Classics/Philosophy 205: Ancient Philosophy
Kalamazoo College – Spring 2016
MWF 8:30-9:45am
Location: Upjohn Library Commons 303

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Office Hours: MWF 10:00am-12:00pm, Tu 2:30-3:30pm, and by appointment

Course Description and Goals:
This course will study the development of wisdom traditions and philosophical thought in ancient Greece and Rome, from its beginnings in the 6th century BCE through the 2nd century CE. It will examine the development of philosophy within its cultural contexts and its influence upon the history of philosophy and intellectual thought.

The aims of this course are:
(1) To obtain a basic understanding of the development of philosophy in the Classical World and its foundational importance for Western culture.
(2) To become conversant with the core concepts of the major schools of Greco-Roman philosophy.
(3) To produce plausible philosophical readings of ancient texts.
(4) To perceive and communicate effectively about the influence of Greco-Roman philosophy upon the modern philosophy and the modern world.
(5) To develop and enhance students’ skills in critical thinking, reading comprehension, and philosophical and literary analysis.
(6) To develop and enhance students’ oral and written communication in the coherent and meaningful articulation of a central idea, the identification and synthesis of suitable evidence (textual and otherwise) and logical support for such an idea, and the proper use of idiomatic English according to the traditional guidelines of grammar, style, tone, diction, and elegance.

Required Texts:
There are two required textbooks for this course:


Online Resources:
A large part of the primary source materials and secondary readings for this course will be online. Please enroll in this course on Moodle so you have access to the online resources. The following also offer valuable resources on ancient philosophy and the ancient world in general:


Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://www.iep.utm.edu/

Internet Ancient History Sourcebook: http://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/asbook.asp
Homework, Attendance and Participation:
Students are expected to attend class and actively contribute to class on a daily basis. Attendance and participation will account for 20% of the final grade in this course. Active participation includes evidence of assignment preparation, thoughtful and insightful contributions which respond to the points of other students and further the discourse of the class, and respect for both the instructor and fellow students. Effective class preparation entails careful and active reading and analysis of each day’s assignments, including, but not limited to, taking notes on the major themes and ideas in each reading; marking noteworthy parts of the text; and bringing questions on any unclear parts of the assignments to class.

Group Presentation: Students will be assigned to individual groups that will present and lead discussion for one day on a specific philosopher. These presentations will be assigned during the first week of the term. Each presentation should give a synopsis of the philosopher’s life and key doctrines. The group should then lead class discussion of the assigned primary text readings (via handouts, discussion questions, group work, etc.).

Response Papers: There will be four response papers during the course of the term. These papers will be 600-750 words in length and each one will examine key questions from our readings and class discussions. See the schedule below for tentative response paper due dates. Papers are to be printed out and turned in at the beginning of class. Late papers will receive a half-letter-grade reduction per day late.

Final Paper: Each student will complete an individual paper whose topic is of his/her own choosing. The final paper may be (but is not limited to) an expansion of one of the student’s response papers or presentation. The paper will consist of two parts: (1) A paper proposal/abstract (250-300 words); and (2) the fully drafted paper (at least 1500-1800 words).

Grades: The final grade will be determined as follows:

- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- Four Response Papers: 40% (10% each)
- Group Presentation: 10%
- Final Paper: 30%

Schedule: This schedule is tentative and subject to change.
*Items with an asterisk will be posted on Moodle

Week 1: The Beginnings of Philosophy in Greece
M 3/28: Introduction: What is Philosophy?
Philosophy and Early Greek Poetry*
W 3/30: The Milesians and Pythagoreans (AGP 1-22)
F 4/1: Xenophanes and Heraclitus (AGP 23-40)
Selections from Homer and Hesiod*

Week 2: Origins of Philosophy: The Presocratics
M 4/4: The Eleatics (AGP 40-51)
Empedocles (AGP 52-74)
W 4/6: Anaxagoras (AGP 75-80)
The Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus (AGP 80-93)
Response Paper #1 Due in Class
F 4/8: The Sophists (AGP 104-118)
Herodotus’ Account of Solon*
Thucydides, ‘Pericles’ Funeral Oration’*

Week 3: Socrates and His Legacy
M 4/11: The Problem of Socrates: Reeve introduction (vii-x)
Socrates’ Trial and Death: Plato’s Apology of Socrates (AGP 153-178)
W 4/13: Socrates’ Trial and Death: Plato’s Crito and Phaedo (Reeve 62-83)
Xenophon’s Apology of Socrates (Reeve 177-184)
F 4/15: A Parody of Socrates: Aristophanes’ Clouds (Reeve 84-176)

Week 4: Plato and the Appropriation of Philosophy
M (4/18): AGP introduction to Plato (127-134)
What is Virtue? Meno (AGP 241-266)
W (4/20): Philosophy and Desire: Symposium (AGP 320-368)
[Readings guides for the Republic will be posted on Moodle]*
Response Paper #2 Due in Class

Week 5: Justice and the Ideal City: Plato’s Republic
M (4/25): The Analogy of City and Soul: Republic II-IV (AGP 398-482)

Week 6: The Desire to Understand: Aristotle
M (5/2): The Ideal City in Action?: Plato and the Myth of Atlantis*
Response Paper #3 Due in Class
W (5/4): Introduction to Aristotle (AGP 683-692)
Aristotle on nature: Categories (AGP 694-700)
Physics II (AGP 740-757)
Metaphysics I (AGP 796-809)
F (5/6): The soul: Posterior Analytics 2.19 (AGP 728-731)
De Anima (AGP 847-869)

Week 7: Virtue and Ethics: Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics and Politics
M (5/9): Virtue and Happiness: Nicomachean Ethics I-III (AGP 870-901)
W (5/11): Practical and Theoretical Wisdom: Nicomachean Ethics V-VII, X (AGP 901-929)
F (5/13): Virtue and the City: Politics (AGP 930-960)
Week 8: Hellenistic Philosophy
Epicurus, “Letter to Menoeceus” and “Principal Doctrines”*
Lucian, Sale of Philosophers*
Cleanthes’ Hymn to Zeus*
Response Paper #4 Due in Class

Week 9: Philosophy in Rome
Seneca on Death: Moral Letters 24, 63, and 77*
Tacitus, ‘The Death of Seneca’*
W (5/25): Stoicism on Stage: Seneca’s Trojan Women*
F (5/27): Catch-up day
Paper Abstract Due

Week 10: Philosophy in Rome
M (5/30): No class: Memorial Day
Cicero, ‘Scipio’s Dream’*
Cicero, Laelius on Friendship*

Finals Week: Final Paper Due W 6/8, 11:00am