

An Introduction to Greek Philosophy

AMNE 235 / PHIL 211 (2024): Greek Philosophy I



Online Version of this Syllabus: bit.ly/socrates211

Overview

This course traces the early evolution of ancient Greek philosophy, the “love of wisdom” (*philosophia*), from its roots in Homeric oral poetry (c. 800 BCE) to the Socratic dialogues of Plato (429-347 BCE). We’ll focus on the ancient Greek search for knowledge about nature and the human condition, which many philosophers attributed to an injunction from the Oracle at Delphi: “Know Thyself.” That inquiry unfolded into mythological and scientific speculation about reality and cosmology, human freedom and well-being, and new conceptions of statecraft and justice in cities like Sparta and Athens.

We’ll trace these themes through Presocratic thinkers like Pythagoras, Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, and explore the insights of women like Aristoclea of Delphi, Diotima of Mantinea, and Perictione of Athens, respectively depicted in Greek literature as teachers of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato. According to later sources, their traditions argued for ethical non-violence, sustainable communities, gender equality in education and government, and a theory of stable metaphysical patterns underlying visible reality. These threads converge in Plato’s depiction of Socratic self-cultivation (*epimeleia tou beautifulou*), combining novel instruments of rational inquiry with personal inspiration to seek human flourishing (*eudaimonia*) as a goal of each individual and community.

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Course Plan

Instructor and Teaching Assistants

- Instructor: [Dr. Michael Griffin](#) (he/him), Professor, AMNE and Philosophy
 - Email: michael.griffin@ubc.ca, or via Canvas Messages, Discussions
 - Optionally, you can find me on our Discord server or leave a note in *#michaels-office*
 - Office hours: Mon 2-3pm (BUCH C227B)
- TAs: TBD
 - Contact through Email (above), Canvas Messages, Discussions.
- The TAs and Instructor will be jointly responsible for reading and responding to your assignments, essays, and contributions throughout the term. You can ask us about any projects.

Delivery Plan

This delivery plan may adapt based on pedagogical needs and safety considerations during the term.

Calendar of Topics and Readings

- [Visit the course calendar here to view topics and readings.](#)

Meetings and Lectures

1. Weekly In-Person Meetings | Attend Mon and Wed 1-2pm in CHEM D300
 - **Each week, please join class in person on Monday and Wednesday.**
2. Weekly Hybrid Meeting | Attend Fri 1-2pm on Zoom or in CHEM D300
 - **On Fridays, you may attend class in person *or* via Zoom.** The Zoom link is on Canvas.
 - **Note: our very *first* Friday class, Sep 6, will be in-person only.**
3. Lecture Recordings | Available online
 - **For all lecture content, pre-recordings will also be made available for review purposes.**

Additional Resources

- Discussions with the instructor, TAs, and peers, are available on UBC Canvas (canvas.ubc.ca). Additionally, Dr. Griffin's Discord server (link on Canvas) is available optionally for response & discussion. Avoid posting personally identifying information on Discord, which is not hosted in Canada.

Textbooks

Core books

Please try to find the following books for purchase. They will be ordered (for e-copies and hard copies) via the [UBC Bookstore](#). We'll be reading these closely together.

- **Presocratics:** P. Curd and R.D. McKirahan, *A Presocratics Reader* (Hackett), 2nd edition.
- **Plato:** C.D.C. Reeve, *A Plato Reader: Eight Essential Dialogues* (Hackett)

Further readings will be posted online, and available via the UBC Library online. In particular, you'll see references below to the following:

- **DP:** Michael Griffin, [Delphic Philosophy 1 Anthology](#) (2020).
- **Ricken:** Friedo Ricken, *Philosophy of the Ancients*, a general overview treatment.

Reaching out

Please reach out to Dr. Griffin, above, if we can offer accommodations to support your success.

Assessment Structure

- The due time for each date is usually **11:59pm Pacific Time**.
- For assignments due on a **holiday Monday**, the due date is moved to **Tuesday**.

