

Fall 2011
Philosophy 301 - History of Western Philosophy: Ancient
Section 002 T R 1:30 - 2:45 PM

Instructor: Prof. Cherubin

Office: Robinson B461

Office hours: T R 4:30 - 6:00 PM; some additional times may be available by appointment

Office hours are "student hours": times faculty have set aside specifically to meet with students.

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Course web site: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/rcherubi/ancient/p3012.htm>

Supplementary readings for PHIL 301: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/rcherubi/ancient/p301sr.htm>

Description

This course is intended to introduce the student to ancient philosophy through the close study of selected works of the "pre-Socratic" philosophers, plus Plato, Aristotle, and Lucretius. Students are not expected to have had any previous experience in philosophy. However, course requirements will benefit a 300-level philosophy course.

The term '*philosophia*', from which the English word 'philosophy' comes, was coined in ancient Greek to describe an activity that was considered to have begun around the late seventh century BCE. Questions we will look at in this course include the following:

What did *philosophia* involve? How did it differ from, and how was it related to, other activities and ways of thinking that existed at the time (or that exist now)? What issues, questions, and problems did the earliest people to be called "philosophers" (*philosophoi*) find important or valuable? What approaches and ways of thinking do they seem to have used in addressing these things? How are these early approaches and ways of thinking significant for addressing philosophical problems and questions that arise today? How if at all did *philosophia* change or develop over the period studied (seventh century BCE to first century CE)? What were its social and political effects on the communities in which it took root?

Unifying themes we will investigate throughout the semester include the question of what knowledge requires; the relationship between the search for understanding and the search for the best kinds of life; and the relationships between questions of the nature of what is, questions of the nature of knowledge, and questions of the nature of good.

Aims

This course aims to introduce students to philosophy the way philosophy was introduced to the Mediterranean world. This means an introduction to core texts of ancient philosophy; an introduction to the skills of reading philosophy in general and ancient philosophy in particular; an introduction to problems of interpretation of ancient texts and foreign-language philosophy; an introduction to critical evaluation of secondary sources; and an introduction to critical reading and thinking. Students will explore how to apply the questions, ideas, and ways of thinking developed by the ancient philosophers to issues in the modern world, and will learn to assess, criticize constructively, and further develop these ancient positions. Through writing assignments and class discussion, students will develop their skills at understanding, analyzing, and explaining key arguments and positions in the texts studied; at writing about these clearly, assessing the arguments' strengths and weaknesses; at comparing and contrasting the views of different authors on philosophical issues; and at providing appropriate and adequate support for conclusions.

Technology Skills

By the end of the semester students in this course should be able to use e-mail; to use GMU's course management software Courses 9.1; to use on-line library catalogs and other library databases including

online journal databases; to find reserve materials such as books and journal articles; to use word-processing programs to format documents with correct margins and (if needed) footnotes or endnotes; to access documents on the course web site, in on-line journal databases, and on the GMU electronic reserve system.

Be sure that your GMU e-mail account is activated, and please check it regularly. University policies now **require** students to activate their GMU e-mail accounts and to check their GMU e-mail regularly.¹ (See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for help in setting up your account.) Official university communications (announcements; messages from Financial Aid, the Library, instructors, etc.) are sent by e-mail, and students are responsible for knowing the information conveyed in this way. If I need to contact you for any reason outside of class hours, I will do so via your GMU e-mail address. **In addition, your GMU e-mail username and password are required in order to use our course management software, Courses 9.1 (successor to Blackboard CE8).**

Course Requirements

A. Required Texts

Please purchase ##1-3 by the sixth week of classes; the bookstore tends to return unsold books to the publishers after that point.

1. McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, second edition. Hackett Publishing Co. Available in the GMU Bookstore. (No matter where you purchase this text, *make sure to purchase the second edition.*)

2. Plato, *Five Dialogues*, trans. Grube. Hackett Publishing Company. Available in the GMU Bookstore.

3. Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. Latham/Godwin. Penguin Books. Available in the GMU Bookstore.

