

History of Western Philosophy: Ancient and Medieval

Philosophy 361RH-001

Fall 2012

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Course Description

This course offers you a survey of Western philosophical thought from approximately 600 BCE to 1400 CE. We will focus primarily on the ways in which selected pre-modern thinkers addressed questions concerning the principle of life (*psyche*, “soul”), sensation, and thought. Plato and some of the Presocratic philosophers framed their answers to these questions in terms of metaphysical explanations that reached far beyond the natural world. In contrast, Aristotle and others sought their answers empirically by offering naturalistic accounts of how humans possess life, are aware of the world around them, and have thoughts. Later Classical and Medieval philosophers sought to synthesize and develop ideas from both schools of thought, as well as incorporate elements from other influences, especially Neoplatonism, Stoicism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This later focus on what came to be known as *soul* yielded an amazing variety of theories that contrasted strikingly with those that came before, yet whose development maintained a degree of continuity that makes possible our tracing their genesis and evolution over two thousand years—and beyond.

The Ancient and Medieval eras laid much groundwork for Modern sensibilities. The problems of explaining life, sensation, and thought metaphysically versus naturally, for example, still rage today in the form of materialist versus non-physical, often spiritual, accounts of mind (i.e., physicalism vs. dualism). In order to better understand the background for this and other current debates, we will look at several thinkers’ theories concerning such issues as:

- What is it for a living thing to have a soul?
- How are living things embodied?
- How is the human soul constituted (that is, what are its parts or elements)?
- Does the soul live beyond the death of the physical body?
- How does the soul co-ordinate with its physical body?
- How do human beings sense, perceive, or become aware of the world outside them?
- What explains errors in sensation and perception?
- What is thinking?

In addition, due to claims standardly made regarding the allegedly self-generated, foundational nature of Ancient Western philosophy and its alleged close association with “manly” rational thought, we will begin the course by examining several issues regarding the interpretation of source materials. For example:

- How do we make sense of “fragments” that ancient authors typically cited not for the sake of accurate intellectual history, but for their own biased purposes?
- Is the Ancient Greek philosophical tradition *purely* Western—that is, is it a self-generated development of solely European (i.e., white racial) origin, as many historians have claimed, or is it some sort of hybrid arising from major influences of, say, Asian, African, *and* European cultures?
- Given the evidence we possess, does it make sense to proclaim an “origin” or starting point for Western philosophical and scientific thinking, a point that inaugurates a totally different manner of thought from that which came before? Or is establishing such an origin somewhat arbitrary?
- Why do we find so few women represented in Ancient and Medieval philosophical debates?

This course will introduce you to practices fundamental to the history of philosophy. Your reading of original texts, for instance, will often be juxtaposed with sample interpretations by various Ancient,

Medieval, or Modern scholars. Grasping the interplay between source material and its interpretation is a critical component of the history of philosophy—indeed, of all philosophy.

RH Designation

PHL 361 is a designated “RH” course, meaning that it provides students with an autonomous experience of the research and creative process in the humanities leading to the production of a scholarly product – in this case, a research paper in philosophy. In addition, this course emphasizes philosophy’s methods of reaching scholarly conclusions, forming appropriate interpretations, and making fitting judgments. As such, one-half of your course grade will depend on producing elements of a research apparatus: finding sources, a proposal, annotated bibliography, and a finished research essay (see also below); the rest of your grade will depend on learning philosophy’s standard scholarly methods for interpretation, judgment, and conclusion.

Required Texts

- Aristotle, *De Anima (On the Soul)*, translated by Hugh Lawson-Tancred (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).
- Chodorow, Stanley, *Writing a Successful Research Paper: A Simple Approach* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2011).
- *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: the Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Traditions*, Third Edition, eds. Arthur Hyman, James J. Walsh, and Thomas Williams, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2010).
- Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).
- Plotinus, *The Essential Plotinus*, Second Edition, tr. Elmer O’Brien (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978).
- *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Second Edition, eds. G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- *The Stoics Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia*, eds. Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2008).
- Handouts made available in class.
- Reserve readings (available electronically through the MSU Library website).

