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2020

### 301-01 Ancient Survey

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#### Recommended Citation

Strevell, Evan, "301-01 Ancient Survey" (2020). *Philosophy Syllabi*. 815.  
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Ancient Survey  
PHIL 301 01  
Evan Strevell

## Course Description

This course examines the positions and arguments of major ancient Greek philosophers. The survey is thematic, rather than topical. This means we will consider the various areas of philosophy as Plato and Aristotle deal with them: ethics, epistemology (what is knowledge?), natural philosophy (principles and causes of natural being and becoming), and metaphysics (the nature of reality). For the Presocratics, we will focus on the first beginnings of cosmology, natural philosophy and metaphysics. We then take up three dialogues by Plato in which we will consider the nature of virtue and the distinction between philosophy and sophistry (*Protagoras*), the question of what knowledge is (*Theaetetus*), and the Forms (*Phaedo* + selections from *Republic*). After Plato, we will consider Aristotle's natural philosophy (*Physics*), metaphysics (*Metaphysics*) and ethics (*Nicomachean Ethics*).

Is there still pressing urgency to study ancient philosophy? Or has there been so much progress in philosophy that ancient stuff is way out of date? But does philosophy seem to make progress like the natural sciences as we currently understand them? Philosophy may have to start always from the same problems whether or not natural science is (endlessly) progressive. In the contemporary period many philosophers have called the whole tradition of philosophy into question, and this seems to make us need to return to the beginning of the tradition to determine what philosophy is or was. This has been particularly the case since Nietzsche and then in the 20th century starting with Heidegger, and then with feminism, critical theory and so forth.

I believe that by reading works of ancient philosophy we are reading especially exciting works of philosophy. They are rewarding works in themselves and in how they can open us to philosophy and get a deeper appreciation of it generally. They may still be pertinent to our philosophical questions.

## General Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Develop (further) a liberal habit of mind as patterned by Platonic dialogues.
2. Develop (further) exegetical skill for interpreting difficult texts.
3. Develop (further) the ability to identify and assess argumentation.
4. Understand and be able to explain the basic issues, themes, and positions in Presocratic, Platonic, and Aristotelian philosophy.
5. Develop rationally defensible accounts about the issues, themes, and positions in Presocratic, Platonic, and Aristotelian philosophy.

## Course Format & Organization

Each week we will make our way through a certain amount of assigned text in a module. It's ok if you do not comprehend the entire reading or even much of it your first time through. That's normal. We will meet synchronously by Zoom on Wednesdays and Fridays for intensive, seminar discussions of the assigned readings. Students will be assigned to two seminar groups. There will be

a rotation of primary and secondary responsibility for discussion between the two groups (spelled out here). A third class consists of a weekly recurring peer review assignment. These emphasize two primary skills utilized in the history of philosophy, exegesis and argument reconstruction (spelled out here). In lieu of videotaped lectures (let's face it, these are awful to sit through), I will provide notes for you to digest about the material in each module. At the end of each module, there will be a quiz that covers the issues, themes, concepts, and positions contained in the assigned text covered by the module. Your quiz score will tell you how well you are absorbing and retaining the text.

## **Class Discussion Format & Organization**

### *Seminar Groups*

For class meetings, students will be assigned to two seminar groups. Groups will rotate having primary and secondary responsibility for discussing the assigned text.

Find your assigned seminar group [here](#) (scroll to bottom of page after the jump to locate Seminar Groups 1-2).

### *Meeting Schedule & Zoom Links*

Though subject to change, I plan for us to meet twice a week at 1pm on Wednesdays and Fridays.

