

# **PHL202 H5S Ancient Philosophy**

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## **An Introduction to the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle**

### **Course Information**

Course Number: PHL 202 H5S

Class meets: Mon. & Wed., 12:00-1:30

Course Website: [www.individual.utoronto.ca/mjimenez/AncientPhil.htm](http://www.individual.utoronto.ca/mjimenez/AncientPhil.htm)

Printable syllabus: [www.individual.utoronto.ca/mjimenez/AncientPhilSyllabus.pdf](http://www.individual.utoronto.ca/mjimenez/AncientPhilSyllabus.pdf)

Instructor: Marta Jimenez ([m.jimenez@utoronto.ca](mailto:m.jimenez@utoronto.ca))

Office Number: -

Office Hours: Wed. 10:30-11:30 and by appointment

Mailbox: -

### **Course Description and Objectives**

This course is an introduction to ancient philosophy through the works of Plato and Aristotle. We will critically examine the theories, philosophical problems and arguments discussed by these philosophers. We will start with some general reflections about Socrates and the ancient conception of philosophy as a way of life, and we will set as our central task to develop an account of the kind of wisdom that ancient philosophers were seeking to attain and its relation to the question about the good life. To this end, we will discuss Platonic and Aristotelian views on metaphysics, theory of knowledge, psychology and ethics.

The aims of the course are (1) to cultivate the skills of reading and interpreting texts of ancient philosophy, learning to look at the philosophical problems in their original context, (2) to develop an understanding of the central concepts, theses, and arguments discussed in the works of Plato and Aristotle and (3) to achieve an appreciation of the relevance of the philosophical views and theories of those authors to later philosophy, understanding not only what the problems are, and why they arose, but also why many of them persist. In addition, this course will help you (4) improve your writing and critical thinking skills.

### **Requirements and Grading**

Class Attendance & Participation: 10%

Mid-Term Examination: 25% (Week 6)

Course Paper: 30% (Due Week 11)

Final Examination: 35% (Date TBA)

Class participation includes five 10-minute in-class written comments on a topic discussed during that class. Each comment is worth 2%.

The exams will include short-answer and essay questions. Students will be expected to know the basic ideas of the authors studied and to demonstrate an understanding of the central concepts, distinctions, theses, and arguments discussed in class. Students will also be expected to identify and explain relevant passages from the weekly assigned texts.

The course paper will be a 6-7 page paper. Students will have a choice among several assigned topics.

## **Required Texts**

- *Complete Works of Plato*, ed. John Cooper & D. S. Hutchinson (Hackett, 1997).  
[We'll read *Apology*, *Alcibiades*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Protag.* (selec.), *Gorg.* (selec.), *Republic* (selec).]
- *Aristotle: Introductory Readings*, ed. T. Irwin & G. Fine (Hackett, October 1996).

## **Tentative Schedule**

### ***Introduction***

1. **Introduction**. Ancient conceptions of philosophy and modern approaches to ancient philosophy.

### ***Plato and Socrates***

2. **The Examined Life**. First approach to the question about the good life: How should I live? (*Apology*)
3. **Know Thyself**. Second approach to the question about the good life: What am I? (*Apology*, *Alcibiades*)
4. **Love of Wisdom (I)**. Third approach to the question about the good life: How do I become good? (*Meno*)
5. **Is Knowledge Attainable?** Paradox of inquiry and doctrine of recollection. (*Meno*, *Phaedo*)
6. **Is Self-Knowledge Possible?** The self as the soul and the body as obstacle. Immortality of the soul. (*Phaedo*)
7. **Love of Wisdom (II)**. Competing views about wisdom. The art of measurement. (*Protagoras*)
8. **Is Wisdom so Desirable?** Callicles' challenge to wisdom and defense of the political life. (*Gorgias*)
9. **Challenge against Justice**. Why be just? City-soul analogy. (*Republic* 1-3)
10. **Moral Psychology and the Virtues**. Parts of soul. Akrasia. (*Republic* 4)
11. **Philosopher Kings**. The ideal education of the rulers. The Form of the Good. (*Republic* 5-7)
12. Mid-term exam, in class.

### ***Aristotle***

13. **Aristotle on Wisdom**. Aristotle's own history of philosophy. Criticism of previous thinkers, including Socrates and Plato. Theory of the causes. Teleology. (*Metaph.* 1-3, 6, *Physics* 2.1-9)
14. **Arguments against Plato's Forms**. (*Metaph.* 1.9, NE 1.6)
15. **Substance**. What is being? Study of substance. Subject, matter and form. Essence. (*Metaph.* 7.1-4, 7-9)
16. **Potentiality and Actuality**. (*Metaph.* 9.1-2, 5-7)
17. **On the Soul (I)**. The nature of the soul. Perception. (*De Anima* 1.1, 2.1-6, 11-12)
18. **On the Soul (II)**. Imagination. Thought. Movement. (*De Anima* 3.3-5, 10-11)
19. **Aristotle on the Acquisition of Knowledge**. (*Post An.* 1.1-4, 2.8-10, 19)
20. **Aristotle on the Human Good**. The good, virtue and the human function. (NE 1.1-5, 7)
21. **Virtues of Character**. On habituation. Relation between *areté* and *phronésis*. (NE 2.1-7, 6.13)
22. **Voluntariness**. Issues about intention and motive. Praise and blame. Responsibility. (NE 3.1-5)
23. **Practical vs. Theoretical Wisdom**. Aristotle on the best life. (NE 6, 10.6-8)
24. **Final considerations**.