Contact Information

_Instructor:_ Dr. Chris Lay  
_Email:_ cmlay@utep.edu  
_Office:_ Worrell 301  
_Office Hours:_ MW 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM, 1:30-3:00 PM

Required Materials

All course readings are made freely available on the course website.

Course Description and Objectives

Ancient philosophy really refers to the foundational thinkers, arguments, and schools of thought that made any kind of philosophical tradition possible at all. If we’re honest, ancient philosophers laid the investigative groundwork for nearly all knowledge disciplines active today, including literature, psychology, sociology, anthropology, mathematics, and ‘proper’ sciences like biology, chemistry, and physics. While we may look at many of their particular claims as silly or at least outmoded by our current intellectual standards, we must make the obvious point that the ancients lacked access to contemporary resources or ways of thought. Indeed, ancient belief systems were formative and essential to the types of thinking we employ today; in other words, we wouldn’t have our current technology or robust bodies of knowledge from which to draw without their pioneering intellectual work. The ancients were essentially ‘flying blind’, which makes their eager pursuit of knowledge and explanation all the more laudable. Likewise, it makes it all the more impressive that no small number of observations made by ancient philosophers are timeless—not just a basis for future learning, but whole ideas that have survived and defied centuries (millennia, in some cases) of challenges.

For this course—organized historically—we’ll survey how major thinkers from both ancient Eastern and Western traditions have attempted to describe and explain the unknown world around them. (Note, however, that the course will focus primarily on ancient Greek philosophy). From the East, we examine Mohism and a seminal text in Buddhist philosophy, the _Milinda Panha_. On the Western side, we begin with the Pre-Socratics, work through Greek philosophers Plato, Aristotle, and Epictetus, then conclude with two Roman philosophers, the Neoplatonist Plotinus and St. Augustine.

Learning Objectives

- Become familiar with major figures/beliefs in both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions
- Trace the historical development of ancient philosophy and identify relevant connections/influences between the beliefs of the ancients and contemporary belief systems
- Cultivate skills of critical analysis, including considering multiple perspectives and evaluating your own thinking

Course Requirements

- One mid-term short essay of 4-6 pages (30% of final grade each)
- One final course paper of 7-9 pages (45% of final grade)
- Weekly discussion board posts (15% of final grade)
- Regular in-class participation (10% of final grade)
Format

Each class will consist of lecture and discussion of assigned readings in conversational style. Reading assignments from the required texts are listed in the Course Outline. As each class is really an ongoing dialogue between the students and instructor, the reading should be done before class each day.

Participation

This course is taught as a dialogue—which is particularly relevant to the manner in which philosophy was conducted by many of the ancients. Of course, a dialogue cannot progress without the participation of its interlocutors. Every voice can contribute something unique to a conversation; most often, this is a new perspective not considered by others. As a substantial part of your overall grade, ‘participation’ includes raising questions/comments during class discussion, being properly prepared for class, and even such seemingly benign things as punctuality. Every student is not necessarily expected to speak-up in every class meeting, and I understand that some students are uncomfortable participating in this kind of public discussion. In such cases, preparedness and punctuality can are especially important.

Discussion Posts

Students will post a response to a specified question on Blackboard each week by Friday at 11:59 pm. Posts are required to meet a 150 word minimum and must refer back to the readings by describing or reconstructing elements of the arguments from those readings. Any student who fails to submit more than four (4) discussion posts unexcused will automatically receive a grade of F.

Final Paper Revise and Resubmit

For your final paper, you may elect to submit your paper early and receive comments on improving the paper. In this case, your final grade will be for the revised, resubmitted paper. This is entirely voluntary, but it does permit you the opportunity to improve your work and ensure the best possible grade for yourself. The dates that paper topics are assigned and when early submissions are due are both included on the course outline.

Paper Extensions

Your final course papers are to be submitted on the date and time specified in the Course Outline. Note that all papers are due by 11:59 pm on a given date. Should circumstances outside your control make this impossible, you must request an extension from me. This can be done via email or in-person. Please note that extensions will not typically be granted on the day the paper is due (or the day just before), nor will more than one extension usually be granted per semester. You may be required to present documentation of the circumstances related to your extension request.

