

Classics of Ancient Western Philosophy
Phil 3000
Fall 2009
Syllabus

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Office: Peabody Hall #24
Hours: Wed 4:25 - 6:25
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Course Description

The possibility of knowledge in Ancient Western philosophy is intimately bound up with the possibility of expressing knowledge. If someone knows then they should be capable of expressing to others that which is known. But what is the relation between the verbal expression of knowledge and the thing known? What is the relation of verbal expression to that which is expressed? After all, expression takes on a particular form, and is constrained to only a certain number of possible forms, and if this form differs from that which is supposed to be expressed then a “true” expression seems to be impossible. The scope of this question must itself be questioned. Does this problem of expression apply equally to expressions of knowledge and expressions about things? Is there a difference between these?

These problems become even more dire when one applies them to thought – which can be taken as one’s own verbal expression to self (as one of our authors will suggest). What path to knowledge can there be if our own words, and hence our own thoughts, cannot be connected to that which they are supposed to represent?

This topic is very slippery. The above paragraphs contain expressions of ideas. If we make sense of the paragraphs does that mean we make sense of what the paragraphs are supposed to be expressions of? When we talk about the relation between talking and that which is talked about, or thinking and that which is thought about, do we ever actually get to that which is talked, or thought, about? The ancient philosophers were keenly aware of such issues. We will spend the semester trying to come to grips with how, and to what extent, they thought the issues could be resolved.

As a way of trying to keep our footing on this slippery terrain we will be using the greek term *logos* as a kind of stepping stone throughout the course. *Logos* is translated in many, many different ways. Some of them include: word, talk, conversation, articulation, speech, account, ratio, logical argument, thought, rational principle, formative principle, etc. The ambiguity, pervasiveness, and importance of this term make it an interesting (and hopefully beneficial) one to pay particular attention to.

Readings

Heraclitus, Selected Fragments (Handout)
Parmenides, Selected Fragments (Handout)
Democritus, Selected Fragments (Handout)
Plato, *Theaetetus*
Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*
Plotinus, *Ennead III.8, Ennead V.8.1-3* (These texts will be made available to you online)

Study

The bulk of the work for this course lies in the preparation for class. Lecture will be *much* more beneficial if you come having already put thought into the material. All of the readings are difficult. They require multiple readings and considerable thought. These texts can be incredibly rewarding, but their rewards must be earned through labor.

Grading

Quizzes (average of three)	5%
Paper #1	15%
Midterm	15%
Paper #2	25%
Final	40%

The grading scale in this course may differ from your other classes. Here is the breakdown:

82 - 100%	-	A	62 – 68	-	C
80 - 82	-	A-	60 – 62	-	C-
78 - 80	-	B+	58 – 60	-	D+
72 – 78	-	B	50 – 58	-	D
70 – 72	-	B-	<50	-	F
68 – 70	-	C+			

Readings and Assignments

The readings should be completed before class on the day listed. You are expected to have the text being covered that day with you in class. You should come to class with questions and prepared to discuss the material. You will be called on during class to help us navigate the material. This schedule is a (very) loose guideline for what we will be covering in class. More than anything else it gives you a reasonable way to break up the texts into manageable chunks. **This schedule is flexible and subject to change.**

August

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
17 Introduction	18	19 Heraclitus (handout)	20	21 Parmenides (handout)
24 Democritus (handout)	25	26 Plato 142a – 148e	27	28 148e – 152c
31 152c – 160e				

September

	1	2 160e – 168c	3	4 168c – 172c
7 Labor Day	8	9 172c – 177c	10	11 177c – 183c
14 183c – 187a	15	16 187a – 191a	17	18 191a – 196c
21 196c – 201c	22	23 Finish 2 nd def.	24	25 201d – 206a Paper #1 Due
28 206a – 210d	29	30 Finish 3 rd def.		

October

			1	2 Finish Theaetetus
5 Midterm Exam	6	7 Aristotle Bk I ch1-3	8	9 I.4-6
12 I.7-9	13	14 I.10-13	15	16 I.14-15
19 I.16-18	20	21 I.19-23	22	23 I.24
26 I.25-26	27	28 I.27-31	29	30 Fall Break

November

2 I.32-34	3	4 BK II. 1	5	6 II.2-6
9 II.7-8	10	11 II.9-12	12	13 II.13-16
16 II.17-19	17	18 II.20	19	20 Plotinus Ennead III.8.1-3
23 Thanksgiving	24	25 Thanksgiving	26	27 Thanksgiving
30 III.8.4-6				

December

	1	2 III.8.7-9		4 III.8.10-11 Paper #2 Due
7 Ennead V.8.1-3	8 Review	9 Reading Day	10	11
14 Final Exam 3:30 - 6:30pm				

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.