

PHIL 410: Classical Philosophy

Instructor: Lianghua (Glenn) Zhou (glzhou@tamu.edu) **Office Hours:** MW 1:45-2:45 pm (or by appt)

Instructor's Office: YMCA 420

Lecture and Discussion: MWF 12:40-1:30 pm, YMCA 113

Course Description

This course is an introductory survey of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, from its beginnings in the sixth century BCE through the Hellenistic period as well as the beginning of the Roman empire. We will discuss all the major philosophical movements and figures in this part of the Western history: Presocratics, Sophists, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cyrenaics, Cynics, Epicureans, Stoics, and Skeptics.

Course Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, you will be able to:

- (1) read texts closely and engage them philosophically,
- (2) understand and appreciate theories from ancient times,
- (3) write clear and compelling argumentative papers.

Prerequisites

Junior or senior classification or approval of instructor. All readings are in English, but feel free to use other languages to support your learning.

Special Course Designation

This course has the following special course designation: writing intensive (W). You must pass the writing components (including reading reflections and papers) to earn a passing grade in this course.

Required Texts (please use *only* these translations and editions)

FP *The First Philosophers: Presocratics and Sophists*. Trans. by R. Waterfield, (Oxford World's Classics)

PL *Plato. Complete Works*. Ed. by J. Cooper. (Hackett) [**Note:** you *don't* need to buy this text, as it is quite expensive, and I will give you PDFs on Canvas for each assigned portion of this.]

AR *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. by R. McKeon. (Modern Library)

DC *Diogenes the Cynic, Sayings and Anecdotes, with Other Popular Moralists*. Trans. R. Hard. (Oxford World's Classics)

HP *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*. 2nd ed. Trans. by B. Inwood & L. P. Gerson. (Hackett)

WP Vaughn, L. *Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide*. (Oxford UP)

PDF available on the course's Canvas site

Lecture Schedule, Topics, and Readings

1 August 19: Introduction

- August 21: The Milesians I: Thales, **FP** (pp. 11-13)
- 3** August 23: The Milesians II: Anaximander, **FP** (pp. 13-17)
- August 26: The Milesians III: Anaximenes, **FP** (pp. 17-20)
- August 28: Heraclitus, **FP** (pp. 39, 41-43)
- 6** August 30: Parmenides I, **FP** (pp. 56-62)
- September 2: Labor Day, No Class
- September 4: Parmenides II, **FP** (pp. 59-61)
- 9** September 6: Zeno I, **FP** (pp. 77-79)
- September 9: Zeno II, **FP** (pp. 75-77)
- September 11: The Atomists I, **FP** (pp. 171-176)
- 12** September 13: The Atomists II, **FP** (pp. 189-190)
- September 16: Protagoras, **FP** (pp. 211-217)
- September 18: Writing Instruction I, **WP** Ch. 3-4 (**Short Paper Assigned**)
- 15** September 20: Plato, *Apology* (Excerpt), **PL** (pp. 18-26)
- September 23: Plato, *Euthyphro* (Excerpt), **PL** (pp. 2-11)
- September 25: Plato, *Gorgias* (Excerpt), **PL** (pp. 794-809)
- 18** September 27: Plato, *Theætetus* (Excerpt), **PL** (pp. 176-178)
- September 30: Plato, *Republic* (Excerpt), **PL** (pp. 1130-1137)
- October 2: Plato, *Laws* (Excerpt), **PL** (pp. 1326-1327, 1423-1424) (**Short Paper Due**)
- 21** October 4: Aristotle, *Physics* 1.1, **AR** (p 218)
- October 7: Fall Break, No Class
- October 9: Aristotle, *Physics* 1.7-8, **AR** (pp. 230-234)
- 24** October 11: Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.3, **AR** (pp. 693-696)
- October 14: Aristotle, *On the Soul* 1.1, **AR** (pp. 535-538)
- October 16: Aristotle, *On the Soul* 2.1-3, **AR** (pp. 554-560)
- 27** October 18: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1-4, 7, **AR** (pp. 935-938, 941-944)
- October 21: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1-4, 6, 9, **AR** (pp. 952-956, 957-959, 963-964)
- October 23: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.1-3, **AR** (pp. 1036-1042)
- 30** October 25: Aristotle, *Politics* 3.9, 12-13, **AR** (pp. 1187-1189, 1192-1197)

October 28: Writing Instruction II, **WP** Ch. 5-7 (**Medium Paper Assigned**)

October 30: Cyrenaics, **DC** (pp. 142-149)

33 November 1: The Epicureans I, **HP** (pp. 6-7, 13, 18, 63-64, 83-84)

November 4: The Epicureans II, **HP** (pp. 29-34, 40-43)

November 6: The Cynics, **DC** (pp. 10-12, 16, 19, 27, 29-31, 50, 118)

36 November 8: The Stoics I, **HP** (pp. 110, 132, 138, 148)

November 11: The Stoics II, **HP** (pp. 184-188)

November 13: The Stoics III, **HP** (pp. 195-199, 211-212, 258-259) (**Medium Paper Due**)

39 November 15: Academic Skeptics I, **HP** (pp. 267-270, 274-275)

November 18: Academic Skeptics II, **HP** (pp. 276-280)

