

Ancient philosophy

Dr. Jacob Archambault

Course description

This course provides an introduction to philosophy in Greek antiquity, where philosophy first takes shape.

The course begins by following Plato's demarcation of philosophy from other disciplines in the person of Socrates in the dialogues leading up to his trial: in the *Euthyphro*, from religion; in the *Sophist*, from sophistry; in the *Statesman*, from politics. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates is presented as philosophy at its height; in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, at its nadir. Examining these contours, we begin to see what is distinctive, what is exemplary, and what is dangerous in philosophical thinking. Nadir.

The subdiscipline most central to ancient philosophy is metaphysics. Nature, understood as the realm of becoming, is taken for the subject matter of physics; what is above nature, of metaphysics. This division governs the permutations of philosophy from antiquity to today. In antiquity, what is above nature, thus nature *par excellence*, is form or idea. In Plato, we find the formal divided from the transitive; in Aristotle, reconciled to it. This division and reconciliation is passed on to later historiography as a synthesis of Heraclitean and Parmenidean pre-Socratic philosophy, and governs the reception of pre-Socratic thought to today. To better understand this heritage, we first examine the distinction between being and becoming in Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics*; and thereafter, the pre-Socratic philosophers to whom these domains are posthumously yoked. Doing so, we obtain a better sense of philosophy's essence, origins, and opposites.

Course requirements

Homework (50%) - Questions are assigned for each reading, to be completed prior to discussion of the text. Assignments are collected at the beginning of class, and graded for quality and comprehension.

Final paper (50%) - The student will write a paper on a figure or theme discussed during the course. 3000 words or fewer.

Required texts

Benardete, Seth, trans. *The Being of the Beautiful: Plato's Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman*. University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Heidegger, Martin. *Early Greek Thinking*. Harper & Row, 1993.

West, Thomas, and Grace Starry West, Trans. *Four Texts on Socrates*. Cornell University Press, 1998.

Additional texts will be provided.

Syllabus

Week 1	Introduction.
Week 2	Plato. <i>Euthyphro</i> . In West and West, pp. 41-62.
Week 3	Plato. <i>Sophist</i> .
Week 4	Plato. <i>Statesman</i> .
Week 5	Plato. <i>Apology</i> . In West and West, pp. 63-98.
Week 6	Aristophanes. <i>Clouds</i> . In West and West, pp. 115-176.

Week 7	Heidegger, Martin. 'On the Essence and Concept of <i>phusis</i> in Aristotle's <i>Physics</i> β, 1'. In <i>Pathmarks</i> , pp. 183-230.
Week 8	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> α 993a 30-995a 20.
Week 9	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> Z, 1028a 10-1032a 11.
Week 10	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> Θ, 1045b 27-1051a 3.
Week 11	Heidegger, Martin. 'Logos' (Heraclitus, Fragment B 50). In <i>Early Greek Thinking</i> , pp. 59-78.
Week 12	Heidegger, Martin. 'Moirā' (Parmenides VIII, 34-41). In <i>Early Greek Thinking</i> , pp. 79-101.
Week 13	Heidegger, Martin. 'Aletheia' (Heraclitus, Fragment B 16). In <i>Early Greek Thinking</i> , pp. 102-124.