1. Wednesday Class Meetings 1:00 to 1:50pm
  - o <https://xavier.zoom.us/j/95639419010?pwd=NEZMdm1Sd3ZDSEt2c1NWWGMwT HhDZz09>
  - o Password: 503538
2. Friday Class Meetings 1:00 to 1:50pm
  - o <https://xavier.zoom.us/j/92919220596?pwd=UUJ1K3V4OGhNTWtLR3A3OUJqRTR zZz09>
  - o Password: 512716

### *Group Responsibilities*

1. **PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY** Following a five minute (maximum) summary of previous discussion (see tertiary responsibility below), this group will discuss the text with me directly.
  - o This group needs to have prepared especially carefully.
  - o Each member must pick out a single passage or argument that they think is the most crucial for the reading and write up some reflections on it prior to the meeting. Commentary means exegesis or reconstruction. This should be a minimum of 250 words.
  - o Commentary can form the basis of your exegesis or reconstruction peer review for the week OR you can work it into an exegesis or reconstruction paper to be submitted for extra credit (on extra credit, see VI in [Graded Assignments](#)).
2. **SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY** One group will react to the discussion in chat on Zoom. This can take the form of questions that arise for you from the discussion as well as commentary you wish to give about what is being said. The chat will be saved and distributed.
3. **TERTIARY RESPONSIBILITY** A rotating pair of students from the group responsible for chat will volunteer or be assigned to take notes on the discussion and the conversation in chat and compile a 5 minute (maximum) summary of the major points of the class conversation. List:
  - o the major issues and questions discussed and how they were resolved and

- any major questions that remain unresolved or went undiscussed.
  - Students taking notes must coordinate together to come up with a summary of the discussion.
4. For the final 10 to 15 minutes or so of each meeting, the conversation is opened up to all in the class.

### *Rotation of Responsibilities*

I will list which group has what responsibility for each meeting under "Required Reading & Discussion Schedule" in each module.

### **Required Texts**

Weeks 1-2:

Curd, Patricia (ed). 2011. *A Presocratics Reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Patricia Curd and Richard D. McKirahan (trans.). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing.

Weeks 3-4:

Sachs, Joe. 2011. *Socrates & the Sophists: Plato's Protagoras, Euthydemus, Hippias Major and Cratylus*. Indianapolis, IN Focus Publishing (Imprint of Hackett Publishing).

Weeks 5-6:

Plato. 2004. *Theaetetus*. Joe Sachs (trans.). Indianapolis, IN Focus Publishing (Imprint of Hackett Publishing).

Weeks 7-8:

Plato. 1998. *Phaedo*. Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage and Eric Salem (trans.). Indianapolis, IN Focus Publishing (Imprint of Hackett Publishing).

Weeks 9-14:

Aristotle. 1996. *Introductory Readings*. Gail Fine and Terrence Irwin (eds., trans.). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing.

### ***Required Work & Graded Assignments***

#### *I. Viewing Assignments on Canvas*

Due dates for scheduled quizzes, writing assignments, and peer review assignments are embedded in the individual modules, but are also marked on the Canvas calendar for you. Be sure to check the calendar often to keep track of upcoming assignments.

When viewing assignments in "[Assignments](#)" on Canvas, I suggest you select "Show by Type" at the top right of the page.

#### *II. Seminar Discussion by Zoom (15% of the final grade)*

Rather than lecturing on what I think about the text in class (you will be provided notes for that), we will approach the issues, ideas, and positions that arise through careful conversation, which I direct by facilitating discussion and coordinating responses. Participants will give and justify accounts about the text instead of merely sharing opinions. Those not conversing must consider carefully what those who are conversing say.

Students must be thoroughly prepared to discuss the text—notice the emphasis on preparedness to

discuss, not on already understanding. Arrive sufficiently prepared to discuss the text in a collaborative effort to achieve insight together with others. I or another will throw out a question and you may have no clue how to answer. So what should you do? Jump in and start swimming.

### III. *Commentary + Peer Review (15% of the final grade)*

You will submit in alternating weeks two different kinds of philosophical commentary on assigned texts: (1) exegesis + peer review and (2) argument reconstruction + peer review. These emphasize and build two skills, the interpretation of meaning (exegesis) and grasping what an argument amounts to (argument reconstruction). They also happen to be two principal skills utilized for critically engaging philosophy and writing a philosophical essay.