Late Papers

All papers submitted late (without an extension) will be docked one full letter grade for every 24-hour period (or fraction thereof) after the assigned due date and time. Papers that are more than three days late (72 hours, counting from the date/time the paper is due) will not be accepted, and you will receive a failing grade (F) for that assignment.
Grading Policy

Exams and papers will be given a numerical grade corresponding to the list below. Reading quizzes are pass/fail (either 100 or 0).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>A = 90-100</th>
<th>B = 80-89</th>
<th>C = 70-79</th>
<th>D = 60-69</th>
<th>F= 0-59</th>
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Attendance

Attendance is not formally taken each class, but your participation grade will suffer if you miss regularly—even if you actively participate when you do attend. Along with participation, attendance is also taken into consideration when deciding whether to round up a final score that falls right between two letter grades or to grant leniency for late work, among other things. You are expected to arrive on time for class and leave only when the whole class is dismissed. If at some time you find that you will need to arrive late for class or leave early, you should contact your instructor beforehand. Should you wish to withdraw from the course, you should initiate the withdrawal before the midterm withdrawal deadline (April 3). Withdrawals after this point will receive a grade of F.

Accommodation for Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at the beginning of the semester. A disability determination must be made by this office before any accommodations are provided by the instructor.

Electronic Devices

It is the policy of this classroom that all electronic devices are to be off or silenced during class. This includes, but is not limited to: cell phones, laptops, tablets, and eReaders. If you are observed using electronic devices or should a device create a disturbance during class—for instance, if your phone rings during class—you may be asked to pack your things and leave the room. Exceptions: electronic devices are permitted in the event the Center for Accommodations and Support services has certified that you have a legitimate disability such that an electronic aid is necessary for you to learn.

Academic Honesty

You are expected to abide by the University standards for academic honesty. These standards can be located online at https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html

Other Course Policies

Please do not email your instructor about problems accessing assignments on Blackboard. If you encounter difficulties accessing material, open a ticket with University technical support and request within the ticket that your instructor be informed.

Week 1: Course Introduction

Jan 20        Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday (No Class)
Jan 22        Course Introduction and Syllabus Review
Week 2: The Pre-Socratics, Part 1

Jan 27  Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, “The Milesians”
Jan 29  Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, “Heraclitus and Parmenides”

Week 3: The Pre-Socratics, Part 2

Feb 3  Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, “Zeno of Elea”
Feb 5  Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, “The Atomists”

Week 4: Philosophy in Ancient China - Mohism

Feb 10  Mo Zi, “Exalting Worthiness”
Feb 12  Mo Zi, “Universal Love”

Midterm Short Essay Assigned

Week 5: Plato – On Death and the Immortality of the Soul

Feb 17  Plato, *Phaedo* pp. 94-116
Feb 19  Plato, *Phaedo* pp. 117-133

Week 6: Plato – From Death to Love

Feb 24  Plato, *Phaedo* pp. 134-154
Feb 26  Plato, *Symposium* pp. 1-17

Week 7: Plato – The Nature of Love

Mar 2  Plato, *Symposium* pp. 18-36
Mar 4  Plato, *Symposium* pp. 37-63

Week 8: Plato – The Form of Justice

Mar 9  Plato, *Republic* Book I pp. 3-20
Mar 11  Plato, *Republic* Book I pp. 21-34
Mar 13  Midterm Short Essay Due
Mar 16  Spring Break (No Class)
Mar 18  Spring Break (No Class)
Week 9: Plato – The Just Individual and the Just State
Mar 23 Plato, Republic Book II pp. 35-48
Mar 25 Plato, Republic Book II pp. 49-61

Week 10: Aristotle – Teleology and Cause
Mar 30 Aristotle, Physics Book III
Apr 1 Aristotle, Metaphysics Book XII
Apr 3 Withdrawal Deadline

Week 11: Principles for Wellness in Art and Life
Apr 6 Aristotle, Poetics, Chapters I-XVIII
Final Papers Assigned
Apr 8 Epictetus, The Enchiridion, Chapters I-XXXI

Week 12: Ancient East-Asian Philosophy – Self and Human Experience in Buddhism
Apr 13 Milinda Panha Book II, Chapter 1
Apr 15 Milinda Panha Book II, Chapter 2

Week 13: Neoplatonism – Plotinus and the One
Apr 20 Plotinus, Ennead VI Book 9
Apr 22 Plotinus, Ennead VI Book 8, Chapters 1-10

Week 14: From Neoplatonism to Augustine
Apr 27 Plotinus, Ennead VI Book 8, Chapters 11-21
Deadline for Revise and Resubmit
Apr 29 Augustine, The Teacher, Chapters 1-4

Week 15: Transition from Ancient to Medieval – Augustine on Learning
May 4 Augustine, The Teacher, Chapters 5-9
May 6 Augustine, The Teacher, Chapters 10-14
May 13 Final Papers Due

An electronic copy of this syllabus is available on Blackboard. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. If there are changes, these will be announced in class and an updated copy will be posted to Blackboard.