

T R 3:00 – 4:15 PM Distance Learning (entirely online; synchronous)

Instructor: Prof. Sophia Stone

Office hours: 4:15 – 5:15 T R – held after class in our Zoom room. Additional times are available by appointment.

Zoom: [class link](#).

E-mail: sstone22@gmu.edu



Raphael's *School of Athens*, 1511, source: Wikipedia Commons

Description

Big P philosophy:

This is an upper-division History of Philosophy course in Ancient Greek Philosophy. Ancient Greece (circa 7th/6th Century B.C.E.) is the birthplace for Western philosophical thought. Our first philosopher, Thales of Miletus, whom we know very little compared to Plato and Aristotle, was also the first 'mathematician' – even before Aristotle systematized the discipline. Though our records are scant, Thales supposedly visited Egypt where he learned and used geometry to measure the pyramids and the distance of ships from shore. He brought his studies back to Miletus. Thales was interested in the fundamental questions of what there is, whether there was one underlying substance from which all things were made, and if so, what would that substance be? Aristotle reports that Thales thought the underlying substance of everything was water. Each subsequent thinker we will be reading in the course, the early Greek philosophers, then Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, to Euclid and Lucretius, were practicing a similar art of inquiry – asking questions and seeing where they led. Yet each philosopher had specific questions that interested them. Before Socrates, with some exceptions, philosophers typically were interested in questions about nature, numbers, and the universe. Socrates was primarily interested in questions about ethics: how should

we live? How should we treat ourselves and one another? What was the most important thing about living? Socrates thought that the most important thing was to live an examined life. The death of Socrates profoundly affected his followers, most notably Plato, who formed the first public academy for learning. Aristotle joined him and studied with Plato for twenty years until Plato's death, he tutored Alexander the Great and shortly thereafter founded his own school of learning, the Lyceum. We'll end by reading Lucretius's book *On the nature of the universe*, written in verse. It is a challenging book yet integrates most of the thought we will have read and inquired into throughout the semester, and so acts as a final exam of critical reading and thinking. The course readings are difficult and strange yet interesting in their own way. With some exceptions made the first week of class, the assigned reading follows the historical order in which they were formed. The assignments are reflective of the reading and discussions we've had in class and there is a research component, where students get to expand on a question that deeply interests them with support from academic journal articles and philosophy encyclopedia articles as well as our primary texts in class.

Students will get a sense of the foundation of intellectual thought in the West and will learn about the specific contributions to that thought from the philosophers before Socrates, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and the atomist Lucretius. Special attention will be given to developing the writing, reading and critical thinking skills in each student, as well as cultivating that sense of wonder that marks a person who lives an examined life. Finally, students will come away with a sense of comfort and familiarity in philosophical discussions by utilizing the [Good Thinker's Toolbox](#) and practicing the rules for [Plain Vanilla discussions](#), discussed next.

Little p philosophy:

The method of discussion in this class follows what Thomas Jackson, Professor Emeritus at the University of Hawai'i calls "little p philosophy." Little p philosophy centers on that sense of wonder that Plato wrote about in the *Sophist* and the *Theaetetus* where philosophy begins, "philosophy begins in wonder." Unlike big P philosophy, where one is not truly a philosopher until she has received a degree in it, little p philosophy begins with the claim that we are all born philosophers. If one pays attention to the questions that children ask, they are interested in many of the same questions that our early Greek philosophers inquired about: how do we know how big the Earth is? Why does the sun move in the sky? Why when I go to a high place, things far away get smaller? How can watching very small things tell us about big things, and how can observing big things tell us about small things? How can I measure how far away a boat is from the shore if I don't have a ruler or compass? Is it fair that I have enough food when others don't? Big P philosophy can be intimidating when it is a student's first time in a philosophy course. There seems to be a big distance between the knowledge that professor has and where the student of their first philosophy class begins. In our class discussions, I hope to shrink that gap as much as possible by incorporating an approach from p4cHawaii about doing philosophy. This approach is based on the following four pillars: Community, Inquiry, Philosophy and Reflection. These four pillars are [the foundation](#) of the activities in p4cHawaii inquiry: 1) establishing an intellectually safe community; 2) a community ball (we'll modify this for the online format); 3) the Good Thinker's toolkit; 4) Plain Vanilla deliberative discussion techniques; 5) magic words and hand signals; 6) Evaluation of self and the community's inquiry. The little p component of the course will entail the participation grade of the course.