4.a. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book I, available on-line through links from our course web page and our Supplementary Readings page.

b. Cherubin, "Notes on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* A1-2," available on-line through links from our course web page and our Supplementary Readings web page. (Book A=Book I.)

5. Some additional short texts (original translations, supplements to lecture notes, etc.) will be made available on the course web site.

6. Some further required readings will be found on print reserve in the Johnson Center Library . Some other required readings will be found on electronic reserve (e-reserve) through the Library web site, <http://library.gmu.edu> . As of the first day of classes the password that will allow us to access the electronic reserves is not yet available. As soon as I am informed of the password I will inform the class.

7. Some supplementary materials are in the form of journal articles which are found either in the Periodicals area of Fenwick Library, or on-line through GMU's journal databases (Project Muse, JSTOR, etc.), or both.

B. Class sessions

1. Class sessions begin at 1:30 PM and end at 2:45 PM.

2. Class lectures are intended to supplement and develop the reading material assigned for each day. Class lectures are not a substitute for the assigned reading, nor is the reading a substitute for the class lectures. Students are responsible for knowing both the material presented in the reading and the material presented in the lectures. If you are absent for a class session, you are responsible for getting the notes for that day from a classmate.

Students are expected to come to each class session having read the material assigned for that day, and prepared to discuss it, to take notes, to answer questions, and to ask thoughtful questions about the

¹ See http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=17&navoid=1310#offi_comm_stud.

reading and class lectures.

The course reading can be difficult, and if you have questions or problems in reading it, the class lectures and discussions are designed to address that. Thoughtful class participation is encouraged; it cannot harm your grade, and can even benefit it. *If you don't have questions, you haven't done the reading.*

All discussion and lecture in this class will strive to uphold the highest standards of respect and civility. Differing perspectives and ideas will be heard and engaged philosophically, which means they will be investigated and subjected to inquiry.

There may be some ungraded in-class writing exercises designed to reflect students' understanding of the reading. Participation in these exercises, should they occur, will form part of the participation portion of the semester grade (see C.2. below).

3. Please bring to class each day the text we will be studying that day.

4. Before each class session begins, please make sure that all cell phones, pagers, and other potentially noisy electronic devices are either turned off or put on silent settings (for example, set cell phones to vibrate rather than ring). Do not use any device in a manner that distracts your fellow students or yourself.

5. A guest presentation on library databases and research will be held on October 4. This will occur during regularly scheduled class meeting time. Your attendance at the presentation will be expected. Students will be expected to use the information gained from this presentation in preparing their papers.

C. Written Work

1. There will be three graded writing assignments.

a. The first assignment is to be 5-7 pages long, and will be due in class on September 27.

b. The second assignment, a paper, is to be 7-8 pages long, and will be due in class on November 3.

c. The third assignment will be a take-home essay exam, and will be due on December 13.

2. Each graded written assignment counts for thirty per cent of your grade. The remaining ten per cent will be a "participation" grade. "Participation" can include thoughtful participation in class or in online discussions on Courses 9.1/Blackboard, thoughtful participation in any ungraded in-class writing exercises that may occur (see section B.2. above), and improvement in written work.

3. Use Courses 9.1/Blackboard to submit your work for the three graded assignments. Please do not submit assignments via e-mail. Attachments frequently fail to open properly, and material pasted into the body of an e-mail message often comes through with pieces of text missing.

4. A helpful guide for writing in philosophy, developed in cooperation with the GMU Philosophy Department, is here: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/philosophy/>.

