Course Description

Few periods in the history of the world have been more productive than classical Greece between 600 BCE and 300 BCE. The history of Western civilization would be entirely different without Greek advancements and contributions in history, architecture, science, medicine, poetry, drama, and a host of other fields and disciplines. This course will focus specifically on Greek philosophy from this period. Philosophy in the Western tradition first emerged on the western coast of Anatolia among Ionic city-states, but beginning in 5th century Athens, philosophy took a fateful turn. Atomists and sophists began to undermine the foundation of Greek society, religion, and culture, which set the stage for new figures to pioneer novel approaches questions of ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology.

It is into this void that Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle emerged. It is hard to overstate the influence of either Plato or Aristotle. Some combination of both Platonism and Aristotelianism became orthodoxy in the Western intellectual world for two thousand years after they lived. Even after the advent of the Scientific Revolution and Modern philosophy, it is still possible to find acolytes of Plato and Aristotle in every significant philosophical epoch up to and including the present day. In all likelihood, there will always be philosophers who call themselves Platonic or Aristotelian (or both) so long as there is any memory of the ancient history or philosophy itself. It is impossible to consider either intellectual history or serious philosophical questions without understanding what either figure thought and said.

This course aims to examine and unpack both Presocratic philosophy and some of the critical texts of both Plato and Aristotle. Their work touches on the foundational questions of human existence: what does it mean to be human; how should we live our lives; what is the nature of reality itself; how do we “divide nature at its joints”; how do we know what we know; what is beauty; what constitutes logical inferences? While it is possible to spend a lifetime asking these questions and studying the classical Greek answers to them, we will do our best to survey some of the most important aspects of their writings.

General Course Objectives

At the end of this course, you will be asked to evaluate the course's success at meeting these objectives:

- Gaining a basic understanding of the subject (e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories)
- Developing skill in expressing myself orally or in writing
- Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.

Specific Course Objectives
By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify and understand some of the most important figures and texts in the history of ancient philosophy.
2. Improve your ability to write about and discuss the fundamental questions of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and human well-being.
3. Compare and contrast serious and sophisticated philosophers who disagree with each other about substantial philosophical questions.

Instructor

Michael Otteson
Email: michael.otteson@usu.edu
Office Hours: MW 12:00-1:00 (over Zoom)

Course Resources

Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy from Thales to Aristotle, ed. S Marc Cohen, Patricia Curd, and C.D.C. Reeve, Fifth Edition

Evaluation Methods and Criteria

Participation: 20%

This course deals with a collection of (sometimes difficult) philosophical texts. Our class will not function unless you read the material for each class and have made a good faith effort to understand it. It will also not function if nobody other than me talks during class. We will go through the assigned reading every day and discuss it, which means that you will need to participate in our class discussions. As such, I want to reward keeping up with the reading as much as possible.

However, this semester comes with a twist courtesy of the coronavirus. The format of this course is face-to-face hybrid, which means only a third of you will come to class on any given day. As such, your participation grade will come in two segments. The first third of your participation will come from the questions you ask over Zoom when you are tuning in to our class remotely. You will be expected to follow along with the discussion and send in at least one question per class. We will periodically pause to answer Zoom questions during lecture. If you submit a question, then you will receive participation points. It is possible we will not have time to cover all of the questions, so we will introduce an element of randomness to determine whose question we will discuss. The other two thirds of your participation grade will come from your contributions on the days that you come to class. Given that it is much harder for people to participate in class
discussion over Zoom, I will expect the people in class to help carry the discussion. On
the days you come to class, you will need to come up with at least two questions or
comments about that day’s readings. You will need to email the questions to me in
advance of our discussion, and I will expect you to ask it during class. We may not get
to all of the submitted questions, so we may have to introduce randomness to the
process. When questions come in from Zoom, I will throw them out to the students who
have come to class, and I will give them the opportunity to expand on or respond to the
questions before I do. If you are involved in this process, you will earn your participation
points for the semester. All of this means that you need to pay special attention to the
readings on the days you come to class so that help carry our discussions.

If you cannot attend class in person on the days you have been assigned for academic-
excused or medical reasons, then you will need to send the questions in advance so
that we can cover them.

This semester, participation will depend on your compliance with all of the COVID rules
that USU has set out. You must always wear a mask while in class and maintain six
feet of distance between yourself and other people.

Presocratics Paper: 10%
The first writing assignment for this course will be a short essay (three pages)
explaining some aspect of Presocratic philosophy. You may write on the moral
skepticism of the sophists, the materialism of the atomists, Heraclitus, Parmenides, or
monism of the Milesians (and perhaps on Xenophanes). This paper is purely exegesis
and will help me get a first look at your writing. This will enable me to give you feedback
for later work.

