. The Political and the Philosophical Life.

Reading: Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book X

July 26 (Th): Stoicism and Epicureanism.

Reading: Epictetus: *The Handbook*

Epicurus: Selections

July 27 (F): **Second In-Class Exam**

WEEK FOUR (July 30 - August 3): Medieval Philosophy

July 30 (M): Philosophy and Revealed Religion

The Unity of Truth

The Perfection of God and the Origin of Evil.

Reading: Augustine: *On Free Choice of the Will*

July 31 (T): Sin and Conflict Within the Will.

Reading: Augustine: *On Free Choice of the Will*



August 1 (W): The Way of Happiness and the Political Regime.
Reading: Selections from Al Farabi.

August 2 (Th): The Eternity of the World. Reason and Religion.
Reading: Selections from Ibn Sina and Al Ghazali.

August 3 (F): **Second Paper Due.**
The Eternity of the World. Reason and Religion.
Reading: Selections from Ibn Rushd and Moses Maimonides.

Week 5 (August 6 - August 8)

August 6 (M): Proving the Existence of God.
Reading: Aquinas: Five Ways.
Selections from Ibn Sina and others.

August 7 (T): Aquinas on Temporal and Eternal Happiness
Reading: Aquinas: Selections from *Summa Theologica*

August 8 (W): **Final Exam**

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty. Specifically, unless otherwise directed by the professor, students may not consult other students, books, notes, electronic devices or any other source, on examinations. Failure to abide by this may result in a zero on the examination, or even failure in the course.

Academic communities depend on trust. The worst offense in an academic community is to represent someone else's work as your own, whether it be cut and pasting from the Internet or copying from another student. Philosophy is a cooperative endeavor, and I encourage you to speak with other students, friends and family members about this course. Cooperate, but don't copy! If you ever have any doubt whether what you are doing constitutes cheating, please ask the professor.