History of Philosophy: Ancient Philosophy

Philosophy 364

Instructor: Ryan Wasserman | ryan.wasserman@wwu.edu | Bond 302, TR 11:15-12

Overview: This is a survey course in early Greek philosophy. The first half will focus on ancient theories of change, and the second half will focus on ancient theories of the good life. In exploring these topics we will discuss the views of many early thinkers, including Heraclitus, Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Pyrrho.

Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to identify the key figures in ancient Greek philosophy, and to present, explain, and evaluate some of their central views and arguments. You will also see improvements in your ability to think critically and to write analytically.

Textbook: The required textbooks for this course are Early Greek Philosophy (2nd ed.), by Jonathan Barnes, and Ancient Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction (2nd ed.), by Christopher Shields. I’ve listed the second book as “suggested” at the bookstore since there is a free electronic version available through the library. There will also be some readings available on the course website. Some of these readings are shortened versions of Plato’s dialogues. If you would like to read the full versions, I have placed a complete collection of Plato’s dialogues on reserve at the reserve desk in the library.

Requirements: You are expected to arrive on time for class, having done the assigned reading in advance. You are also required to complete a midterm paper (35 points), a final paper (35 points), and six homework assignments (5 points each, for a total of 30). In keeping with the course outcomes, all of these assignments will require you to do some writing, and all of them will require you to work out your own views on some topic or other. Details on the papers will be posted on the course website at least two weeks before they are due. Homework assignments will be passed out in class and will not be announced in advance. So, if you are going to
miss class, and you believe you have a good excuse, you should let me know right away. If I accept your excuse, I will send you the assignment electronically. (The same thing goes for turning in homework assignments. These assignments are due in class so, if you are going to miss class for what you think is a good reason, let me know and I may accept the homework assignment electronically.) There will be approximately eight assignments throughout the quarter, but I will only count your six highest scores. Course grades are determined according to the following scale: 100-93=A, 92-90=A-, 89-87=B+, 86-83=B, 82-80=B-, 79-77=C+, 76-73=C, 72-70=C-, 69-67=D+, 66-63=D, 62-60=D-, 59-0=F.

**Extensions:** Requests for extensions will be handled on an individual basis.

**Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty at Western Washington University is a serious infraction dealt with severely. It is your responsibility to understand the nature and possible consequences of academic dishonesty. For more information on academic dishonesty, see appendix D of the university catalog:


**ADA Accommodations:** At Western Washington University, we are committed to providing a campus community, workplace and academic environment that is fully accessible to people of all abilities. Under federal and state law, no qualified person will be denied access to, participation in, or the benefits of a University program or activity on the basis of their disability. For more information on accommodations, see the DSR webpage:


**Student Rights and Responsibilities:** Western Washington University students enjoy the same basic rights, privileges, and freedoms granted to all members of society. At the same time, acceptance of admission to the university carries with it an obligation to fulfill certain responsibilities and expectations as a member of the Western Washington University community. For more details, see Western’s **Student Rights and Responsibilities Code:**

[http://www.wwu.edu/dos/conduct/the_code.shtml](http://www.wwu.edu/dos/conduct/the_code.shtml)

**Ethical Computing:** Students are also responsible for knowing and adhering to WWU’s standards for ethical computing. For more information, see Western’s **Policy for Responsible Computing** and the **User Agreement for WWU Network and Computer Resources:**
Student Services: Western encourages students to seek assistance and support at the onset of an illness, difficulty, or crisis.

- In the case of a medical concern or question, contact the Health Center: 650-3400 or [http://www.wwu.edu/chw/student_health/](http://www.wwu.edu/chw/student_health/)
- In the case of an emotional or psychological concern or question, contact the Counseling Center: 650-3400 or [http://www.wwu.edu/counseling/](http://www.wwu.edu/counseling/)
- In the case of a health and safety concern, contact the University Police: 650-3555 or [http://www.wwu.edu/ps/police/](http://www.wwu.edu/ps/police/)
- In the case of a family emergency or personal crisis, contact the Dean of Students: 650-3450 or [http://wp.wwu.edu/students/](http://wp.wwu.edu/students/)

Equal Opportunity: Western is committed to an environment free of discrimination and harassment. Federal and State laws, as well as University policies, protect faculty, staff, and students against discrimination based on the following legally protected characteristics: Race, Color, Creed, Religion, National Origin, Sex, (including pregnancy and parenting status), Age, Disability, Marital Status, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, Genetic Information and Veteran Status. For more details, see the EO website: [http://www.wwu.edu/eoo/](http://www.wwu.edu/eoo/)

Changes: This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and by e-mail. Students will be held responsible for any changes.

Schedule:

04.03  Introduction to Ancient Philosophy
04.05  Heraclitus on Change Barnes, Introduction, Synopsis, Note to Readers, and Chapter 8, Shields 1.1-1.3

04.10  Parmenides on Change Barnes, Chapter 9 and Shields, 1.4
04.12  Melissus on Change Barnes, Chapter 10

04.17  Zeno on Change Barnes, Chapters 11
04.19  The Atomists on Change Barnes, Chapters 20 and 21, and Shields, 1.5-1.7
04.24  Plato on Change Republic (website), Phaedo (website) and Shields, Chapter 3
04.26  Aristotle on Change Physics (website)

05.01  Review Day
05.03  ☑ Midterm paper due at 10am in my office

05.08  Introduction to the Good Life
05.10  The Cyrenaics on The Good Life Aristippus (website)

05.15  The Epicureans on the Good Life Epicurus and Letter to Menoeceus (website) and Shields, 5.1-5.2.
05.17  The Stoics on the Good Life The Stoics and On the Ends of Good and Evil (website) and Shields, 5.3

05.22  Aristotle on the Good Life Nicomachean Ethics, Book I (website) and Shields, Chapter 4
05.24  Aristotle on the Good Life Nicomachean Ethics, Book II (website)

05.29  The Skeptics on the Good Life Pyrrho and Outlines of Pyrrhonism (website) and Shields, 5.4-5.5
05.31  The Skeptics on the Good Life

06.05  Plato on the Good Life Apology (website) and Shields, Chapter 2
06.07  Review Day

06.14  ☑ Final paper due in my office at 10am