Grading

1. To get an A on an exam or paper, you need to: answer the question(s) correctly (there may be several ways to do this); cover your topic thoroughly; follow all instructions; *explain* how you came to your conclusions and why you think they are right (or, explain why you have doubts); show your reasoning; make no factual errors²; write clearly. To get an A+ you must do all the things that would earn an A, in a

²What is a factual error in philosophy? I will say more about this during the semester. But here are some examples: If you say that the philosopher Lucretius had blond hair, that would be a factual error, but it would not be important enough for me to deduct points for it, unless you somehow tried to make a connection between Lucretius' hair color and his philosophical ideas! I would lower your grade somewhat, however, if you said that Lucretius lived in 5th-century BCE Athens under the democracy. He lived in Roman territory sometime between the first century BCE and the first century CE, during or after the point when Rome became a non-democratic empire. This is very important because as we will see, Lucretius was responding to philosophical, political, theological, and scientific issues of his time and place. Similarly, if you wrote that Lucretius said or believed that mind or soul is immortal, that would be a factual error; he says something quite different, and essentially contrary to that. If you wrote that

way that shows a higher level of understanding and clarity (for example, presenting an especially comprehensive explanation or an especially detailed analysis or an especially nuanced conclusion).

An exam or paper that gets a B is one that gets most parts of the question(s) right, but makes some noticeable factual error OR does not answer the question(s) completely (leaves out something fairly important) OR does not show the student's understanding or reasoning OR comes to unexplained conclusions.

An exam or paper that gets a C is one that answers the question somewhat, but leaves out crucial points OR makes some major factual errors in one area OR includes little explanation or shows little reasoning OR combines several of the problems mentioned in the paragraph on "B" papers and exams OR is not written clearly enough to convey your understanding of certain important points.

An exam or paper that gets a D shows minimal understanding of the texts OR covers little of the question(s) correctly OR makes major factual errors that undermine your answers OR is so unclear that I can only tell whether a few parts are right OR includes no explanations.

An exam or paper will get an F if it covers less than 60% of the question(s) or topic correctly OR if it does not address the question(s) OR if it is so unclear that I cannot tell what you are saying.

If you do not submit an assignment, you will receive a grade of F for that assignment.

There will of course be partial credit given on exam questions.

Grades of A-, B+, B-, C+, etc. will also be given. An A- paper is between an A paper and a B paper but closer to an A paper; a B+ paper is between an A paper and a B paper but closer to a B paper, etc.

As required by University policy, a letter grade of A+ is equivalent to a numerical grade of 4.0; a grade of A is also equivalent to a numerical grade of 4.0; a grade of A- is equivalent to a 3.67; a B+ is equivalent to a 3.33; a B is equivalent to a 3.0; etc.

For a full listing of the University's policy for converting letter grades into numerical grades to compute your GPA (grade-point average), see the University Catalog online at <http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=17&navoid=1274#grading>.

2. Late assignment policy: Work that is handed in late *with a documented legitimate excuse* will be accepted without penalty. Examples of documented legitimate excuses include a doctor's note or emergency room receipt if the absence was due to illness; a receipt from a mechanic for emergency car repairs on the day of class; an official document (such as a syllabus) from one of your other courses proving that you had a required field trip for that class on the day our class meets; an official document from your workplace proving that your job sent you out of town on the day our class meets; an official document from an athletic team proving that you had a competition on the day our class meets; etc.

Other work that is handed in late during the semester (before Finals Week), without a documented legitimate excuse, will lose one letter grade per week that it is late. For example, an assignment that would have received a B+ if handed in on time will receive a C+ if handed in one week late without a documented legitimate excuse. (An assignment that is handed in one to three days late will lose one grade increment; for example, a B+ would become a B. An assignment that is handed in four to six days late will lose two grade increments; for example, a B+ would become a B-.) The maximum penalty is two full letter grades. *No work that is due during the semester may be handed in more than 2 weeks late without a documented legitimate excuse.* Work that is due on your final exam day will NOT be accepted after that day and will receive a grade of F *unless* you have requested a grade of IN (see #4 below).

Lucretius said that the unexamined life is not worth living, that would be a factual error; it is Socrates (as reported by Plato) who said this. I would deduct points for these kinds of factual errors, because they show a lack of understanding of Lucretius' work.