Assignments

- one extended research essay (10-15 pages): 40% of grade
- quizzes on Chodorow and finding usable research assignments: 5%
- one research essay proposal (2-3 pages): 5%
- one annotated bibliography (2-3 pages): 5%
- one mid-term exam: 15%
- one final exam: 15%
- participation and industry in class: 15%

Essays and exams will be graded on an A-F scale; proposals and bibliographies will be graded on a +/√/- scale.

Interpretation of Grades

Letter grades in the course will be awarded according to the criteria described below:

- A** Achievement that is outstanding relative to basic course requirements—for example, written work that conveys a superior understanding of the material and is free of grammatical errors. Has a special quality—for example, an essay that provides particularly insightful analysis, criticism, or reflection.
- B** Achievement that is significantly higher than basic course requirements; e.g., a well-written and well-produced essay. May contain a few minor flaws that could be overcome without difficulty. Shows a solid understanding of the material.
- C** Achievement that fulfills basic course requirements. However, may contain significant flaws—e.g., an essay that fulfills the assignment's basic requirements, but does not do it in a clear or noteworthy way. Shows some understanding of the material, but presents it partially, incompletely, or awkwardly. May fail to address properly one or more major assignment requirements. Awkward handling of source materials may be in evidence. May contain grammatical errors that interfere with the essay's readability.

D Achievement that is worthy of course credit, but is not satisfactory. For example, an essay that forces the reader to do far too much work to understand it, due to numerous and/or serious grammatical errors, incomplete or inadequate presentation of materials, poor reasoning, or poor writing. May also fail to address properly one or more major assignment requirements, without which the essay fails to address the primary aims of the assignment.

F Achievement not worthy of course credit.

Other Course Policies and Information

Academic Dishonesty. All work for this course must be written by the person submitting it for evaluation. It must also be written for **this** course. These requirements include anything submitted for credit in the class. **Anyone found guilty of plagiarism, cheating, forgery, or other forms of academic dishonesty will fail this course** and the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students. (See the *MSU Student Conduct Guidelines* for further information.)

Copies. Make backup copies of all your submitted work and keep them until you receive your final grade.

Academic Philosophical Resources. For your research essays for this course (see below), you **must** use academic philosophical resources. Usually, an academic philosophical resource is an essay published in a recognized philosophy journal, a recognizably philosophical anthology, a philosophy book, and/or is listed in *The Philosopher's Index* (see below). Academic philosophical essays and books typically have footnotes or endnotes, explore concepts or theories in extended depth (i.e., for several pages), focus on argument or conceptual analysis, and have the sort of character possessed by the books and essays we will read for this course. Typically, but not always, they are written by professional philosophers. **For the purposes of this course, the academic philosophical resources you use for your research papers must be listed in *The Philosopher's Index* or explicitly approved by me before you may use them.**

Assigned Readings. Philosophy requires a solid comprehension of texts. My assumption for this class is that you will make every effort to **read the assigned material twice and come to class prepared to discuss it.** The best way to achieve the comprehension needed to discuss philosophy texts intelligently is to **read the material carefully and more than once:** first for a general grasp, then a second time (generally more slowly) for a deeper, more detailed understanding.

Attendance, Participation, and Industry. A significant portion of your grade (20%) will depend on your **active participation and industry in class**, which I will take to be illustrated by thoughtful discussion, comments, and questions regarding the course's topics and materials. This aspect of your grade **presupposes regular attendance.** Missing numerous class sessions (i.e., **six** or more) should lead to the expectation that your grade will be negatively affected, and missing **eleven** or more (i.e., more than 25% of the course) for **any** reason should lead to the expectation that you will not do satisfactorily or, in extreme cases, not pass the class. In addition, only rarely or never saying anything in class should lead to the expectation that your grade may be negatively affected.

E-reserve and Online Readings. Some of the course readings will be made available to you through the Renne Library e-Reserve system or are accessible online through various databases. **These readings are required texts** for this course. As such, you will need to **print them out and bring your copies to class** so that we may study and discuss them in detail.

