

INTRODUCTION TO GREEK PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Amichai Amit

Spring Semester

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Office Hours: by appointment

Short description:

Ancient Greek philosophy has had a formative influence on western thought in general, and on western philosophy in particular, such that the latter can be viewed as a millennia-long project of cultivating the philosophical seeds sown by the ancient Greeks. For this reason, familiarity with the basic ideas of these ancient philosophers provides a key to unlocking many of the treasures of the western canon. The objective of this course is to afford liberal arts students such a familiarity by studying major texts of Greek philosophy.

Introduction to Greek Philosophy follows the development of Greek philosophy from its inception in the fragments of the Milesian school, Parmenides, and Heraclitus, through the Socratic dialogues, to the highly detailed and systematic works of Plato and Aristotle. Beginning with the earliest philosophers, we will explore the gradual separation of mythical and philosophical ways of thinking—and in particular, the transition from the explanation of the cosmos by means of myths of origin to the metaphysical investigation that aspires to disclose the most general and fundamental principles that constitute the cosmos. We will follow this metaphysical investigation as it develops in Plato's theory of ideas and culminates in Aristotle's theory of substance. Along with metaphysics, the course will also look into ethical and political questions, such as "what is the good life?" and "what is the ideal structure of governance?" We will focus on the way these questions are considered and answered by the sophists, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

Assessments:

Minor assignments: As a preparation for the discussion of some of the major texts (e.g., *Mino*, *The Republic*, and *Nicomachean Ethics*) students will be required to post a response or a question to a dedicated forum in the Moodle. Furthermore, each student will be required to define one philosophical concept and post the definition to the "philosophical dictionary" on the Moodle – 11%

Midterm: In-class exam on Socrates and the pre-Socratic philosophers – 19%

Final requirement: A paper of 4-6 pages– 60%

Participation: Students are expected to participate actively by contributing fruitfully to class discussions and reading the relevant materials in preparation to class – 10%

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted a maximum of three absences without penalty. Any additional absences will affect the final grade and may result in failure of the course.

Academic conduct:

Plagiarism is taken extremely seriously. Any instance of academic misconduct which includes: submitting someone else's work as your own; failure to accurately cite sources; taking words from another source without using quotation marks; submission of work for which you have previously received credit; working in a group for individual assignments; using unauthorized materials in an exam and sharing your work with other students, will result in failure of the assignment and will likely lead to further disciplinary measures.

Additional requirements:

Students are requested to turn off all electronic devices.