3. **Policy on assignments that are not submitted at all:** Any required assignment that you do not submit by the time that the last assignment is due will receive a grade of F, **unless** you have requested a grade of IN (see #4 below).

4. **Policy concerning grades of IN (incomplete):** Grades of IN will be given **only** in either of the following situations:

(1) If you request a grade of IN *in writing* at least 24 hours before the last assignment is due AND submit an Incomplete Application (available at

<http://chssundergrad.gmu.edu/system/documents/4157/original/incomplete.pdf?1307557617>) OR

(2) If a sudden emergency arises less than 24 hours before the assignment is due AND you can provide *documentation* of this emergency (as described in the section on late assignments, above) and a *written request* for a grade of IN *plus* the Incomplete Application mentioned above.

If you do not make a *written request* for a grade of IN (including submitting an Incomplete Application) and cannot provide *documentation* of emergency, you will receive a grade of F for each assignment that is missing.

University policy specifies that instructors are to assign an IN only if the student has a very limited amount of work to complete and there is a non-academic reason that prevents them from completing the work within the semester.

5. **Policy on plagiarism/ Honor Code policy:** You are responsible for knowing, understanding, and obeying the University Honor Code and the Honor Code Statement for this course. For details please see the Honor Code Statement attached at the end of this syllabus (pages 8-10). The policy for this class is in accordance with University policy as outlined in the online University Catalog at <http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=17&navoid=1310#Honor>. If you have any questions, please ask your instructor.

6. **Academic accommodations: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. See also this page for a list of contacts at the Office of Disability Services: <http://ods.gmu.edu/contact/>.**

All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. By 'disability' I mean a learning disability, physical disability, or other condition that requires that you receive modified assignments, note-takers, extended exam time, etc.

The need for accommodations must be identified to the ODS and the instructor at the beginning of the semester (unless the need for accommodations develops after that point, in which case it should be identified as soon as possible after it arises). Please get the proper documentation from the Office of Disability Services concerning the specific accommodations you will need at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as it is available, so that we can set up appropriate arrangements. Then please take a moment (before or after class, in office hours, etc.) to show me the documentation and to make sure I understand exactly what you will need. *Do not wait until just before an assignment due date to do this; if you wait too long, there may not be time to set up the arrangements you need.*

Schedule

Please note that this schedule may change should that become necessary. Any changes that must occur will be announced in class beginning as soon as the instructor knows of them. Students are responsible for

becoming aware of these changes once they have been announced.

August 30: Introduction

August 30 - October 6: The "pre-Socratic" philosophers

Texts: McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates* plus web material

due 9/1: Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5

due 9/6: Ch. 6 and 7

due 9/8: Ch. 7 and 9

due 9/13: Ch. 9 and 10

due 9/15: Ch. 10

due 9/20: Ch. 11 plus web material

due 9/22: Ch. 12 and 15 plus web material

due 9/27: Ch. 14 and 13 plus web material

due 9/29: Ch. 13 and 18 plus web material

10/4: Research Instruction session (in JC Library Instruction Room)

due 10/6: Ch. 18

→See list on our Supplementary Readings web site

(<http://classweb.gmu.edu/rcherubi/ancient/p301sr.htm>) for additional reserve, web, and/or library reading for each week.

September 27: Paper due

October 6 - November 3: Plato

Text: Plato, *Five Dialogues*

Assigned readings for the class are the dialogues *Euthyphro* and *Phaedo*. Time permitting, we may study a further dialogue from the same text. Students who have never read Plato before are strongly encouraged to read as well the dialogues *Apology* and *Crito* (in the same book) as helpful background for the *Phaedo*.

→See Supplementary Readings web site for additional reserve, web, and/or library reading.

November 3: Paper due

November 8 – 29: Aristotle

Text: Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book I (available through a link from our course web page and through a link from our Supplementary Readings page) with on-line "Notes on *Metaphysics* A1-2" (available through links from the same pages). (Book I = Book A.)