Essay Format. Your written, out-of-class assignments for this course must be word-processed and clearly readable in 10 to 12 point font. Space the lines as instructed, use approximately one-half to one-inch margins, place your name, assignment description, and course and section number in an upper corner of the first page, title your essay, number your pages, use a standard citation format, and staple or paper clip multiple-page essays together. There is no need for cover or backing sheets, plastic binders, folders, etc.

Incompletes. University policy states that students themselves must ordinarily petition for Incompletes to the appropriate administrative body. Incomplete grades are generally given to students who become ill or

have other emergencies late in the semester. Students eligible for Incompletes should have consistently completed four-fifths of the assigned work during the semester in a timely fashion.

Late Papers. Late assignments are generally frowned upon, may receive a lower grade than they would otherwise, or **may not be accepted** for credit. If you have difficulty meeting a deadline, contact me ASAP.

Other Course Policies and Information (continued)

Philosophical Research Resources. A number of research resources for philosophy, containing articles and books that may be used for writing essays in this course, are owned or licensed by the Montana State University – Bozeman Library system. For example, the MSU Library system owns subscriptions to *Phronesis* and *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*. These resources may be identified and in many cases accessed online through the MSU Library system’s databases; in other cases you may obtain these materials physically from books and journals the MSU Library system owns or may borrow through Interlibrary Loan services. In particular, your research into topics arising in this course will be greatly facilitated by *The Philosopher’s Index database*, to which the MSU Library system offers access online.

Required Texts. This course is about the **analysis of texts**. The assigned readings exist in books or online resources that you **must have with you on the days we discuss them**. If you come to class without these texts on the relevant days, you will be counted as absent.

Research Essay. For your major project in the course, I will require you to write a **10-15 page research essay** that philosophically explores a topic of your choice, either a theory, idea, theme, or figure covered in class, or something that is plausibly related. By 31 October I will expect you to submit a **written proposal** of 2-3 pages that describes your research topic, explains why you believe it is a philosophical problem worth exploring in an extended essay for this class, outlines what you believe your argument will be (i.e., what you expect your thesis and major premises will be), and lists several sources (i.e., philosophy readings) you are fairly sure you will use for your project, at least one of which must be from the class readings themselves and at least two of which must be from outside the course readings. Then, by 5 November I will expect you to submit an **annotated bibliography** of at least six sources that might be used for your research project, at least one of which must be from the class readings themselves, and at least three of which must be external to required course readings. The **research essay** itself will be due 30 November. I will provide additional information on this project, its proposal, and bibliography later in the semester, or upon request.

Schedule of topics and assignments

August 27

Introduction to the course

Overview, background, sources, and general philosophical practices of the Ancient and Medieval eras

August 29-31

***Making sense of Presocratic fragments and Western philosophy’s “origins”:
a problem of interpretation***

The “origins” of Western philosophy and science: critiquing the standard version

Reading: Flory, “Some Typical Western Historians and Philosophers on the Origins of Philosophy and Science” (handout on e-reserve)

[print out & bring to class]

Flory, “Racism, *Black Athena*, and the Historiography of Ancient Philosophy,”

The Philosophical Forum 28 (1997), 183-208 (e-reserve) **[print out & bring to class]**

Press, “Origins of Western Philosophic Thinking,” in *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy*, ed. Richard H. Popkin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 1-5 (e-reserve) **[print out and bring to class]**

Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Prologue, 1-15

[5 pp. from Wikisource], (e-reserve) **[print out and bring to class]**
Recommended: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. x-xvii

September 3

No Class – Labor Day

September 5

Schedule of topics and assignments (continued)

Further considerations concerning early Western philosophy

Reading: Waithe, "Introduction," *A History of Women Philosophers*, vol. I/600 BC - 500 AD, ed. Mary Ellen Waithe (Dordrecht, 1987), pp. ix-xv, 5-9 (e-reserve)
[print out and bring to class]

