Ancient Philosophy 1315, 3315 Spring 2017

Course content and schedule: I offer you this schedule as a help to your planning. It does not constitute a formal undertaking on my part.

Mon Jan 23  Philosophy in the core curriculum at this university. Faith and reason. Ancient philosophy in the core.

Weds Jan 25 and Mon Jan 30  Pre-philosophical Greek thought, especially Homer. Gods and human beings – especially divine intervention in human decision, and the gods’ relation to human fortune. Anthropomorphism – especially in Xenophanes. The tragic point of view,

Weds Feb 1  Ionians: Thales: “Everything is water”; “everything is full of gods”. Anaximander, Anaximenes.

Fri Feb 3  Heraclitus: “Eyes and ears are bad witnesses”. Flux. Fire. Logos. The same river is different waters. Heraclitus’s reputation with Aristotle and Plato as a relativist. Logos and order in the city. Religion.


Weds Feb 8  Parmenides: “It is the same that can be thought and can be” No past, no future, no possibility, no change. Rejection of lists of opposites, and of relativism. Truth and reality. The Way of Truth.. Zeno of Elea: Parmenides’s theories applied to physical problems, e.g. motion.


Mon Feb 13  Socrates. Asking questions as a form of intellectual midwifery. Ignorance and irony. The elenchus

Weds Feb 15  Socrates: Definition and the rejection of relativism. How far is the picture of Socrates in the early Platonic dialogues accurate?

Mon Feb 20  Plato: the dialogues. The “Euthyphro question”; moral relativism

Weds Feb 22  The Euthyphro The fact-value distinction

Mon Feb 27. Plato, the Meno: the nature of abstract and mathematical learning; recollection; knowledge and opinion

Weds Mar 1  The Phaedo: arguments for and against the immortality of the soul

Mon Mar 6  Review

Weds Mar 8  Test?

Mon Mar 13  Spring Break
Weds Mar 15 Spring Break

Mon Mar 20 Plato: the theory of forms

Weds Mar 22 Republic. Justice and other virtues in society and in the individual

Mon Mar 27 The Sun and the divided line

Weds Mar 29 the myth of the Cave

Fri Apr 30 Aristotle: His biological conception of the universe. The analysis of change. Substances as basic existents; accidents as modifications of substances.

Mon Apr 3 Matter and form in artefacts and in natural beings. Modes of explanation, including final modes

Weds Apr 5 Aristotle’s Ethics: the end of life.

Fri Apr 7 Aristotle’s Ethics Human flourishing and the virtues.

Mon Apr 10 Aristotle’s Ethics Virtues of feeling: courage and temperance.

Weds Apr 12 Aristotle’s Ethics Individuals and society

Mon Apr 17 Aristotle’s Ethics: Excellence of thought

Weds Apr 19 Epicureans: Their central tenets, cosmological and ethical

Mon Apr 24 Term paper due. Stoics. The propositional content of the passions. The extirpation of the passions.

Weds Apr 4 The neo-Platonists: Plotinus and Porphyry
Platonism and neo-Platonism. The One. Augustine and neo-Platonism

Mon May 1 review

Weds May 3 Last day of classes. Review

Mon May 15 Exam 3.00 – 5.30 pm

Texts
The Presocratic Philosophers, Kirk, Raven and Sorabji (recommended)
Great Dialogues of Plato, trans. W.H.D. Rouse (required)
The Basic Works of Aristotle, McKeon (recommended)

Learning objectives:
Originally, “learning objectives” were ways in which the behavior of “students” was to be modified after taking the course. I will not think in this way or use this jargon. For what I intend to explain, see the provisional syllabus. The skills I expect you to show, and to improve in, include: reading ancient texts for philosophical content; recognizing unfamiliar ideas and relating them to more familiar ones; distinguishing between different attitudes shown in reply to closely-related
questions; judging the values of different arguments independently of the truth of their conclusions, and vice-versa. You will be expected to read (translations of) ancient texts, consult and evaluate commentaries, being ready to give reasons for your views. I expect you to show (at least) competence in all these skills in the tests and written work

**Written work:**
1315 students: Mid-term and final tests, and one paper of up to about 2000 words, due on Apr 24th. I may substitute a further test for the paper, or a paper for one or more of the tests. I may set other short assignments or tests as seems opportune. There will be a final test (*not* take-home)
3315 students: as for 1315 students, the term paper will be of 3,000 words.

**Attendance policy:**
The university has a strong attendance policy, and I will be passing lists of attendance in class. Moreover, you are unlikely to be able to get a full understanding of the subject from the reading alone – I should not be giving these classes if you could learn the same from books. Non-attendance at class will not be regarded as an excuse for failing to be aware of matters I may from time to time announce in class.

**Office hours:**
Mon, Wed and Fri 8.30 – 10.00 a.m.

**Determination of final grades:**
In-term tests: at least 10%. Term paper: at least 25%. Final test: at least 50%. I shall also bear in mind class participation when giving a final grade. If I see fit to change these proportions, I will inform you.

**Final exam**
The final exam will take place on Mon May 15, 3.00 – 5.30 p.m.

**Myself**
My phone number: 713 831 7292; my e-mail: martincf@stthom.edu

**On-line texts and commentaries:**
Very many ancient philosophical texts are available on-line, as are some commentaries. I list some that may be of interest
The Internet Classics Archive http://classics.mit.edu/index.html
The Perseus Project http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/
Project Gutenberg http://promo.net/pg/
Classic Texts in Ethics http://ethics.acusd.edu/books.html
Plato and his Dialogues http://www.plato-dialogues.org/plato.htm

You will no doubt find many more serious sites for commentaries, and also a number of paper-mills. You may feel tempted to print out material from these, if you are hard-pressed to complete an assignment on time. I would strongly recommend against this. I will have abundant evidence – from the tests etc. I will give you – of your natural way of writing, and I will probably not find it hard to catch you out. I will take this seriously. The university’s Draconian policies on academic dishonesty and plagiarism are to be found in the undergraduate handbook, online at http://www.stthom.edu/studentaffairs/campus/pdf/handbook.pdf
Your course work is supposed to provide evidence that you have certain skills – if you use someone else’s work you are submitting fraudulent evidence. To the extent that you have done this to any great extent in your college years will turn your degree into a fraud. If there’s enough of it goes on, everyone’s degree becomes a fraud. Then people will stop going to college, and the institutions of tertiary education will break down. I would regard this as a bad thing, and it is in my interest to prevent it.

If I discover that a student has plagiarised material for a class assignment, I will give that student an F for the whole course. If you turn in very bad work of your own, or fail to turn in any work at all, I shall only award an F for that piece of work. The university allows me to penalise plagiarism in that way. It is thus in your interest not to plagiarise, but to turn in your own work, however bad it may be.

**Disabilities**

Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact me after class or during office hours. Additionally, students will need to contact Counseling and Disability Services in Crocker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-2169 or 6953.