



**PHIL 31011–001: Ancient Philosophy**

**Prof. Michael Byron**

Office: 320B Bowman Hall

Hours: MW 11:00–12 & by appointment

**Fall, 2024**

[Ancient Greek in Canvas](#)

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**Course Description:**

The epitome of Ancient Greek Philosophy is the golden age of Plato and Aristotle, but systematic reflection about the cosmos began centuries earlier and continued in the ancient world through the Macedonian and Roman Empires. Our writing intensive course will explore the often zany ideas of the earliest Greek philosophers in order to set in context the achievements of Plato and Aristotle and to render more evident their debts to their forebears. After briefly exploring the Platonic and Aristotelian developments of these themes, we'll shift to our second focus, which will be the post-Aristotelian movements of Skepticism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism.

Understanding these movements prepares one—perhaps as much as reading Plato and Aristotle—to understand modern philosophers like Descartes and Malebranche, Kant, and Mill.

**Prerequisites:**

At least one of PHIL 11009, 21002, 41038; and at least one of PHIL 11001, 21001. Students who do not satisfy the prerequisites risk being deregistered.

**Learning outcomes:**

- Demonstrate increased awareness and understanding of complex issues and complex philosophical texts.
- Demonstrate exposure to and knowledge of main views and issues addressed by major figures from the history of philosophy.
- Demonstrate recognition of philosophical arguments encountered in complex philosophical writings within the contexts and traditions that inform those arguments and writings.
- Demonstrate the ability to draw links or associations between various arguments and philosophical sources and resources.
- Develop the ability to present complex philosophical ideas, theories, and perspectives fairly, objectively, and critically.
- Engage students in development of written reflection and response.

**University Requirements:**

This course may be used to satisfy required Kent State upper division hours; it is a requirement of the PHIL major and an elective for the PHIL minor.

**Texts:**

Required (links are to Amazon, but students may purchase anywhere):

1. [Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy](#), 5th ed. Cohen, Curd, & Reeve, ISBN: 978-1624665325 (\$50-ish)
2. [Hellenistic Philosophy](#), 2nd ed. Inwood & Gerson, ISBN: 978-0872203785 (\$17-ish)
3. [Thales to Sextus: An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy](#), Garrett Thomson, ISBN: 978-1478627760 (\$45-ish)

**Note:** all books are available as e-books at a substantial discount

## **Calendar:**

Unit 1: Presocratics, weeks 1–5

Unit 2: Plato & Aristotle, weeks 6–10

Unit 3: Hellenistic philosophy, weeks 11–15

Detailed course schedule and assignments are available Canvas:

<https://kent.instructure.com/courses/93277>

## **Requirements:**

- Attendance & Contribution, including a minimum of 2 substantial forum posts per week
- 2 short papers (6–8 pages each)
- 2 midterm exams
- Final exam

## **Grading:**

Final grades will be assessed using a standard scale (80-82 = B–, 83-86 = B, 87-89 = B+, etc., rounded to the nearest whole point)

- Contribution, including esp. Discussion forum: 10%
- Short papers: 40% (20% each)
- Midterm exams: 30% (15% each)
- Final exam: 20%

## **Expectations:**

Attendance & Contribution: In accordance with university policy, students are expected to attend class. Absences may be excused with proper documentation indicating an objectively good reason for missing class. Each unexcused absence will deduct 10% from your contribution grade, since absent students cannot contribute.

Every student should come prepared for class. That means, at a minimum, that you should bring your readings and a prepared mind to every class meeting. Your contribution will sometimes include answering questions from me or from other students.

Please silence phones during class; if you anticipate an emergency call, please notify me and sit near the door to slip out for your call. Otherwise, the **use of devices during class is a distraction and not permitted.**

Late papers: All of the deadlines for the course are published in Canvas. Life does happen, and we can extend deadlines for good reason, almost always done in advance of the deadline. Late papers will receive a reduced grade.

**Registration:** The official registration deadline for this course is **Week 1**. University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Students must confirm their enrollment by

checking their class schedules (using Student Tools in FlashLine) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.

**Withdrawal:** The course withdrawal deadline is **Week 10**.

**Cheating:** University policy 3342-3-01.8 deals with the problem of academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism. None of these will be tolerated in this class. The sanctions provided in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. If you have any questions, please read the policy at <http://bit.ly/1KZAB05> or ask.

**Students with disabilities:** Kent State University is committed to inclusive and accessible educational experiences for all students. University Policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to course content. Students with disabilities are encouraged to connect with Student Accessibility Services as early as possible to establish accommodations. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health, chronic medical conditions, or injuries), please let me know immediately.

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) Contact Information:

Location: University Library, Suite 100

Email: [sas@kent.edu](mailto:sas@kent.edu)

Phone: 330-672-3391; VP 330-968-0490

Web: [www.kent.edu/sas](http://www.kent.edu/sas)

**Notice of copyright and intellectual property rights:** Any intellectual property displayed or distributed to students during this course (including but not limited to powerpoints, notes, quizzes, examinations) by the professor remains the intellectual property of the professor. This means that the student may not distribute, publish or provide such intellectual property to any other person or entity for any reason, commercial or otherwise, without the express written permission of the professor.

**FERPA Statement:**

This course may require contribution to a discussion forum, wiki, blogs, and other collaborative projects. Collaborative projects by their very nature expose student work products to other students and possibly members of the public, although graded work and student grades will never be disclosed. Nonetheless, the nature of collaborative work might make it impossible to protect students' privacy rights in all work product under applicable provisions of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). Students remaining in the class agree to waive their applicable FERPA rights for any and all such collaborative work for this course.