Waithe, Quotations by Ancient Women Philosophers, excerpted from *A History of Women Philosophers*, vol. I/600 BC - 500 AD (handout on e-reserve)

[print out and bring to class]

Recommended: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. 1-15

September 7-10

Mythical and Near Eastern sources for Presocratic philosophy

Reading: *The Presocratic Philosophers*, pp. 1-20, 26-46

Recommended: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. 16-29

September 12

Aristotle's interpretation of the Presocratics' and Plato's theories of soul

Reading: Aristotle, *De Anima*, pp. 132-154;

Lawson-Tancred, "Introduction," *De Anima*, pp. 23-48

Recommended: Lloyd, "The Social Background of Early Greek Philosophy and Science [1972]," in G.E. R. Lloyd, *Methods and Problems in Greek Science: Selected Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 121-140 [e-reserve]; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book I, tr. W. D. Ross

<<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.1.i.html>>

Recommended: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. 30-42

September 14-19

Ionian thinkers on nature and the human soul

Reading: *The Presocratic Philosophers*:

Thales of Miletus, pp. 76-77, 79-80, 86-99 (esp. 95-98)

Anaximander of Miletus, pp. 115-122, 128-137, 140-142 (rec.: 100-115)

Anaximenes of Miletus, pp. 143-148, 150-1, 158-162

Xenophanes of Colophon, pp. 163-4, 168-172

Pythagoras of Samos, pp. 214-222, 232-238

Philolaus of Croton, Alcmaeon, and later Pythagoreans, pp. 324-334, 346-348

Recommended: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. 43-6

September 21

Italian thinkers and later Presocratics on nature and the human soul

Reading: *The Presocratic Philosophers*:

Heraclitus of Ephesus, pp. 181-188, 202-212

Empedocles of Acragas, pp. 284-5, 309-312, 320-321

Recommended: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. 47-59

September 24

Atomists and other Presocratics on the soul and mind (nous)

Reading: *The Presocratic Philosophers*:

Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, pp. 362-70, 374-6, 382-4

Leucippus of Miletus and Democritus of Abdera, pp. 425-9

(rec.: 413-425)

Diogenes of Apollonia, pp. 437-452

Aristotle, *De Anima*, pp. 133-7, 140, 146-8

Recommended: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. 60-73

September 26-28
Plato on the soul
Plato on the soul (I)
Reading: Plato, *Apology*, *Crito*, in *Complete Works*, pp. 18-36; 38-48;
Plato, *Meno*, in *Complete Works*, pp. 880-897
Recommended: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. 74-81

Schedule of topics and assignments (continued)

October 1
Plato on the soul (II)
Reading: Plato, *Symposium*, in *Complete Works*, pp. 472-7; 484-505

October 3
Plato, women, and feminist interpretations of the Symposium
Hawthorne, "Diotima Speaks Through the Body," in *Engendering Origins*, ed. Bat-Ami Bar-On (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), pp. 83-96 (e-reserve)
[print out and bring to class];
Blair, "Women: the Unrecognized Teachers of the Platonic Socrates," in *Ancient Philosophy* 16 (1996), pp. 333-350 (e-reserve)
[print out and bring to class]
Reread: Plato, *Symposium*, in *Complete Works*, pp. 484-94

October 5-8
Plato on the soul (III): the self and immortality
Reading: Plato, *Phaedo*, in *Complete Works*, pp. 50-100

October 10-12
Plato on the soul (IV): human soul and world soul
Reading: Plato, *Timeaus*, in *Complete Works*, pp. 1225-51; 1254-5; 1270-83; 1286-91
Reread: Aristotle, *De Anima*, pp. 134-135, 140-143
Review for Midterm

October 15
Midterm

October 17
Aristotle on the soul
The soul as form: the nature of the soul
Reading: Aristotle, *De Anima*, pp. 126-130, 156-164;
Lawson-Tancred, "Introduction," *De Anima*, pp. 11-16, 48-54, 58-60, 62-64, 68-75;
Recommended: Everson, "Psychology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*,
ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge :Cambridge University Press, 1999),
pp. 168-194 (e-reserve)