Assessment Summary

| Assignment | Project | Due Date | Worth |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| Weekly quizzes | Answer online: Canvas | Each Monday (for preceding week) | 15% |
| Weekly discussions | Post online: Canvas | Each Monday (for preceding week) | 10% |
| In-class responses | In-Class Questions | During class meetings | 15% |
| Thaumaturge week | Sign-up to curate a week | Any week during term | 5% |
| Creative project | Submit preliminary plan | October 10, 2023 | 5% |
| | Submit creative project | December 15, 2023 | |
| Essay projects | Essay project 1 | October 20, 2022 | 50% |
| | Essay project 2 | December 13, 2022 | |

Weekly Quizzes • Submit your answers each Monday

Each week, a set of tests will be posted for your completion.

Quizzes are available online on Canvas. Quizzes will be predominantly multiple-choice, and based on the readings and lectures posted for the same week. Their focus is helping you to gauge your progress, and keep connected with the course content.

Example question: *Which of the following is not an Olympian deity described by Hesiod?*
 (a) Zeus (b) Hera (c) Iron Man (d) Hestia

The quiz for each week's content is due by end of the day (11:59pm) the following Monday. For example, the quiz for September 9-13th's material is due on September 16th at 11:59pm. Your first quiz will be due Monday, September 16th. If a Monday is a holiday, the due date will be moved to a later date, usually Tuesday at 11:59pm.

Late or missed policy: Quizzes are generally not accepted late, because answers are available following the due date. Reach out to the instructor or see [concessions](#) if you are unable to complete a quiz.

Weekly Discussion Responses • Post your answer each Monday

Engage in class discussion of interesting points each week.

Early each week, we'll open a Canvas Discussion thread for **discussion of the week's lectures and readings**. Drawing from the week's content and your journal, post in the thread **a summary of what you think is most interesting about the week, or questions that are especially outstanding**. Generally, the discussion thread will be open until **the following Monday at 11:59pm Pacific Time**, on the same schedule as the quizzes (above).

You'll normally receive a full completion grade for posting relevant content in the thread, unless your contribution is [plagiarized](#), trivial, or in violation of UBC's values for respectful conduct (see below). We'll ordinarily try to give credit for anything posted in good faith! You may also receive bonus marks for especially valuable or thoughtful contributions. If you really like what someone's posting, you can "like" their post to encourage their contributions.

Late or missed policy: You may miss, or submit late, one weekly response in the term without any penalty. (Your lowest mark in this category will be ignored).

Thaumaturge for a week • Join a group for a week

Sign up to help inspire discussion and engagement during a week of your choice during term.

"Philosophy begins in wonder (*to thaumazein... archē philosophias*)," suggests Socrates (Plato, *Theaetetus* 155cd)—which could also be translated, "wonder is the root of curiosity."

We ask each student to sign up to act as “wonder-maker” (thaumaturge) for a week: to help bring out what’s exciting and interesting in that week’s material. You’ll usually not be alone: there should usually be more than 5 thaumaturges for each week; and most weeks are limited to 12.

It’s a “light-touch” role—you’re like a gardener for the week, especially engaged alongside the instructor and TAs. **Note that there isn’t a specific place to upload thaumaturge content: you can contribute *all across the course*, including in-person. Collaborate with your group to write a plan and summary of your activities, with headers for each individual contributor, in the Thaumaturge assignment.** See below for details on how to sign up and submit.

Suggestions for thaumaturge activities

- Using Canvas **discussions for your week**, post a **summary** of key notes for the video lectures for the week, to help support others who may have limited bandwidth access, and to amplify or question lecture and reading content.
- Add content and ideas to the course Discord server (link on Canvas). You can use the general or fun channels, for example.
- Together with your group, create an engaging **activity** that can contribute to learning this week. Here’s an [example activity](#).
- Participate actively in weekly **synchronous meetings**, and pose questions and sparks for discussion.
- Using Canvas **discussions**, post extra thoughts and cool side-content related to the week: videos, articles, interviews, memes.
- **Let the instructor know what you’ve been up to**, using the assignment posted for the group.

