

PHIL 353:

The Presocratic Philosophers

Term: Winter 2016

Time and place: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 15:35 to 16:25; EDUC 539

Credits: Three

Prerequisites: None, though previous instruction in philosophy is **strongly recommended**

Instructor: Dr. Antoine Panaioti

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Office hours: Thursday 12:40 to 14:10 at Leacock 923, or by appointment

I) Course Description

This term, PHIL 353 will consist in a survey of prominent figures in the history of Early Greek Thought, with a focus on cosmology and ontology. Following a brief introductory segment on our sources for Presocratic philosophers, methodological issues surrounding the interpretation of their views, and Aristotle's highly influential reception of his early predecessors' thought, we will be closely scrutinizing the pronouncements and/or arguments of such eminent Early Greek Thinkers as Thales, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus, and Pythagoras, amongst others.

II) Course Goals

The purpose of this course is to provide students with thorough instruction in the study of Early Greek Thought. More generally, the course is designed to help students refine their reading and writing skills, develop critical thinking, and gain a greater ability to present analytically rigorous, yet historically sensitive philosophical reconstructions of important arguments and theories. Such skills are highly transferable. Ultimately, students are expected to succeed in composing a carefully structured and well-argued research paper.

III) Instructional Method

The course will be structured in a hybrid fashion, mixing elements of the lecture and conference formats. Monday and Wednesday classes will consist mainly in lectures, while Friday classes will be devoted to conference-style discussions. Students are expected: (a) to read all assigned texts for the week *before the Monday lecture*; (b) to submit a discussion question/comment (max. 200 words; electronic submission) every Thursday, by 16:00 PM; and (c) to participate actively in Friday class discussions, with their discussion question/comment ready at hand.

IV) Evaluation

Evaluation for PHIL 353 breaks down as follows:

- A) Participation (40%) – lecture attendance will not be monitored, though question/comment submission and conference participation will be.
- B) Short Essay (20%) – this will be due at the beginning of class on Friday, February 26, immediately before reading week; further details will be provided on Wednesday, February 17.
- C) Final Research Paper (40%) – 3,000-word essay on the topic of your choice (research proposals due Friday, April 08); electronic submissions due Thursday, April 28.

V) Course Material

The following title should be purchased at the Word Bookstore (469 Milton Road; cash payment only):

Graham, D. W. (ed.). *The Texts of Early Greek Thought*, Part I. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

All other reading material will be made available on the PHIL 353 MyCourses webpage.

VI) Course Outline

Introduction: Of Sources, Method, and Reception/Transmission

08/01: Barnes, Jonathan, *Early Greek Philosophy*, Middlesex, Harmondsworth, 1987, pp. 24–31 & 295–301

01/11–15: Runia, David T., “The Sources for Presocratic Philosophy” in *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*, edited by P. Curd & D. W. Graham, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 27–54.

Frede, M., “Aristotle’s Account of the Origins of Philosophy” in *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*, edited by P. Curd & D. W. Graham, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 501–529.

Part I: Notable Ionians Cosmologists

01/18–22: **Thales** and **Anaximander**, *Texts*, pp. 17 –71

01/25–29: **Anaximenes** and **Xenophanes**, *Texts*, pp. 72 –134

02/01–05: **Heraclitus**, *Texts*, pp. 135–200

02/08–12: **Heraclitus** continued

Graham, D. W., “Heraclitus: Flux, Order, and Knowledge” in *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*, edited by P. Curd & D. W. Graham, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 169–188

Part II: The Eleatics

02/15–19: **Parmenides**, *Texts*, pp. 203–245

02/22–26: **Parmenides** continued, **Melissus, & Zeno**, *Texts*, pp. 245–270 & 462–285

March Break

Part III: Cosmology after the Eleatics

03/07–11: **Empedocles**, *Texts*, pp. 326–433

03/14–18: **Anaxagoras**, *Texts*, pp. 371–325

03/21–25: **Leucippus & Democritus**, *Texts*, pp. 516–629

03/28–04/01: **Leucippus & Democritus** continued

Part IV: Pythagoras and his School

04/04–08: *Readings TBD*

04/11–15: *Ibid.*

Please note that the course outline is subject to revision. All changes will be announced in class and posted on the course’s website.

VII) McGill Policy Statements

1. McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures” (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

2. In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.