→See Supplementary Readings web site for additional reserve, web, and/or library reading.

November 29 - December 8: Lucretius and the "Hellenistic" period

Text: Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe* plus a look back at McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates* Ch. 16

→See Supplementary Readings web site for additional reserve, web, and/or library reading.

December 13: Final assignment due

Related (optional) materials and activities

1. The GMU Philosophy Club holds meetings, lectures, discussions, and debates on campus. All of these events are open to all interested students, regardless of experience or major. Some joint activities with other area colleges are planned. Its events will be announced in class, but for more information visit

the Philosophy Department office (Robinson B465), or contact the Club's faculty advisor, Prof. Emmett Holman (eholman@gmu.edu).

2. For supplemental ancient philosophy notes, announcements, and links to pertinent web sites, visit your instructor's main web site at <http://classweb.gmu.edu/rcherubi/ancient/index.htm> .

Important dates this semester

Sept. 6: Last day to add classes; last day to drop with no tuition penalty	Sept. 30: Last day to drop classes
Oct. 3 - Oct. 28: Selective Withdrawal Period	Oct. 11: no class meeting (M classes meet T)
December 8: Last class session	Dec. 13: Last assignment due

Important general note from the University concerning enrollment

Check PatriotWeb regularly to verify that you are registered for the classes for which you think you are registered. This is particularly important since students are no longer dropped for nonpayment. Faculty are not to grade the work of students whose names do not appear on the official class roster. If you are registered for a class you do not attend, you will not necessarily be dropped automatically. Therefore if you wish to drop a class, do so through PatriotWeb. Once the add and drop deadlines have passed, instructors do **not** have the authority to approve requests from students to add or drop/withdraw late.

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Website <http://registrar.gmu.edu>.) After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

Those important web addresses again

- Main web page for PHIL 301: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/rcherubi/ancient/p3012.htm>
- Supplementary Readings page: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/rcherubi/ancient/p301sr.htm>
- Prof. Cherubin's main ancient philosophy page: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/rcherubi/ancient/index.htm>
- The GMU Writing center's guide for writing in philosophy (produced in cooperation with the Philosophy Department): <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/philosophy/>
- The GMU Library page: <http://library.gmu.edu> ;
- The Library's "Ask a Librarian" service: <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

Some other useful resources at GMU

GMU Writing Center, Robinson A114: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): <http://caps.gmu.edu>

University Catalog: <http://catalog.gmu.edu>

University policies: <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>

Honor Code Statement

This course is conducted in accordance with the **GMU Honor Code**, as outlined in the University Catalog. The **GMU Honor Code** is as follows:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this honor code: *Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.*

See also the online version of the most recent catalog:
<http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=17&navoid=1310#Honor> .

See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu> for more detailed information.

Each student is to do his or her own work; collaboration on required written assignments (exams, papers, etc.) is not permitted.

All answers on exams and papers must be in the student's own words.³ Short quotations from the class texts or from other sources may be used, provided that all quotations are properly attributed (you **must** cite the author's name, the title of the source, and the page number or URL if any). **If you do not know how to do this, please see your instructor and I will be glad to help you.**

Further clarification: Earlier versions of the University Catalog provided good general accounts of what is meant by 'plagiarism' and 'cheating' here, and **I will continue to use these for purposes of this course, as clarified below:**

Earlier versions of the University Catalog included under the heading 'Plagiarism' two kinds of thing. First is "[p]resenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment."⁴ This means that if you quote from any source without giving proper credit to that source, what you have done counts as plagiarism, and will not be permitted. By 'source,' I mean printed material, electronic material (information from internet sites, e-mail, etc.), films, videotapes, audiotapes, radio, television, human beings other than yourself, or any other presenter of verbal information. By 'proper credit' I mean clear identification of the source of each quotation you have used, including the title of the source, the name of the author (where available), the URL if the source is a web site, the journal title if the source is a journal article, the date of publication (or of download from a web site), and the publisher if the source is a book. *If you have any question as to whether what you are doing constitutes quotation from a source, or if you are unsure about how to quote a source or how to give proper credit, please see your instructor.*