Thus, the course is designed to be highly challenging, intellectually interesting, engaging, and delightfully rewarding.

Phil 301: History of Western Philosophy, Ancient

Course Format:

This course is online, taught synchronously. On most Tuesdays and Thursdays, we will meet via Zoom in our scheduled time slot. If a class is cancelled, there will be an online activity in Blackboard that you complete within a designated timeframe. See our Blackboard page for a link to the Zoom sessions: in the left-hand sidebar you will see a link entitled “Class meetings (Zoom).” Phil 301 will never require you to be available at a specific time other than our official class time slot.

Virtual “office hours” are times when you can meet one-on-one with the professor. I’ll leave the Zoom classroom open one hour for convenience after class. However, if you need to schedule a time, I can also be available Monday or Wednesday in the afternoon. If you need a morning appointment, I am available on Fridays only.

Technology Requirements:

Students in this course will need to use the GMU email system for correspondence with the professor. Students will use GMU’s course management software Blackboard to access class sessions and other course content for online links to readings, and instructions for writing assignments and to upload completed assignments. Students will use Zoom to access class meetings and will use online library catalogs and other library databases. Students are expected to use word-processing programs such as MS Word or Google Docs to format documents according to the Chicago style of formatting for correct margins, and when needed, footnotes, endnotes and bibliography.

To access Blackboard, please log in with your Net ID and password to: <http://mymason.gmu.edu>

Course Requirements:

- A. Required Texts (available via the GMU Bookstore; available electronically on Amazon)
 - a. McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 2nd edition. Hackett Publishing Co.
 - b. Plato, *Five Dialogues*, trans. Grube. Hackett Publishing Co.
 - c. Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. Smith. Hackett Publishing Co.
- B. Required Texts (available via online through a link from our Blackboard site)
 - a. Plato, *Republic*, Books VI and VII
 - b. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book I
 - c. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I, II, and X
 - d. Aristotle, *Poetics*, Book I
 - e. Euclid’s *Elements*, Book I
- C. Class Sessions
 - a. Synchronous instruction begins at 3:00 pm and ends at 4:15 pm. Office hours follow class in the same link.
 - b. Students are expected to come to class each session having read the material assigned that day, prepared to discuss it, to take notes, to answer questions, and to ask thoughtful questions about the reading and class lectures.
 - c. Since this class is remote, special care will be given to cultivating an online community of learners that includes concern for others, mutual respect, and

collaboration, when necessary, online activities. Therefore, video cameras must be turned on during class. Exceptions will be made in case of poor internet connectivity or a student is severely ill but still wants to attend class virtually. In the event a student needs to break to attend to an emergency, the video camera may be turned off, accompanied with a private chat message to the professor briefly indicating when he or she will return.

- d. All discussion, lecture and activities 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 explored through sincere and respectful inquiry. If there is something mentioned or done in class that is disturbing that interferes with learning, please notify the professor in a private chat message on Zoom and come see the professor in office hours immediately after class.
- e. If there is a technical issue or questions about assignments or activities, please ask during class, either in a public or private chat message on Zoom.
- f. In addition to formal writing assignments that are graded (short papers graded on a 0-5 scale and one research paper, graded 0 – 100%), there will be discussions and reflective writing assignments that will not be graded, except for a complete/incomplete designation. The ungraded assignments cumulatively will make up for the class participation grade, which is 10% of your overall grade.
- g. Please have ready the text we will be studying that day to class.
- h. Before each class session begins, be sure that all cell phones are put on silent, with notifications turned off and remove other distractions so that you can give the class and your classmates your full attention.