How to sign up & submit your thaumaturge activity for the week

1. In the [course calendar](#) (right-hand column), choose a week you’d like to sign up for. Check on the the group name for each week, toward the right-hand of the sheet.
2. In the course’s [Canvas](#) page, using the left-hand navigation, browse as follows: **People > Groups**. Join a **Weekly Thaumaturge Group** corresponding to your week and topic of choice!
3. **Connect with your group to discuss and plan.**
 - a. Optionally, there’s group chat in the Discord server’s polis channels. Note that some weeks have several poleis (‘cities’). In recent years, most groups have used Discord to communicate.
 - b. You can find your group on **Canvas**. In the main Canvas navigation, locate [Groups](#). (On the web, it’s in the far-left, dark blue navigation, fourth from the top; on the iPhone Canvas app, in Dashboard, scroll down to the bottom and find Groups). You can find your group members, check for announcements, and post discussions here.
 - c. While it’s your collective responsibility to coordinate as a group, get in touch if I can help to connect you with other thaumaturges for the week, or answer any questions.
4. **Find the Thaumaturge assignment on Canvas. By the Monday following your week, group should submit a summary of how you’ve each contributed over the week:**

nominate a member to submit the assignment on the group's behalf. Be sure to include separate headers in your summary for each group member's contributions.

5. You'll each receive an individual grade.

Thaumaturge assessment

- You can expect to receive an A-range result (80% or higher) for a substantial, good-faith effort.
- You may receive a higher result (100%) for exceptional effort and extra work.
- If you're not able to participate, reach out to the instructor.

Creative Project: Your Philosophy

Develop a creative project in a medium of your choice.

Develop a creative project that explores ideas in this course and expresses a philosophy that appeals to you, applied in a medium of your choice (for example, short story, essay, blogs, drawing, music, or podcasts), and designed to speak to a non-academic audience.

For example, you might prepare a short story, a small series of artworks or sketches, a brief graphic novel, a game mod, a limited series of podcasts, or a blog. You can share this project online using any platform you prefer: a locally hosted option with UBC support is an ePortfolio hosted at www.ubcart.ca.

You may choose to work individually, or collaborate in a small group (provided your individual contributions are clearly articulated). In your preliminary plan, you'll be asked to lay out your criteria for success, and your own grading rubric.

Late policy

- **We will accept a major assignment (essay, creative project) within 48 hours of the due date without penalty.** To use this extension, note in the comment box when you submit that you're using the automatic extension.
- **After 48 hours, we will continue to accept work up to at least one week after the posted deadline**, ordinarily deducting 2% from the grade for each day late (after 48 hours).
- If you expect not to be able to submit within a week of the due date, or are requesting a special concession, please reach out to the instructor to discuss, and see below on [concessions](#).

2 Research Essays

You'll be invited to compose and submit two research essays during term.

Your essay should be about 1,500 words in length, but can be 10% under or over the goal. You can use a citation style of your choice, as long as it's consistent. (Further details will be posted in September).

Example topic: Analyze the view that human goodness or excellence (aretē) ranks higher than than comfort, pleasure (hēdonē) and social status (timē) in constituting a fulfilling life. Try to develop and analyze a specific **argument** for this view, with reference to Plato's dialogues read in class. Explain

whether or not you are sympathetic to this view, and why you agree or disagree. Consider and reply to effective counterarguments or alternatives to your position.

Your essay will usually be read by one Teaching Assistant and the instructor, and you'll receive detailed comments on your first essay as feedback to develop for your second essay.

We're not assuming that you've already written an essay for Philosophy or Classical Studies: we'll try our best to help introduce you to the assignment and make it an enjoyable project, even if this is your first university essay ever! Several "essay clinics" and practice sessions will also be available to help out prior to submission.

