

## Ancient Philosophy (PH 200) Fairfield University

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June 2019  
Office: DMH 311  
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### Course Description

Ancient philosophers from Greece and Rome examined a wide range of important philosophical issues. In this course we will be focusing on their investigations of virtue, the soul, and the relationship between philosophy and the good life. We'll begin by reading some early accounts of the nature and purpose of philosophy. In weeks 2-3, we'll explore some of Socrates' more surprising views, including his claims that virtue is knowledge, that no one can act against what he knows to be best for him, and that philosophy is just practice for death. In weeks 3-4, we'll turn to Aristotle's account of happiness, to his claim that virtue consists in a mean, and to his puzzling conclusion about the value of politics vs. contemplation. In the final part of the course, we'll briefly discuss Socrates' Stoic legacy.

You might find that some parts of the ancient philosophical tradition are familiar and accord with your own views. You might also find that some parts of the tradition are unfamiliar and challenge assumptions you have about the nature of the world. One of our goals in this course will be to think critically about the ways in which ancient philosophy has shaped our contemporary cultures. Another main goal is to develop an appreciation for how unusual and innovative some of the views of the ancient philosophers were.

**Note: PH 101 is a prerequisite for this course.**

### Required Texts

- *Laches and Charmides*, Plato (Hackett: 1992)
- *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., edited by S. Marc Cohen, Patricia Curd, and C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett: 2016)

### Course Goals and Objectives

By the end of the course, you will

- be able to *identify* some of the central figures and questions in ancient philosophy;
- be able to *explain* and *interpret* some of the main philosophical arguments that ancient philosophers gave;
- be able to *discuss* and *evaluate* a few of philosophical arguments discussed in class, both during class conversations and in written pieces of work.

These skills, especially the second two, are *transferrable*. They'll be useful no matter what career path you end up pursuing. You will leave the class better able to think outside the box by envisioning alternative options, and you will be better prepared to offer your own, critical assessment of positions and plans that your colleagues, peers, or supervisors might be considering.

## Course Requirements and Grading

Doing philosophy is hard work! But, as with any skill, you will get better with practice. The course assignments and class discussions are all designed to help you develop a better understanding of the assigned readings and to give you hands-on experience evaluating philosophical views and developing your own arguments.

Assignment	% of Final Grade
Attendance and participation	15%
2 quizzes (multiple choice, short answer, commentary on passage)	2x10% = 20%
3 short (2-4 page) writing assignments	3x15% = 45%
Final presentation + submission of presentation form	15% + 5% = 20%

## Course Policies

### *Attendance*

Consistent attendance and active participation are crucial to your learning experience in this class (and to the learning experience of class as a whole). Because the summer session is so compressed, attendance is mandatory and missing classes will negatively affect your grade. **You will lose 7 points (out of 100) for attendance and participation for each unexcused absence. If you have more than three unexcused absences, you will automatically fail the course.**

### *Technology Policy*

Our main goal in this class is to explore ideas in conversation with each other. To do this, you won't need a cellphone, laptop, tablet or other electronic device. You just need to show up with a hardcopy of the assigned text, a notebook and pen/pencil (for taking or referring back to notes), and your own thoughts about the material! In order to facilitate thoughtful conversations, I will be requiring you to **leave gadgets in your bag (this includes cellphones, laptops, and tablets)** unless I expressly permit it. Occasionally, we will use tech in for in-class assignments. In those cases, I will advise you when gadget use is permitted.

### *Accommodation*

Fairfield University is committed to providing qualified students with disabilities an equal opportunity to access the benefits, rights, and privileges of its services, programs and activities in

an accessible setting. If you require accommodations for this course, please contact the Academic and Career Development Center as early as possible in the semester to complete the registration process for accommodations. Center staff will work with us to create a plan for your success in this course.

### *Sexual Misconduct and Harassment*

Fairfield University seeks to provide an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have been the victim of sexual harassment, misconduct or assault, we encourage you to report it, knowing that if you report this to a faculty member, she or he must notify Fairfield University's Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident (you may choose whether you or anyone involved is identified by name). For more information about your options at Fairfield please see the Student Handbook.

### *Academic Integrity*

I expect you to follow Fairfield University's academic honesty policy (see the Academic Honesty section of the current catalog: [catalog.fairfield.edu/undergraduate/overview/academic-policies-general-regulations](http://catalog.fairfield.edu/undergraduate/overview/academic-policies-general-regulations)). Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) copying examination answers from crib notes or another student, submitting your own work from other courses for credit in this course (without prior permission of both instructors), and submitting the information, ideas, or language of others as your own work in fulfillment of course assignments. If you are uncertain about whether your use of material constitutes plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please consult me. Instances of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of zero for the paper or examination, and I will send an official letter to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences detailing the academic misconduct. The letter will remain on file in the Dean's office and will be a permanent part of your academic record.

## Tentative Schedule of Topics and Readings

1.1 May 28	Philosophy begins in wonder	fragments from the Presocratics
1.2 May 29	The perils of reason	selections from the Sophists
1.3 May 30	Socrates: mission and method	<i>Laches</i> (I)
2.1 Jun 3 *Assignment 1, due beginning of class	Philosophical definitions	<i>Laches</i> (II)
2.2 Jun 4	Socratic intellectualism: all desire is for the good	<i>Protagoras</i> (I)
2.3 Jun 5	Socratic intellectualism: <i>akrasia</i> and the sufficiency of knowledge for action	<i>Protagoras</i> (II)
2.4 Jun 6	What does the philosopher know?	<i>Phaedo</i> (I)
3.1 Jun 10 *Assignment 2, due beginning of class	The soul and immortality	<i>Phaedo</i> (II)
3.2 Jun 11	Why do we need Forms?	<i>Phaedo</i> (III)
3.3 Jun 12 *Quiz 1	Aristotle and the end of action	<i>NE</i> I.1-5
3.4 Jun 13	Happiness and human excellence	<i>NE</i> I.7-9
4.1 Jun 17 *Assignment 3, due beginning of class	Virtue and the soul	<i>NE</i> I.13, <i>DA</i> 1.1-2 and 2.1-5
4.2 Jun 18	Character virtue	<i>NE</i> II.1-9
4.3 Jun 19	Intellectual virtue	<i>NE</i> VI
4.4 Jun 20	Aristotle on <i>akrasia</i>	<i>NE</i> VII
<b>Jun 22</b> *Presentation form due by midnight, via Blackboard		
5.1 Jun 24	Aristotle on the best kind of life	<i>NE</i> X
5.2 Jun 25	Stoicism	Epictetus I
5.3 Jun 26 *Quiz 2	Stoicism	Epictetus II
5.4 Jun 27	<b>Student presentations</b>	