Students will be placed (mostly) in groups of three. In addition to submitting an exegesis or argument reconstruction, each group member will provide critical peer review for two other group members. Finally, each group member will respond to the peer review each receives. Think of this as mimicking a careful class discussion about a particular passage or argument in an assigned text. Due dates are given in the modules.

### IV. *Quizzes (10% of the final grade)*

There will be a scheduled quiz for each module. These assess how well you are mastering the main themes, concepts and positions in the material. Any unannounced pop quizzes will consist of a single, obvious reading question. Quizzes may be made-up only when missed due to official university obligations, documentable medical appointments, or family emergencies.

### V. *Essays (60% of the final grade)*

Details, expectations, due dates, and rubrics will be provided in the modules.

#### A. Presocratics (15% of the final grade)

750 words (three standard double-spaced pages)

#### B. Plato (20% of the final grade)

1,250 to 1,750 words (five to seven standard double-spaced pages)

#### C. Aristotle (25% of the final grade)

1,500 to 2,000 words (six to eight standard double-spaced pages)

### VI. *Extra Credit Bank*

Within the "Assignments" navigation pane, you will find an "[Extra Credit Bank](#)." In addition to the required weekly philosophical commentary + peer review, you may submit up to two 500 word philosophical commentaries per week (two exegesises OR two reconstructions OR one of each), each worth 1 point of extra credit. At the end of the semester you can distribute your extra credit points to quizzes (which are worth 10 points each) and to writing assignments.

### VII. *Grading Scale for Assignments*

A = $\geq$ 93 or 9.3	C = 73-76
A- = 90-92	C- = 70-73
B+ = 87-89	D+ = 67-69
B = 83-86	D = 63-66

B- = 80-82  
C+ = 77-79

D- = 60-62  
F = ≤ 59 or 5.9

## Office Hours & Contact Information

1. Email: [strevelle@xavier.edu](mailto:strevelle@xavier.edu) (allow 24 hours for a response)

For questions about course content and assignments, post to the Discussions board entitled "[Course Questions](#)."

2. Office Phone: 513-745-2084

3. Office: My Kitchen Table

4. Office hours are:

Tuesday 8 to 8:30am	Thursday 2:30 to 3pm
Tuesday 8:30 to 9am	Thursday 3 to 3:30pm
Tuesday 9 to 9:30am	Thursday 3:30 to 4pm

To meet during these times, [go here \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

To meet by appointment, send an email through the Canvas inbox app.

## Policies

### *Instructor Availability*

- I will try to keep a 7am to 2pm, Monday to Friday schedule. You should assume that I will not check email outside of those days and hours.
- Office hours: limited to three hours a week by appointment through a google doc.

### *Due Dates*

All readings and graded assignments (quizzes, assignment due dates, etc.) will be posted in the modules. Readings and assignments will also be posted on the Canvas Calendar.

### *Late or Missed Assignments*

Late or missed assignments will be accepted or made up at my discretion. If you procrastinated until the night before an essay is due and will likely get a very poor grade, you may wish to request an extension. I might not give you one, however. If you are late turning in an assignment, I might let you turn it in, but I might not. If I do let you turn it in, I will arbitrarily decide how many points to deduct or whether to deduct any at all.

### *Use of Electronic Devices*

For class discussion by Zoom, devices should be used only for following discussion—not surfing the internet, checking email, texting, etc. It is a challenge to pay attention by Zoom. In Zoom faculty meetings over the summer, I wanted nothing more than to wander off to Pitchfork to read music reviews. Sometimes I did. I get it. Fight it!

### *Correspondence with Instructor*

For questions about course content or assignments, post to the "Course Questions" discussion board in "Discussions" on Canvas. Email correspondence must be through the Canvas mail

application (the "Inbox")—it automatically tells me what course and section you are in. Allow 24 hours for a response on weekdays. Do not depend on me to check my email on the weekend.