October 19
Sense perception and error
Reading: Aristotle, *De Anima*, pp. 164-179, 183-88

October 22-24
Imagination, intellect, and movement
Reading: Aristotle, *De Anima*, pp. 197-221
(esp. 197-201, 207-210, 216-217 (on imagination); 201-207, 211-216 (on intellect))

October 26
Feminist interpretations of Aristotle's theory of soul
Reading: Lange, "Woman is not a rational animal," in *Discovering Reality*, eds. Sandra Harding & Merrill B. Hintikka (Dortrecht: Reidel, 1983), pp. 1-15
(e-reserve) **[print out and bring to class]**

- October 29 ***The Stoics on the soul and the cosmos***
The soul, cosmos, and sensation as pneuma
 Reading: *The Stoics Reader*, pp. 1-16; 23-29; 38-58; 61-4
 Reading: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. 82-3
Research proposal due
- October 31-November 2 *Cosmic soul and human soul as pneuma*
 Reading: *The Stoics Reader*, pp. 79-101; 166-72
 Recommended: Hankinson, "Stoicism and Medicine," *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 295-309 (e-reserve)
- November 5 **Schedule of topics and assignments (continued)**
The Stoics on ethics, the wise man, and women
 Reading: *The Stoics Reader*, pp. 113-24; 127-32; 177-9
Annotated bibliography due
 Reread: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. 4-5, 27-8
- November 7 ***Plotinus on the soul***
Beauty and the origins of the soul
 Reading: *The Essential Plotinus*, pp. 33-43, 59-71
- November 9 *The soul and "The Soul"*
 Reading: *The Essential Plotinus*, pp. 126-160, 173
 Reading: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. 83-91
- November 12 **No class – Veteran’s Day Holiday**
- November 14 *Intellect and hypostases*
 Reading: *The Essential Plotinus*, pp. 45-58, 91-104
- November 16 ***Medieval philosophers on the soul***
An early Medieval Christian doctrine of soul
 Reading: Augustine, excerpt from *On the Trinity* (ca. 416 CE), *Philosophy of the Middle Ages*, Second Edition, pp. 68-74 (e-reserve) **[print out and bring to class]**
 (Recommended: *Philosophy of the Middle Ages*, Third Edition, "Introduction," pp. xi-xvi; pp. 1-4, 5-8
 Ryan on Augustine’s "race" (e-reserve) **[print out and bring to class]**
 Reading: Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper*, pp. 93-7
- November 21-23 **Thanksgiving Holiday – No class**
- November 19-28 *Medieval Arabic commentators (and physicians) on De Anima*
 Reading: *Philosophy of the Middle Ages*:
 Al-farabi, pp. 223-232 (Recommended: pp. 215-222)
 Ibn Sina, pp. 256-264 (Recommended: pp. 239-43)
 Ibn Rushd, pp. 304-316 (Recommended: pp. 285-8)
 Reread: Aristotle, *De Anima*, pp. 201-5 (Recommended: *De Anima*, pp. 90-99)
- November 30-December 3 *Medieval Jewish and "Averroist" commentators on De Anima*
 Reading: *Philosophy of the Middle Ages*:
 Solomon Ibn Gabirol, pp. 355-359 (Recommended: pp. 335-7, 351-2)
 Hasdai Crescas, pp. 401-408 (Recommended: pp. 397-400)
 Siger of Brabant, excerpt from *On the Intellectual Soul*, pp. 203-6 (e-reserve) **[print out and bring to class]**

(Recommended: *Philosophy of the Middle Ages*, pp. 409-11, 437-9)

November 30

Research essay due

December 5-7

St. Thomas' Medieval Christian commentary on De Anima

Reading: *Philosophy of the Middle Ages*:

Aquinas, pp. 494-504, 506-8, 511-8 (Recommended: pp. 447-50)

Review for Final

December 10

Final Exam (4-5:50 PM)