D. Written Work

- a. There will be four graded writing assignments (90% of your grade)
 - i. First assignment is an essay based on the reading and lectures. (15%)
 - 1. 3 to 4 pages, due in Blackboard
 - ii. Second assignment is an essay based on the readings and lectures. (15%)
 - 1. 3 to 4 pages, due in Blackboard
 - iii. Third assignment is a research paper, due in Blackboard (30%)
 - 1. 6 to 8 pages long
 - 2. Requires 1 page proposal and annotated bibliography (credit/no credit) – one full letter grade dropped from the research paper if not turned in before the research paper
 - iv. Fourth assignment is a series of short essays on course readings and lectures. (30%)
 - 1. 6 to 12 pages long, due in Blackboard

E. Class discussion and participation assignments (10%)

- a. On Thursdays, students will be invited to create questions from the [Good Thinker's Toolkit](#) applied to the reading assignments and lectures for informal class

- discussions, to post them in the online application provided during lecture and to engage in '[Plain vanilla inquiry](#)' – a unique method of discussion from p4cHawai'i.
- b. Sometimes these responses will be sufficient for participation credit, other times, additional posts in discussions on Blackboard will be required for participation credit.
 - c. The participation grade is the percentage of completed participation assignments the student has done.
 - d. In the event of an unavoidable absence, including Covid, the student is encouraged to visit the professor in office hours for either a make-up assignment or an excused assignment. Documentation is required for excused assignments.
- F. Use Blackboard to submit your work for graded assignments. Please do not submit assignments via email. All work needs to be checked by the system to ensure academic integrity. If there is a question of plagiarism in a student's work, I'll request a meeting with the student. However, all confirmed incidents of plagiarism must be reported to administration and will be addressed there.
- G. There is a Writing Resources tab in our Blackboard page that can help you for writing philosophy papers. Students are welcome to attend office hours for additional help. There will be a course lecture designated to the instruction of philosophical writing to help students unfamiliar with the format, as well as a course lecture for planning your research paper. See also the GMU Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

Grading Criteria

Short reflective papers will be graded on a 5 – 1 scale:

5 – excellent (translates to an 'A' for the GMU system):

Exceeds expectations for the depth of insight in the proposed question and exceeds expectations in the proposed answer to the question. Supports each claim with evidence from the text or uses creative examples and is properly documented. The writing is clear in thought, easy to read, without grammar, spelling, or format issues. Each paragraph is a complete whole yet follows a logical progression of development: question, followed by topic sentence, development of thought, and concluding sentence, with a transition sentence, where appropriate, to connect to the next paragraph. Meets the minimum length requirement and follows the format requirement. Students use the [Chicago style](#) for formatting.

4 – very good (translates to an 'B' for the GMU system):

Meets the expectations for the depth of insight in the proposed question and meets the expectations in the proposed answer to the question. Supports each claim with evidence from the text and is properly documented. The writing is clear in thought, easy to read, without grammar, spelling, or format issues. Each paragraph is a complete whole yet follows a logical progression of development. Meets the minimum length requirement and follows the format requirement. Students should use the Chicago style of formatting.

3 – good enough (translates to an ‘C’ for the GMU system):

Meets the expectations for depth and insight in the proposed question and answer, but paper is lacking in support for a claim or is not properly documented. The writing is clear in thought, easy to read, and few grammar, spelling or format issues. Does not quite meet the minimum length requirement. Student uses a different style from the Chicago style of formatting, or uses Chicago style but inconsistently.

2 – needs improvement (translates to an ‘D’ for the GMU system):

The paper lacks depth and insight, both into the formulation of the question and in the answer. The paper has some support for a claim, but it is not properly documented. The writing is confused and difficult to read and unorganized. It contains mistakes in grammar, spelling and format. Might meet the minimum length requirement but in an unsatisfactory way. Student uses a different style from the Chicago style of formatting, or uses Chicago style but inconsistently.

1 – off target (translates to an ‘F’ for the GMU system):

The paper treats the proposed question in a superficial way. Lacks support and evidence for claims. The writing is confused, difficult to read and is unorganized, or is clear and easy to read and well organized, yet substantially misses the minimum length requirement. The paper may use the Chicago style of formatting, yet the length and quality of the paper does not meet the minimum requirements of a passing grade.

0 – no submission:

Students who do not turn in their work by the due date, if they notify the professor through the GMU email system within 24 hours and consults the professor in a scheduled office hour, may submit their work with a half point penalty for each day late. Work will not be accepted three days after the due date. Exceptions will be made for illness, university related absences and family emergencies with documentation only.

Extra credit policy: Attend a GMU philosophy event and write a paragraph reflection about your experience. You may add .5 points to any of the writing assignments of your choice, except for the Research Paper. No more than two extra credit submissions will be accepted in a semester, only one submission per assignment allowed.

