

PHIL 3111: ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

Brooklyn College

Spring 2013

Professor Moris Stern

Office: 3316 Boylan

Email: moris.stern@gmail.com

Office Hours: TBA

Objectives for the Course

- 1) Students will become acquainted with literatures of the past and present, and with significant ideas and real life issues presented in these literary works
- 2) Students will understand philosophical literature, past and present, and will acquire a critical appreciation of their contribution to the life of the individual and society
- 3) Students will develop skills of conceptual analysis and argumentation
- 4) Students will be able to express ideas clearly in writing and speaking
- 5) Students will be able to develop a basis for evaluating texts

Description

The course is an introduction to the classics of Ancient Philosophy – Plato and Aristotle. The primary focus will be on the study and analysis of the issues concerning the good (ethics), knowledge (epistemology), and being (metaphysics) in Plato's Republic, Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and Metaphysics. Another topic of enduring interest in the class will be the idea of the philosophical life as such. Certain Pre-Socratic works (by Parmenides and Heraclitus, for example) and other works by Plato (such as Meno, Phaedo, Theaetetus, etc.) will be consulted if time permits. No prior engagement with philosophy is necessary.

The central topic of the course will be what Plato called ideas (without which, Plato argues, all thinking is impossible). We will investigate the interrelated contexts in our experience in which the issue of ideas comes to the foreground – as we reflect, together with Plato, on what it is for us human beings to strive for knowledge, good life, and reality. We will then proceed to Aristotle's criticism of Plato's ideas, and his own attempt to make sense of the human experience without basing it in what Plato interpreted as ideas in our experience. What does it mean to strive for knowledge, the good, and reality – without ideas (and what, if anything, replaces them?)?

Course Assignments and Grading Policy:

I. 3 Written Assignments – PAPERS. 70 % of the Final Grade

- a) There will not be any revisions or rewrite for papers – do your best and

incorporate what you learn from writing earlier papers into later papers

b) All papers will be submitted through ILEARN plagiarism checking software and all plagiarism will be reported to the Dean

c) The lowest paper grade will be dropped and two remaining ones averaged

II. Weekly QUIZZES – Multiple Choice. 30% of the Final Grade

- short and simple quizzes in the beginning of each class, in order to motivate class preparation and attendance
- 3 lowest quiz grades will be dropped and the rest averaged
- there will not be any make-ups for these quizzes due to *absences* or *latenesses*: the dropping of lowest 3 grades gives sufficient room for all kinds of contingencies related to athletics, ill health, faulty alarm clocks, etc.

III. Participation & discussion in class & attendance

- concerning *class participation*
 - Class participation will either lower or raise the final class grade – as these reflect the effort the students demonstrate in grasping the material.
- concerning *absences*
 - all absences must provide a documented excuse (for example, a doctor's note) or be discussed and arranged with the professor
 - excessive absences especially must be justified medically

Required Text:

- **Title:** The Republic of Plato
Author: Plato, Allan David Bloom (translator)
ISBN: 0465069347
- **Title:** Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics
Author: Aristotle, Joe Sachs (translator)
ISBN: 978-1585100354
- **Title:** Aristotle's Metaphysics
Author: Aristotle, Joe Sachs (translator)
ISBN: 978-1888009033

Schedule:

Readings and papers will be assigned in the order and on the dates that make sense according to the organic development of the class (pace of comprehension, pace of discussion, relevant tangents of interest, etc.). Papers will be assigned at least a week in advance. All readings and paper assignments will be announced on the Blackboard after each session.

Attendance

- excessive absences result in the grade of UW (Unofficial Withdrawal) in class
 - you will receive a warning either in person or by email
- The state law regarding non-attendance because of religious beliefs (p. 53 in the Bulletin), and your class policies (e.g., attendance, participation, etc)

Plagiarism

- if you plagiarize, you fail – no exceptions!
- University Policy on Plagiarism

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.

Student Disability Policy

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her.

IMPORTANT NOTE

- the material is difficult, and YOU WILL BE LOST UNLESS YOU ATTEND CLASS