Ask a Question: 10%
In the context of most papers in college, you argue for and defend a thesis. That is, you
argue for a positive answer to some question or topic. This assignment will focus on
asking, rather than answering, a question. However, unlike the questions that can
count for credit in the context of classroom discussion, this question has to be more
than just clarification. This question will first ground itself in an understanding of the
text. It will show that the student comprehends key aspects of the author’s
perspective. Through it, the student should demonstrate that they grasp the contours of
the theory in question and can find rough edges or material for further discussion or
thought. This question will be substantive in the sense that it will deal with a key aspect
of the text and suggest avenues or pathways for further work or analysis. The student
will schedule an appointment via Zoom with me and will have five to ten minutes to ask
the question. I strongly encourage you to make this question the basis of your longer
paper.
Podcast Debate: 20%

As we will see from the course material, dialogue and dialectic are central to Plato’s approach to philosophy. According to reports from ancient sources, Aristotle also wrote dialogues that have not survived. There are reasons that both figures turned to dialogue as a means to explore fundamental questions of human existence. This assignment will ask you to enter into this kind of dialogue. You will need to work with other students to pick two philosophers we have covered in the course and create characters that hold their respective positions. You will need to correctly represent what the philosophers in question believes based on the readings for the course, and how that person might respond to the perspective and philosophy of their interlocutor in the conversation. You will need to record the audio of your conversation and submit it. I will evaluate your podcast based on how well and charitably you represent each side of the debate and how thoughtfully and constructively the “characters” engage with each other. Also, it should have the feel of a real conversation and not just a rote script or essay that you are reading from. The reason for this is that I don’t just want you to repeat with the author in question said. I want you to think like they thought, or to inhabit their perspective and see through their eyes. There will also be a self and group assessment of each other’s contributions to the collective effort. This assignment should be fifteen to twenty minutes.

Long Paper: 20%

The final paper for this course will ask you to represent and enter into dialogue with the ancient philosophers we have covered in this course. Your paper should explore a serious question that deals with philosophically substantive aspects of the authors we read. I will give you broad latitude to come up with a topic you want to explore in your essay provided that you check it off with me (the “Ask a Question” assignment is a great way to do this). However, if you are looking for topics, here are a few areas that would prove fruitful:

- The nature of God
- The nature of matter (that is, what is the material world)
- The human good
- The fundamental constituents of the universe
- Morality
- Epistemology

Ideally, your paper will deal with how two figures from the course deal with one of the topics above (if you go this route). However, you can also explore one philosopher provided that you can find enough material for an entire essay. Again, there is a lot of latitude here provided you check things off with me. This paper should be eight to ten pages.

Response Papers: 20%
The other writing assignments in this course will be graded primarily on quality. This assignment is more of a measure of your effort in doing and engaging with the readings. Each week, I will post two writing prompts on Canvas. You will need to pick five weeks over the course of the semester (and three before the halfway point of the course) and answer one of the weekly prompts with a one- to two-page answer. If you are in the ballpark here, you will get credit. You do not need to get everything right about the prompt; so long as you have made a good faith effort to answer the question, you will get full points. You will post response papers to Canvas and email them to papersformike@gmail.com

Policies

Late Work:
In normal circumstances, I only accept late work in conjunction with an academic or other medical/emergency related excuse (the bar is pretty high here). Furthermore, I am far more sympathetic to requests for extensions in advance of deadlines rather than after them. However, we are not living in normal circumstances, and I understand that this semester poses unique challenges to both instructors and students. The standard is still that work be turned in on time, and at the end of the semester my hands are tied. However, if students have an emergency and/or contact me in advance, I want to be as accommodating as I can be with deadlines. Please reach out to me if you are going to have problems getting assignments in on time.

Class Decorum

It is crucial that we treat each other with respect during these class discussions. We are covering material that is both difficult to understand and that has potential bearing on some sensitive subjects. As such, we must be civil to each other if this class is to succeed. If you are disrespectful towards others, I will dock your participation points.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to regularly attend class on the days that they are required to be in-person and to Zoom in to class discussions at the time they occur otherwise. If you had academically-excused or medical reasons for not coming to class, please let me known as soon as possible. However, this is college, and as a rule I don't think it is my job to make you come to class everyday. As I note in the evaluation section, I reward people for participation, not attendance. That means that you will need to regularly attend both in-person and on Zoom to get a good participation grade, but missing three or less classes without an excuse will not harm your overall grade provided that you make substantial contributions otherwise. Conversely, I award no points at all for mere attendance without any material contributions to the classroom discussions.

Changes to the Syllabus
This syllabus and the course schedule are subject to change. Please make note of any changes to it in class. I will post updated versions of the syllabus from time to time (as needed).

