

PHIL 3310 (H)  
Spring 2009  
T/R 2:00-3:20 pm

Dr. Wilkerson  
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Office: ENV 320F  
Hr: Friday, Noon-1 pm

## ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

### Course Description:

“Philosophy began when human beings started to wonder.” This enigmatic yet ever so wonderful claim, attributed to Aristotle, the fourth century (BCE) philosopher and student of Plato, casts a spell of seduction over the whole history of Western philosophy. “What happened,” one might inquire, “when human beings began to wonder in a philosophical manner? How did we start to wonder? And why? And, curiously, did we ever NOT wonder about things? How did our wondering about things take root in human consciousness?” Students in PHIL 3310 will survey, in an historical context, the emergence and development of philosophical thought in the Western world. While doing so, we will examine and compare various *epistemes*, asking how different “ways of knowing” might reflect competing views on truth, reality, nature, and the human being—its relationship to these issues and its standing as a social and political agent. We will begin with discussions of pre-philosophical Greek culture, on the myths and gods of the Greek world and the tragic representation of the gods and humans as subjects of fate. Then, we will offer a reading of the *Apology*, Plato’s account of the trial of his teacher, Socrates. In doing so, we will see Plato’s Socrates raise questions concerning the meaning and value of the “examined life” and its significance for the *polis* (the Greek city-state). Next, we will outline various concepts and suppositions regarding natural phenomena, characterizing the thought of the Western world’s earliest philosophers, the so-called Presocratics, followed by a discussion of the Sophistic revolution in Athens and the ensuing *Peloponnesian War*. By the end of the semester, we discuss sections of Aristotle’s *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. Periodically, during the semester, we will discuss hermeneutic interpretations of the Greeks by some of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s major philosophical readers of the texts covered during this course.

### Required Texts:

- 1) PLATO, COMPLETE WORKS (Hackett)
- 2) ARISTOTLE, INTRODUCTORY READINGS (Hackett)
- 3) A PRESOCRATIC READER (Hackett)
- 4) THUCYDIDES, ON JUSTICE POWER AND HUMAN NATURE (Hackett)
- 5) HEIDEGGER, PARMENIDES (Indiana)
- 6) NIETZSCHE, THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY (Cambridge)

A word of caution concerning the assigned texts: all of these texts are translations of materials written originally in ancient Greek or German. It is generally the nature of any translation, but especially with those of an ancient language, that no two separate ones will read the same. Thus, students should be made aware that they would be at a disadvantage if they attempt to use one of the numerous other translations of these materials available.. In short, it is in your interest to acquire the assigned versions of our texts.

### Requirements:

Students will be asked to produce two Interpretive Essays (5-7pp, typed). **Late papers will not be accepted.** Papers are due at the beginning of class on the given date *unless* we make other arrangements *before* the assignment is due. Students who fail to produce both Interpretive Essays should not expect to pass the class. During the semester, students will also produce two short (2-3 pp) Summary Papers surveying one day’s assigned readings. The dates of the readings to be summarized will be determined by the students. Each Summary Paper should address the particular reading assigned for the day the paper is due. Both of these summaries will be presented orally in class. Each student is responsible for setting

his/her own schedule for the writing and oral presentation of the summary papers and shall notify the instructor of his/her intentions no later than January 28. (Students should attempt to schedule one summary paper by the mid-term essay and one thereafter.)

Final Evaluation:

The Interpretive Essays will each count 30% towards the final grade; each of the Summary Papers and the Oral Presentation will count 10% (30% total). Class participation will constitute the remaining 10% of the final grade.

Attendance:

Daily attendance is required. Students who miss an excessive number of sessions (5 or more) may be removed from the class roster with a grade of WF.

Codes of Conduct:

Students are expected to respect their associates and the integrity of the University of North Texas. Cheating, plagiarism, representing another's work for one's own, or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any student found guilty of a major violation of UNT's specific or general codes of conduct will be dismissed from the class and reported to University officials.

## SCHEDULE

### January

- T/20 Introduction to Course: Discuss: A selection from Hesiod's *Theogony* (handout) and the Sophoclean choral song, "The Ode to Man" from *Antigone* (handout)
- R/22 Discuss: Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* (handout)
- T/27 Discuss: Plato's *Apology* from Complete Works (CW 17-36)
- R/29 Discuss: Plato's *Apology* (cont.)

### February

- T/3 Discuss: Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (BT 13-67)
- R/5 Discuss: Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (BT 67-104)
- T/10 Discuss: Nietzsche's "The Dionysiac World View" (BT 119-138)
- R/12 Discuss: "The Problem of Socrates" (handouts of works by Nietzsche and Leo Strauss)
- T/17 Discuss: *A Presocratic Reader (PR)*, "Introduction," "The Milesians," "Pythagoras and Pythagoreans," and "Xenophanes"
- R/19 Discuss: PR, "Heraclitus"
- T/24 Discuss: PR, "Parmenides" and "Zeno of Elea"
- R/26 Discuss: PR, "The Pluralists," and "Atomism"

### March

- T/3 Discuss: PR, "The Sophists"

- R/5 Discuss: Plato's *Protagoras* (CW 746-770 [338e])  
T/10 Discuss: Plato's *Protagoras* (CW 770 [339a]-790)  
R/12 MID-TERM: FIRST INTERPRETIVE ESSAY DUE. Discuss: Plato's *Protagoras* (cont.)

**MARCH 16-22      SPRING BREAK (NO CLASSES)**

- T/24 Discuss: Thucydides, *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature* (JPH) (Introduction and Chapters One and Two)  
R/26 Discuss: Thucydides, JPH Chapters Three and Four  
T/31 Discuss: Thucydides, JPH Chapters Five, Six, Seven, and Eight  
April  
R/2 Discuss: Plato's *Euthyphro* (CW 1-16)  
T/7 Discuss: Plato's *Republic* (Book I [CW 971-998])  
R/9 Discuss: Plato's *Republic* (Book II [CW 998-1022])  
T/14 Discuss: Plato's *Republic* (Books VI [502a-511e], VII [1123-1155], and X [199-1223])  
R/16 Discuss: Heidegger's *Parmenides* (pp 1-28)  
T/21 Discuss: Heidegger's *Parmenides* (pp 29-117)  
R/23 Discuss: Heidegger's *Parmenides* (pp 118-130)  
T/28 Discuss: Aristotle's *Physics* (in *Introductory Readings* [IR], pp 36-47)  
R/30 Discuss: Aristotle's *Physics*, (IR, 48-62) and *Generation and Corruption* (IR, pp. 69-74)  
May  
T/5 Discuss: Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (IR pp. 115-120; 150-159)  
R/7 Discuss: Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (IR, 187-195)

SECOND INTERPRETIVE ESSAY DUE FINAL EXAM DAY:

TUESDAY, MAY 12 AT 1:30 PM.