November 20: The Pyrrhonists I, **HP** (pp. 285-289, 299-300)

42 November 22: The Pyrrhonists II, **HP** (pp. 300-308, 320-321)

November 25: Review Session I

November 27: Reading Day, No Class

45 November 29: Thanksgiving, No Class

December 2: Review Session II

December 6: **Final Exam**

Assignments

The final grade will be calculated based on the following weighting:

Lecture and Discussion Participation	10%
Short Reading Reflections	20%
Short Paper	25%
Medium paper	25%
Final Exam	20%

Lecture and Discussion Participation: Attending lectures regularly will help you better understand the assigned materials, many of which are short but difficult texts. But merely listening to lectures and taking notes are not enough: to better learn philosophy, you need to do philosophy by actively participating in philosophical discussions and debates. The grading of participation is low-threshold, *for effort*, so you can get this part of the grade simply by participating, although this also means that unexcused absences will

affect your grade. To receive the full grade, you are expected to contribute to our classroom discussion at least **8** times throughout the semester.

Short Reading Reflections: Always do the readings before lectures and discussions, and if you have time, you can also review the readings thereafter: doing so will deepen your understanding of the materials and strengthen your memory of them. The purpose of this assignment is to promote engaged reading of the assigned texts and prepare you for class discussion. You will be asked to submit your short reflections (approximately 200 words) on Canvas *weekly* (by **each Friday**) until November 22. The grading will be based on your engagement with the reading—you are not expected to have understood the text fully, but your attempt to grasp the argument presented should be evident in your reflections and/or questions (there will be a separate PDF on Canvas that gives you more specific guidelines on this assignment). The instructor will give you brief comments in addition to a grade.

Short Paper: This assignment guides you to work through the basic structure of a philosophical paper. It first asks you to state the thesis of your paper and to lay out your core argument for the thesis (since this is a history of philosophy class, your thesis and argument will be adopted from an ancient figure or school). It also asks you to sketch what you think is the strongest objection to your argument and to give brief remarks on how you address the objection (here you can consider an objection from the opponents of the ancient figure or school you are defending or just based on your own critical thinking). The length of your paper is 400-600 words. Paper topics will be posted on Canvas by **September 18**. The short paper is due on **October 2**. You are strongly recommended to talk to the instructor about your ideas during his office hours. This assignment will be graded *for the quality* of your ideas and writing (there will be a separate PDF on Canvas that gives you more specific guidelines on this assignment). The instructor will give you detailed feedback on your writing. You will have the chance to revise and resubmit your paper by considering the instructor's feedback.

Medium Paper: This assignment asks you to write a paper of the same structure as the short paper, but you must develop your argument *fully* and spell out what you think is the strongest objection to your argument and address it *fully*. The length of your medium paper is 1000-1200 words. Paper topics will be posted on Canvas by **October 28**. The medium paper is due on **November 13**. This assignment will be graded *for the quality* of your arguments and writing (there will be a separate PDF on Canvas that gives you more specific guidelines on this assignment). The instructor will give you detailed feedback on your writing. You will *not* have the chance to revise and resubmit your paper by considering the instructor's feedback.

Final Exam: This exam is comprehensive: it covers all the materials we discussed in this class. Since the materials are a lot, there are two review sessions in the final weeks that can help you review everything. The exam consists of two parts: the first part involves short answers to explain the key terms or distinctions on the list posted on Canvas, and the second part involves short essay answers to clarify and evaluate a view. More detailed guidelines will be given in the review sessions.

Grading System: A = [90, 100], B = [80, 90), C = [70, 80), D = [60, 70), F = [0, 60).

Late Work Policy

If you have a reason for failing to turn an assignment in on time that accords with the University policy on excused absences, the instructor will either give you an opportunity to make up any work that contributes to the final grade or provide a satisfactory alternative by a date agreed upon by the student and instructor.

You are responsible for providing satisfactory evidence to the instructor to substantiate the reason for the absence. Among the reasons absences are considered excused by the university are those listed in Student Rule 7 (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>). The fact that these are university-excused absences does not relieve your responsibility for prior notification and documentation. Failure to notify and/or document properly may result in an unexcused absence. Falsification of documentation is a violation of the Honor Code. Other absences may be excused at the discretion of the instructor with prior notification and proper documentation. In cases where prior notification is not feasible (e.g., accident or emergency), you must provide notification by the end of the second working day after the absence, including an explanation of why notice could not be sent prior to the class. Accommodations sought for absences due to the observance of a religious holiday can be sought either prior or after the absence, but not later than two working days after the absence.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit <https://disability.tamu.edu>. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

“Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one’s work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case” ([*Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20*](#)).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at <https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu>.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [*University Rule 08.01.01.M1*](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University’s goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns related to mental and/or physical health in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [University Health Services](#).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University’s [Title IX webpage](#).

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors influencing a student’s academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care practices by utilizing the resources and services available through [University Health Services](#). Students needing a listening ear can call the Texas A&M Helpline (979.845.2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends for mental health peer support while classes are in session. The [TELUS Health Student Support app](#) provides access to professional counseling in multiple languages anytime, anywhere by phone or chat, and the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers 24-hour emergency support at 988 or [988lifeline.org](#).