Grade Scheme

The following grading standards will be used in this class:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100 % to 93.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>&lt; 93.0 % to 90.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>&lt; 90.0 % to 87.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>&lt; 87.0 % to 83.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>&lt; 83.0 % to 80.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>&lt; 73.0 % to 70.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>&lt; 67.0 % to 60.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 59.0 % to 0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Schedule/Outline

Week One
8/31: Introduction
9/2: Theogony

Week Two
9/7: Labour Day
9/11: Empedocles: 33-47

Week Three
9/14: Anaxagoras:47-50
9/18: Medea
Week Four
9/21: Medea, Melian Dialogue, Presocratics Paper Due
9/23: Apology
9/25: Symposium
Week Five
9/28 Symposium
9/30 Republic I
10/2 Republic I
Week Six
10/5 Republic II
10/7 Republic II
10/9 Republic III
Week Seven
10/12 Republic III
10/14 Republic IV
10/16 Republic IV
Week Eight
10/19 Republic V
10/21 Republic V
10/23 Republic VI
Week Nine
10/26 Republic VI
10/28 Republic VII
10/30 Republic VII, Paper/Podcast Due
Week Ten
11/2 Republic VIII
11/4 Republic VIII
11/6 Republic IX
Week Eleven
11/9 Republic IX
11/11 Republic X
11/13 Republic X
Week Twelve
11/16 Posterior Analytics: 464-475; Last Day to Schedule Ask a Question
11/18 Physics: 475-796
Week Thirteen
11/23 De Anima: 512-529
11/25: Thanksgiving
11/27: Thanksgiving
Week Fourteen
11/30 Metaphysics: 536-577
12/2 Nicomachean Ethics 577-593
12/4 Nicomachean Ethics 593-609
Week Fifteen
12/7 Nicomachean Ethics 509-622
12/9 Politics 623-638
12/11 Politics 638-654
Week Sixteen
12/18: Final Paper/Podcast Due

Library Services

All USU students attending classes in Logan, at our Regional Campuses, or online can access all databases, e-journals, and e-books regardless of location. Additionally, the
library will mail printed books to students, at no charge to them. Students can also
borrow books from any Utah academic library. Take advantage of all library services
and learn more at libguides.usu.edu/rc. (Links to an external site.)

Classroom Civility

Utah State University supports the principle of freedom of expression for both faculty
and students. The University respects the rights of faculty to teach and students to
learn. Maintenance of these rights requires classroom conditions that do not impede the
learning process. Disruptive classroom behavior will not be tolerated. An individual
engaging in such behavior may be subject to disciplinary action. Read Student Code
Article V Section V-3 (Links to an external site.) for more information.

University Policies & Procedures

COVID-19 Classroom Protocols

In order to continue to provide a high standard of instruction at USU, and to limit the
spread of COVID-19 during the pandemic, students are asked to follow certain
classroom protocols during the fall 2020 semester. These protocols are in place not only
for your safety but also the safety of the rest of the campus community. You will be
asked to clean your desk area at the start of each class, sit in designated seats, wear
face coverings, and follow dismission instructions. There may be individual medical
circumstances that prevent some students from using face coverings. These
circumstances will be rare, but if they do exist, we ask that everyone be respectful. It is
imperative that we each do our part so that on-campus instruction can continue.

Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibilities

Academic freedom is the right to teach, study, discuss, investigate, discover, create,
and publish freely. Academic freedom protects the rights of faculty members in teaching
and of students in learning. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of
truth. Faculty members are entitled to full freedom in teaching, research, and creative
activities, subject to the limitations imposed by professional responsibility. Faculty Code
Policy #403 (Links to an external site.) further defines academic freedom and
professional responsibilities.

Academic Integrity – "The Honor System"

Each student has the right and duty to pursue his or her academic experience free of
dishonesty. To enhance the learning environment at Utah State University and to
develop student academic integrity, each student agrees to the following Honor Pledge:
"I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself with the foremost level of academic integrity."
A student who lives by the Honor Pledge is a student who does more than not cheat,
falsify, or plagiarize. A student who lives by the Honor Pledge:

- Espouses academic integrity as an underlying and essential principle of the Utah
  State University community;
- Understands that each act of academic dishonesty devalues every degree that is awarded by this institution; and
- Is a welcomed and valued member of Utah State University.

**Academic Dishonesty**

The instructor of this course will take appropriate actions in response to Academic Dishonesty, as defined the University’s Student Code. Acts of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- **Cheating**: using, attempting to use, or providing others with any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or in any other academic exercise or activity. Unauthorized assistance includes:
  - Working in a group when the instructor has designated that the quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity be done “individually;”
  - Depending on the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
  - Substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for oneself, in taking an examination or preparing academic work;
  - Acquiring tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty member, staff member, or another student without express permission;
  - Continuing to write after time has been called on a quiz, test, examination, or any other academic exercise or activity;
  - Submitting substantially the same work for credit in more than one class, except with prior approval of the instructor; or engaging in any form of research fraud.