Late assignment policy: If the student contacts the professor through GMU email within 24 hours after the assignment was due and consults with the professor in office hours, student may submit the assignment up to three days late, with a half point penalty for short assignments for each day late, or a 10% penalty for the research paper for each day late. If the student contacts the professor 24 hours prior to the due date, requesting a three-day extension, no late penalties apply. However, no work will be accepted after three days late. Exceptions will be made for illness, university related absences and family emergencies with documentation only.

Policy concerning grades of IN (incomplete): The professor follows the policies in place by the university for incomplete requests. Those policies may be found [here](#). Please note that my incomplete policy is that no work will be accepted more than two weeks after the semester is over.

Policy on plagiarism/Honor code policy: Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is not allowed. Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of work, whether it is one's own or another's. All work must be originally generated for this class, which means that a student may not use a prior paper, in whole or in part, for the work they turn in for this course. Plagiarism also includes using another's ideas or words as one's own without giving proper credit. Students may not use a paper writing service for their work, including A.I. or a human tutor, friend, relative, boyfriend or girlfriend. Students with plagiarism issues will be asked to consult with the professor in office hours and the incident will be reported to administration. Professor reserves the right to give a recorded verbal exam about the submission when necessary. Please see the university's Honor Code page with links to official policies about plagiarism and cheating [here](#).

Academic accommodations: students requiring accommodations should go through the [Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#). University policies for academic accommodations can be found [here](#).

Religious observances: students have the right to follow their religious observances. Students must notify the professor through email before their absence and before an assignment is due to make arrangements for an extension if needed. No more than three days will be granted for such extensions.

Instructor availability: professor responds to email within 24 hours (often less – usually several hours) during the week when class is in session. Professor is never available on email from Friday, 4pm to Sunday morning (10am).

Reading Schedule is on the next page of the syllabus.

Phil 301: History of Western Philosophy, Ancient

Schedule:

Week # Dates	Course Reading	Activity/Assignment	Due Date
Week 1 8/23, 8/25	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book VII Euclid's <i>Elements</i> , Book I The Good Thinker's Toolkit	Introductions; Cultivating our intellectually safe space; Overview of the course; Writing Workshop I	
Week 2 8/30, 9/1	<i>Philosophy Before Socrates</i> , chapters 3 – 6 (Milesians)		
Week 3 9/6, 9/8	<i>Philosophy Before Socrates</i> , chapters 7 – 10 (Xenophanes, Pythagoras, & Heraclitus)		
Week 4 9/13, 9/15	<i>Philosophy Before Socrates</i> , chapters 11 – 14 (Parmenides, Zeno, Anaxagoras & Empedocles)	First Essay based on course readings and lectures	9/12
Week 5 9/20, 9/22	<i>Philosophy Before Socrates</i> , chapters 15 – 18 (Melissus of Samos, the Atomists, Diogenes of Apollonia & Philolaus of Croton)		
Week 6 9/27, 9/29	Plato, <i>Five Dialogues</i> ; <i>Euthyphro</i> & <i>Apology</i>		
Week 7 10/4, 10/6	Plato, <i>Five Dialogues</i> ; Plato's <i>Meno</i>		
Week 8 10/13 (no class 10/11)	Plato, <i>Five Dialogues</i> ; Plato's <i>Crito</i> Writing Workshop II	Second Essay based on course readings and lectures	10/12
Week 9 10/18, 10/20	Plato's <i>Phaedo</i> ; Plato's <i>Republic</i> Book VI		Research proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due 10/19
Week 10 10/25, 10/27	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Books I and X		
Week 11 11/1, 11/3	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Books II, III and IV		
Week 12 11/8, 11/10	Aristotle's <i>Metaphysics</i> , Book I		Research Paper Due 11/9
Week 13 11/15, 11/17	Lucretius, <i>On the Nature of the Universe</i> , Books 1-3		
Week 14 11/22 - 24	Thanksgiving Break		
Week 15 11/29, 12/1	Lucretius, <i>On the Nature of the Universe</i> , Books 4 - 6		
Week 16 12/6, 12/8		Series of essays on course readings and discussions, 6 to 12 pages.	12/7