The second kind of plagiarism outlined in the Catalog was "[b]orrowing the sequence of

³Hint: Paper topics and exam questions will be such that you cannot answer correctly or sufficiently simply by copying sentences from the class texts or other sources. You will need to be able to show that you have understood what you have read. (In general, I ask that quotations make up no more than 20% of your answer to each numbered exam question and no more than 20% of the total length of your papers; this gives you space to answer the questions adequately and to discuss your quotations.)

⁴This and all quotations in this Honor Code Statement are taken from the 2003-2004 GMU Catalog, p. 29.

ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment.” This means that if you take a passage from something you have read, and change a few of the words - without changing the meaning - and then claim that these ideas are yours (or simply fail to mention whose they are), that is also plagiarism, and is not permitted. There is nothing wrong with quoting (briefly) from sources; just acknowledge when you do it. If a source you find says exactly what you yourself think, *show* why you think it is correct. As long as you explain this in your own words, there is no problem. *If you have any questions about what counts as “borrowing the sequence of ideas...,” please see your instructor, and I will be glad to help.*

Both kinds of plagiarism are forbidden at GMU.

Examples of plagiarism and examples of proper (non-plagiarizing) citation are provided at <http://classweb.gmu.edu/rcherubi/ancient/plagiarism.htm> .

According to the earlier catalogs whose descriptions this class will follow, **“cheating encompasses the following: (1) The willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students.**

(2) The above may be accomplished by any means whatsoever, including, but not limited to, the following: fraud, duress, deception, theft, trick, talking, signs, gestures, copying from another student, and the unauthorized use of study aids, memoranda, books, data or other information.

(3) Attempted Cheating.”

All such cheating and attempted cheating are forbidden at GMU. Since required assignments for this course specify that students are not to collaborate, any collaboration between students in the writing of required assignments will be considered to be a case of giving and receiving of “unauthorized and unfair advantage in academic work over other students.”

Again, if you have any questions about whether something you intend to do on a paper or exam is acceptable, please speak to your instructor before the assignment is due. I will be glad to help you -- really.

Penalties/Responses to Plagiarism and Cheating:

A. For a first offense in this course, on assignments other than the final exam or final assignment. If there is *evidence* that a student has collaborated with others, or *evidence* that a student has presented others’ words or sequences of ideas as his or her own, *that student’s paper or exam will be invalidated*, and the student will be required to complete a paper on a different topic, or different exam questions, in a satisfactory manner within a one-week deadline. The work submitted will be assessed a penalty of one letter grade. Work submitted after the one-week deadline will be assessed a late penalty as outlined above under “Late Assignment Policy.” No credit will be given until the work is re-submitted satisfactorily. If the work is not re-submitted satisfactorily, that assignment will receive a grade of F.

B. On the final exam or final assignment, or for a second offense on earlier assignments. If there is *evidence* that a student has collaborated with others or has presented others’ words or sequences of ideas as his or her own, the case will be reported to the Honor Committee. No credit will be given unless the case is resolved with a finding of “Not Guilty.”

Note. By ‘evidence’ I mean something in writing that clearly shows proof of plagiarism or illegitimate collaboration. For example, if two students submit identically-worded answers; if two students

hand in assignments written in the same handwriting when they have previously had different handwritings (if you are injured and suddenly cannot write, let me know of this *before* making arrangements for another student to “help you”!); if a student submits a paper which I find to consist substantially of material copied from a book or web site without attribution *and* I can get hold of a copy of the book or can download pages from the web site -- all of these are cases where I would say that there is *evidence* of an Honor Code violation. If there is any question in my mind, I will speak to the student(s) involved before making the determination as to whether to take action.