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PHL 261Y.01: History of Ancient Philosophy

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Philosophy 261: Introduction to Ancient Philosophy

Professor Matthew Strohl

Office: LA 147

Office hours: TR 9:00-9:30, 12:20-12:50

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Course description:

This course will introduce you to some of the central writings of Plato and Aristotle, and will also include a brief overview of Presocratic and Hellenistic Philosophy. Topics covered in Plato will include Socratic definition, the examined life, Meno's paradox, the theory of recollection, the theory of forms, the immortality of the soul, challenges to morality, the analogy of city and soul, the tripartition of the soul, and the famous metaphors of the sun, line and cave. Turning to Aristotle, topics covered will include change, nature, hylomorphism, the four causes, soul as first actuality, the Prime Mover, happiness (*eudaimonia*), virtue, responsibility, and the place of theoretical study in a happy life.

Required texts:

Plato, *Five Dialogues*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, second ed., Hackett Publishing 2002

Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, Hackett Publishing 1989

Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve, Hackett Publishing 1992

Aristotle, *Selections*, trans. Terence Irwin and Gail Fine, Hackett Publishing 1995

Note: You *must* use these translations (no exceptions!). Translations of Plato's and Aristotle's works vary widely in quality and the vast majority of them are *terrible*. The ones listed above are all very good. Moreover, it is important that all of us be using the same translation, since different translators often translate important terms differently.

Plato: Complete Works, ed. John Cooper, has all the right translations of the Platonic dialogues we'll be reading, so if you have it already there's no need to buy the individual Hackett editions. If you would prefer to buy the *Complete Works* rather than the individual editions go ahead and do so, but it's big and heavy, and so won't be as easy to bring to class. If you plan on taking my 400 level Plato course, you are going to need to buy this book anyways, so you might as well get it now.

Be sure to bring whatever text we're reading to class! I generally lecture by going through the assigned reading sequentially, reading out important passages and discussing them in detail. You'll want to have the text in front of you to follow along and mark important bits.

Grading and exams:

There will be three short answer exams, each worth 20% of your grade. There will also be a final worth 40%. It will cover material from the entire course but will emphasize the material covered after the third in-class exam (Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*). It will call for somewhat more involved answers than the first three exams. You will have some choice about which questions to answer on all exams. I will only ask about material that we have gone over in class.

I will not take attendance. You're grown-ups. I've had students complain on evaluations and in belligerent emails that I don't give enough direct incentive to come to class and that they have trouble motivating themselves to come. One student, angry over failing an exam, even claimed that I was responsible for her poor grade because I didn't have an attendance policy. Well, I'm not going to condescend to a gold-star system or anything like that, but I will learn your names (slowly but surely) and I will be aware of who comes to class and who doesn't. I reserve the right to take attendance into account when deciding whether to round a grade up or down, give someone a break, etc.

I can tell you up front that in all likelihood if you don't come to class regularly you will have a very difficult time with the exams. You have officially been warned.

Also, if you need to reschedule an exam for a legitimate reason, please give me advanced notice (preferably at least a week). I understand that emergencies do come up, but please be prepared to show me documentation if you miss an exam because of an emergency. I reserve the right to not allow someone to make up an exam if they miss it without my prior approval and are unable to document that their absence was due to a legitimate emergency.

Academic misconduct:

You are strictly held to the University of Montana Student Conduct Code (<http://www.umt.edu.SA>). The in-class exams are closed-note: you may not consult anything but your own mind in order to answer questions on the exam. You may not use cell-phones, or any electronic devices to aid you, nor fellow students, nor fellow students' answers on exams, etc. You will receive no credit for any exam that you cheat on. Your conduct will also be reported to the Dean.

Special needs:

Students with disabilities will receive reasonable modifications in this course. Your responsibilities are to request them from me with sufficient advance notice, and to be prepared to provide verification of disability and its impact from Disability Services. Please speak with me after class or during my office hours to discuss the details. For more information, visit the Disability Services for Students website at www.umt.edu/dss/

- 8/28 Introduction, Presocratics (handout)
- 8/30 Euthyphro
- 9/4 Apology
- 9/6 Phaedo
- 9/11 cont.

- 9/13 cont.
- 9/18 spillover/review
- 9/20 **FIRST EXAM**
- 9/25 Symposium: Introductory dialogue, Aristophanes' speech, Diotima questions Socrates, Diotima's speech, Alcibiades' entrance, Alcibiades' speech, Final dialogue (these are the titles in the Hackett paperback. If you are using the *Complete Works of Plato*, see me to sort out which parts you are supposed to read)
- 9/27 Republic II, beginning to 369a
- 10/2 Republic IV
- 10/4 **Out of town, no class**
- 10/9 cont.
- 10/11 Rep V 472b-end, Rep VI 497b-end
- 10/16 Rep VII
- 10/18 Spillover
- 10/23 **SECOND EXAM**
- 10/25 Aristotle, Physics I
- 10/30 Physics II
- 11/1 cont.
- 11/6 **Election Day, no class**
- 11/8 De Anima I.1, II.1-3
- 11/13 Metaphysics XII
- 11/15 spillover **TAKE HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED**
- 11/20 **TAKE HOME EXAM DUE**, Nicomachean Ethics I, ch. 1-5 (this is a short reading)
- 11/22 **Thanksgiving, no class**
- 11/27 Nicomachean Ethics I (the rest of it)
- 11/29 Nicomachean Ethics II
- 12/4 Nicomachean Ethics III
- 12/6 Nicomachean Ethics X

Final: Take home, due **Wed, Dec. 12 at noon**, either by email, slid under my office door, or in my mailbox.