

Presocratics Fall 24
PHIL 353-001
Leacock 109
Weds/Fri 11:35-12:55

This course is a systematic investigation into many of the Presocratic philosophers, focusing on primary sources. The only required text is:

The Presocratic Philosophers, Kirk, Raven and Scholfield (2ed ed), which is available at Paragraphe. You should also access on-line a copy of Hesiod's *Theogony*.

(note: precise class readings may be adjusted due to our pace and/or class interest)

Aug 28, Introduction

Aug 30, Hesiod and Thales

Sept 4 Thales

Sept 6 Anaxamander

Sept 11 Anaxamander, Anaximenes

Sept 13 Discussion on Milesians, what is philosophy?

Sept 18: Class Cancelled

Sept 20: Librarian visit

Sept 25: Heraclitus

Sept 27: Heraclitus

Oct 2: Heraclitus

Oct 4: Class Cancelled

Oct 9: Heraclitus

Oct 11: Quiz 1

No class week of Oct. 14:

Oct 23: Parmenides 1

Oct 25: Parmenides 2

Oct 30: Parmenides 3

Nov 1: Melissus

Nov 6: Zeno 1

Nov 8: Zeno 2

Nov 13: Zeno 3

Nov 15: Empedocles; Quiz 2

Nov 20: Atomists 1

Nov 22: Atomists 2

Nov 27: Atomists 3

Nov 29: Quiz 3

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

3 true/false quizzes 20% each = 60%

Take Home Final (short essays) = 40%

The true/false quizzes are assessing your ability to:

1. Follow the lectures and the readings
2. Relate the concepts discussed in class to the primary texts they are drawing upon
3. Compare and contrast the positions of assorted Presocratic thinkers
4. Understand and choose plausible interpretations of the extant texts
5. Understanding the interpretive challenges at play in addressing Presocratic thought, including, but not limited to, understanding the status of secondary sources and ancient sources which preserve the fragments of the Presocratics

In all assessments priority should be given to the content of the class lectures, and the in-class discussions, over the interpretations found in the required book.

In addition to the assessment criteria for the quizzes, the short essay take-home exam (3 short essays) assesses your ability to:

1. Write concise prose explaining the positions of the Presocratics on assorted issues, and draw upon primary sources (fragments) to support your claims
2. Think systematically across a range of thinkers concerning important themes and problems that have been addressed in the class

McGill is located on un-ceded land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We are presently meeting, here on the downtown McGill University campus, on territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka nation. We should all recognize this fact and think about the history of genocide and racism which these and other Indigenous peoples have suffered, and what we can do to combat its continuation. Oh, and James McGill owned slaves.

“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. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.”

“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).