Late policy

- **We will accept a major assignment (essay, creative project) within 48 hours of the due date without penalty.** To use this extension, note in the comment box when you submit that you're using the automatic extension.
- **After 48 hours, we will continue to accept your work up to at least one week after the posted deadline**, ordinarily deducting 2% from the grade for each day late (after 48 hours).
- If you expect not to be able to submit within a week of the due date, or are requesting a special concession, please reach out to the instructor to discuss, and see below on [concessions](#).

Note: ChatGPT. You may use Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT to support you in preparing initial drafts of this essay. **Please note that, and how, you have used an LLM, if you choose to do so: we may ask for further information about how you have used the resource.** Note that you will need to substantially edit and revise material created by an LLM. LLMs typically argue in very broad terms and cannot provide accurate and specific references to ancient works (like line numbers in a Presocratic poem or page numbers for a Platonic dialogue), and they occasionally 'hallucinate' references that do not exist, to both ancient and modern resources.

In-Class Participation • Answer live questions during each class

During our synchronous meetings, we'll occasionally post live questions. You'll receive credit for answering these questions while they're available. You can answer in-person in class, or remotely via livestream.

We will use the [Top Hat](#) platform for in-class participation. You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or through text message (SMS).

If you already have a Top Hat account, go to the following link to be taken directly to our course.

- <https://app-ca.tophat.com/e/969286>

If you are new to Top Hat, you can register here:

- Go to <https://app.tophat.com/register/student>
- Click "Search by school" and input the name of our school
- Search for our course with the following join code: **969286**

The UBC Faculty of Arts is subscribed to Top Hat, so **it should be free to you. If you run into any trouble registering for free, please let us know!**

Late or missed policy: We aim to ask questions quite regularly throughout term, so missing a few won't significantly impact your grade. At the end of term, review your mark as a whole; if you're concerned about whether your participation result accurately reflects your engagement, please reach out to the instructor. If you miss a significant block of classes, see below, [concessions](#).

Posting final grades

I will confirm your final grades with you via Canvas before they are posted to the SSC, and you'll have an opportunity to query your grade. You should be able to keep accurate track of your marks in the course throughout the term, using Canvas's gradebook. For context, the final average mark for this class is usually between 70-75%, but each year can vary. In the event of a significant deviation, I may need to curve the final grades (in order to prevent an excessively high or low average that would be rejected by the faculty), but this is an unlikely contingency. I'll keep the class apprised if there is any likelihood of classwide adjustments. I'm always happy to talk about how your grade can better reflect your effort and commitment to the course, and I appreciate that this is an exceptional year.

Ungraded Projects and Platforms

Asynchronous Discussions and Q&A: Discord

I'll be available regularly, and especially on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, to answer questions. Additionally, supplementing our formal Canvas discussions, you're welcome to visit me on our **Discord server** (link at start of syllabus).

Please note that Discord is not hosted in Canada and is not compliant with [FIPPA](#): respecting privacy, we should **not** post personally identifying information there (for example, student numbers). You're welcome to use an **alias** for Discord if you choose. I'll moderate discussion here with a light touch; if it doesn't work out, I'll discontinue the server.

Course Journal

I'd encourage you to keep a weekly **course journal** on paper (not online!) Your journal *itself* is for you—it won't be graded, or read by us, unless you want to share something with us specifically. Using your journal, try to keep notes regularly as you watch lectures, read the texts, and think about the course content. Record what you find most interesting; emphasize your own curiosity and open questions. You can use your journal as a resource when you post discussions and plan assignments.

Course Calendar

Visit the [course calendar here](#), posted separately: bit.ly/3DaaQO8
The calendar lists readings, topics, and lectures for each week.

You can also read [supplementary notes on themes](#) covered in this course.

