

Ancient Philosophy

Instructor: István Bodnár
Teaching Assistant: Rosamaria Romanelli
No. of CEU credits: 2 (ECTS credits: 4)
Status: Mandatory for two-yr MA students in their first year
Time: Monday 13:30-15:10

Description:

The course gives an overview of key issues of ancient philosophy from the Presocratics to Aristotle. The course does not require or build on any specific previous knowledge of ancient philosophy. We will read and discuss a selection of texts from different authors and periods, focussing on their argumentative methods and philosophical concepts, interpretative problems discussed in the contemporary literature and the major alternatives in trying to answer these problems.

Course goal:

The primary goal of the course is to help students to acquire the necessary skills to work with ancient philosophical texts. The course will provide guidance in the study tools, reference translations, bibliographies and online resources for the further study of ancient philosophical texts.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the course students will be expected to possess the skills to work with ancient philosophical texts on their own at an intermediate level. They are expected to be able to analyse the argumentative structure of a text and identify the main concepts (also in their different current translations) used by the author of the text. They should know where to find further literature and linguistic and other tools for a deeper analysis.

Weekly schedule

The course will follow a series of thematic groupings. Starting out from the early Presocratics, and what Aristotle's particular reasons were to identify these authors as the originators of the philosophical tradition, we will follow this up with group about the issues of Being, Knowledge and causes, and Ethics and consist of two parts of unequal length: the first part which covers the ethical theories of Democritus,

Date	Theme	Readings
9 Sep	What is ancient philosophy	Aristotle <i>Metaphysics</i> bk I
16 Sep	<i>Archê</i> : Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes	Fragments of Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes from McKirahan
23 Sep	<i>Archê</i> : Heraclitus	Fragments of Heraclitus from McKirahan
30 Sep	<i>Being</i> : Parmenides	Fragments of Parmenides from McKirahan
7 Oct	<i>Being</i> : Anaxagoras, Plato	Fragments of Anaxagoras from McKirahan, Passages from the <i>Phaedo</i> and the <i>Republic</i>
14 Oct	<i>Being</i> : Plato (cont.)	Passages from the <i>Sophist</i>
21 Oct	<i>Being</i> : Aristotle	Passages from the <i>Categories</i> , <i>Metaphysics</i> IV
28 Oct	<i>Being</i> : Aristotle (cont.)	Passages from <i>Metaphysics</i> VII
4 Nov	<i>Knowledge and causes</i> : Plato	Passages from the <i>Meno</i> (and the <i>Theaetetus</i>)
11 Nov	<i>Knowledge and causes</i> : Aristotle	Passages from <i>Metaphysics</i> I (and <i>Posterior Analytics</i>)
18 Nov	<i>Ethics</i> : Plato	<i>Apology</i> , passages from the <i>Gorgias</i> .
25 Nov	<i>Ethics</i> : Plato (cont.), Aristotle	<i>Gorgias</i> , passages from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I
2 Dec	<i>Ethics</i> : Aristotle (cont.)	Passages from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> X

Requirements:

- regular attendance
- regular preparation
- active participation in discussions
- for two-year students: summary statements of the material covered
- for one-year MA students and for non-philosophy students for credit:
 - Three 1-2-page informal position papers throughout the term
 - 2000-word term paper

Assessment:

- For two-year MA students: in-class written examination as part of the History of Philosophy Final Examination at the end of the first year
- For one-year MA students, and for non-philosophy students: 20% class participation; 20% position papers; 60% term paper