- **Falsification**: altering or fabricating any information or citation in an academic exercise or activity.

- **Plagiarism**: representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes using materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the sale of term papers or other academic materials.

For additional information go to: [ARTICLE VI. University Regulations Regarding Academic Integrity (Links to an external site.)](#)

**Sexual Harassment/Title IX**

Utah State University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free from acts of sexual misconduct and discrimination and to fostering respect and dignity for all members of the USU community. Title IX and [USU Policy 339 (Links to an external site.)](#) address sexual harassment in the workplace and academic setting. The university responds promptly upon learning of any form of possible discrimination or sexual misconduct. Any individual may contact USU’s [Office of Equity (Links to an external site.)](#) for available options and resources or clarification. The university has established a complaint procedure to handle all types of discrimination complaints, including sexual harassment ([USU Policy 305 (Links to an external site.)](#)), and has
designated the Office of Equity Director/Title IX Coordinator as the official responsible for receiving and investigating complaints of sexual harassment.

**Withdrawal Policy and "I" Grade Policy**

Students are required to complete all courses for which they are registered by the end of the semester. In some cases, a student may be unable to complete all of the coursework because of extenuating circumstances, but not due to poor performance or to retain financial aid. The term ‘extenuating’ circumstances includes: (1) incapacitating illness which prevents a student from attending classes for a minimum period of two weeks, (2) a death in the immediate family, (3) financial responsibilities requiring a student to alter a work schedule to secure employment, (4) change in work schedule as required by an employer, or (5) other emergencies deemed appropriate by the instructor.

**Students with Disabilities**

USU welcomes students with disabilities. If you have, or suspect you may have, a physical, mental health, or learning disability that may require accommodations in this course, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) (Links to an external site.) as early in the semester as possible (University Inn # 101, (435) 797-2444, drc@usu.edu). All disability related accommodations must be approved by the DRC. Once approved, the DRC will coordinate with faculty to provide accommodations.

Students who are at a higher risk for complications from COVID-19 or who contract COVID-19 may also be eligible for accommodations.

**Diversity Statement**

Regardless of intent, careless or ill-informed remarks can be offensive and hurtful to others and detract from the learning climate. If you feel uncomfortable in a classroom due to offensive language or actions by an instructor or student(s) regarding ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, contact:

- Division of Student Affairs: [https://studentaffairs.usu.edu](https://studentaffairs.usu.edu) (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1712, studentservices@usu.edu, TSC 220
- Student Legal Services: [https://ususa.usu.edu/student-association/student-advocacy/legal-services](https://ususa.usu.edu/student-association/student-advocacy/legal-services) (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-2912, TSC 326,
- Access and Diversity: [http://accesscenter.usu.edu](http://accesscenter.usu.edu) (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1728, access@usu.edu; TSC 315
- Multicultural Programs: [http://accesscenter.usu.edu/multiculture](http://accesscenter.usu.edu/multiculture) (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1728, TSC 315
- LGBTQA Programs: [http://accesscenter.usu.edu/lgbtqa](http://accesscenter.usu.edu/lgbtqa) (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-1728, TSC 3145
- Provost’s Office Diversity Resources: [https://www.usu.edu/provost/diversity](https://www.usu.edu/provost/diversity) (Links to an external site.), (435) 797-8176
You can learn about your student rights by visiting:
The Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University: https://studentconduct.usu.edu/studentcode (Links to an external site.)

Grievance Process
Students who feel they have been unfairly treated may file a grievance through the channels and procedures described in the Student Code: Article VII (Links to an external site.).

Full details for USU Academic Policies and Procedures can be found at:

- Student Conduct (Links to an external site.)
- Student Code (Links to an external site.)
- Academic Integrity (Links to an external site.)
- USU Selected Academic Policies and Procedures (Links to an external site.)
- USU Academic Policies and Procedures (Links to an external site.)
- Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility Policy (Links to an external site.)

Emergency Procedures
In the case of a drill or real emergency, classes will be notified to evacuate the building by the sound of the fire/emergency alarm system or by a building representative. In the event of a disaster that may interfere with either notification, evacuate as the situation dictates (i.e., in an earthquake when shaking ceases or immediately when a fire is discovered). Turn off computers and take any personal items with you. Elevators should not be used; instead, use the closest stairs.

Mental Health
Mental health is critically important for the success of USU students. As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Utah State University provides free services for students to assist them with addressing these and other concerns. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) (Links to an external site.). Students are also encouraged to download the “SafeUT App” (Links to an external site.) to their smartphones. The SafeUT application is a 24/7 statewide crisis text and tip service that provides real-time crisis intervention to students through texting and a confidential tip program that can help anyone with emotional crises, bullying, relationship problems, mental health, or suicide related issues.