Course guidelines

- **Please read the required texts each week**, and if possible work with the physical textbooks, which you can annotate in person. We're going to try to make sense of these books and ideas together, and we'd like to help you to get the most out of them! The course calendar outlines readings for each class. During each lecture, I'll also often pick out and recommend particular, briefer areas of emphasis within the next class's readings, to help you narrow your focus.
- **Please adhere to the University's standards for academic integrity** in your work for the course. You can read guidelines here: learningcommons.ubc.ca/academic-integrity. We'll help with advice for referencing your sources consistently, so that your readers can understand how you're finding and evaluating information.
- **Please contact the instructor as soon as possible about accommodations that might facilitate your wellbeing and flourishing in this class**, including alternative arrangements for learning and evaluation. Note that UBC's Centre for Accessibility can help with academic accommodations, concessions, and accessibility.
- **You're welcome to excuse yourself from a lecture or course content, in advance or during a synchronous class**. Lectures will also be livestreamed, so in-person attendance is at your discretion. In addition, if the material covered in a given lecture is potentially sensitive or troubling, you don't need to attend that lecture. The course calendar will outline topics to be covered in the term. Please notify the instructor (in advance if possible) of material that you prefer to miss, and we'll work together to make alternate arrangements.
- **I appreciate your help in cultivating an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity in class, in keeping with UBC's values and policies (below)**. Plato's Socrates, at his best, pursued a high standard of free inquiry embodied with intellectual humility, individual empathy, inclusion, and self-knowledge. We hope our classroom will also be a welcoming environment for everyone to participate in dialogue and discovery.

Absences and Accommodations

What accommodations are available to me?

- If we can support your success and well-being in the course, don't hesitate to reach out to the instructor. You can also find support from your faculty advising office (for example, [Arts Advising](#)) and from the [UBC Centre for Accessibility](#).
- Note that most assignments in the course have individual late policies. See [assessment](#).

What if I'm feeling unwell?

First and foremost, take care of yourself and those around you! If you are sick, it is important that you stay home. Complete a self-assessment for COVID-19 symptoms [here: https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en](https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en). In this class, the marking scheme is intended to provide flexibility so that you can prioritize your health and still succeed.

Some suggestions in case you miss class or fall behind in case of illness:

- Make a connection early in the term to another student or a group of students in the class. You can help each other by sharing notes. If you don't yet know anyone in the class, post on the discussion forum or (optionally) Discord to connect with other students.
- Reach out to the instructor if you think you might miss any key activities.
- Consult the class resources on Canvas. Most content is available asynchronously.
- Use Canvas discussions or (optionally) Discord for help. Join online office hours if you can.
- If you are feeling ill at the time of a final exam, do not attend the exam. You must apply for deferred standing (an academic concession) through Arts Academic Advising. Students who are granted deferred standing (SD) will write the final exam/assignment at a later date.

What if the instructor's feeling unwell?

- If I am unwell, I will not come to class. I will make every reasonable attempt to communicate plans for class as soon as possible (by email, on Canvas, etc.). Our asynchronous video content and synchronous meetings will still be available, and I will try to make arrangements with substitutes for in-person meetings.

The University's values and policies

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here:

<https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success>

Note for students logging in from outside Canada

This note was primarily intended for online delivery in 2020W, but is included here in case you are studying for any part of the term from abroad.

Keep in mind that some UBC courses might cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by non-Canadian governments. This may include, but is not limited to, human rights, representative government, defamation, obscenity, gender or sexuality, and historical or current geopolitical controversies. If you are a student living abroad, you will be subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, and your local authorities might limit your access to course material or take punitive action against you. UBC is strongly committed to academic freedom, but has no control over foreign authorities (please visit the [UBC Calendar](#) for an articulation of the values of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom). Thus, we recognize that students will have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects.

If you have concerns regarding your personal situation, consider postponing taking a course with manifest risks, until you are back on campus or reach out to your academic advisor to find substitute courses. For further information and support, please visit:
<http://academic.ubc.ca/support-resources/freedom-expression>