### *Attendance*

The course material is difficult and we meet only twice a week, so attendance is essential. Students are expected to arrive prior to class, whether in person or virtually, with the necessary readings in hand. I may require you to show me you have the reading. Office hours are not a substitute for Friday discussions. If you miss a discussion without just cause (the instructor decides what cause is just), get notes from others.

### *Academic Integrity*

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation. All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student's own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited, as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own. You should be aware of the University policy on Academic Honesty

- <https://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/xu-tutor-use/academic-honesty>

Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an "F" in the course, and expulsion from the University" Your instructor may use plagiarism detecting software, such as Turn-It-In, to review your written assignments.

### *Life Happens*

In the time of Covid, a parent or loved one or you may get sick or lose a job. We, all of us, are very stressed. Within reason, I am here for you. If anything in your life is impacting your performance in the class or ability to complete required work well or on time, please trust that you can reach out to me without judgment.

### *Writing Center*

Location: 400 Conaton Learning Commons

Phone: 513-745-2875

Email: [writingcenter@xavier.edu](mailto:writingcenter@xavier.edu)

Good writing is a skill and clear writing really does take practice. Even majors can benefit from an outside party scanning for clarity and organization. The Writing Center can help you make your writing better.

### *Students with Disabilities*

Any student who feels he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should notify the course instructor and contact Cassandra Jones in the Office of Disability Services at 745-3280 or e-mail [jonesc20@xavier.edu](mailto:jonesc20@xavier.edu) to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

### *Orientation to Learning Remotely*

Learning remotely is different than being in a traditional classroom and has both advantages and challenges. You are strongly encouraged to look through this orientation to get some advice on how to approach learning in a remote classroom.

[Click here for an orientation to learning in an online environment](#)

### *Using the Library*

Most of the instructional resources provided by the Xavier University Library continue to be available to students in the remote learning environment. These include electronic collections (such as research databases and digital full-text journals), Zotero (a reference management software to manage bibliographic data and related research material), and electronic delivery of book chapters and articles through interlibrary loan. Check the Library's [remote learning page](#) for more information about what resources and services are available remotely and how to access them.

Your [library liaison](#) can help you select pertinent library materials for your course including reference and research resources that match your course content.

The library website features a page addressing the [specific needs of online students](#)[Links to an external site.](#) There is also a student tutorial, [XU.TUTOR](#), that teaches effective research techniques and gives guidelines on plagiarism and copyright issues.

### *Academic Support*

The [Office of Academic Support](#) provides free services, including tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, and study groups, to undergraduate Xavier students. The OAS is located on the fifth floor of the Conaton Learning Commons, Suite 514.

The [James A. Glenn Writing Center](#) provides free tutoring services to all Xavier students. Tutoring appointments are scheduled in one-hour time slots and can be reserved by calling (513) 745-2875, visiting our office, or emailing [writingcenter@xavier.edu](mailto:writingcenter@xavier.edu) with your preferred times. The Writing Center is located in the Conaton Learning Commons (CLC) Room 400.

The [Mathematics Tutoring Lab](#) is a free service to all Xavier students in MATH classes numbered 105 through 171 (with the exception of 125). An upper level mathematics major (or minor) or the lab director, Mr. Chris Staat, is on duty for assistance in any of these classes. The Math Lab, located on the 4th floor of the Conaton Learning Commons, is a great place to come and work on homework, either by yourself or with a small group, and have someone available to answer any questions. Drop-in question and answer type sessions are welcome.

### *Health Services and Counseling*

[Xavier Health Services](#), operated by TriHealth, provides medical and mental health support for students. Office visits are available by appointment for injuries, immunizations, physicals, previous health concerns, and general sick appointments. Telehealth visits may be an additional option to obtain personalized medical care from a Xavier Health Services provider. Students may call Health Services at 513-345-3022, option 2, to schedule an appointment or speak with a member of the medical team. Please note that walk-in appointments are not available at this time.

Xavier's [Counseling Services](#) is staffed by clinical psychologists and counselors licensed in the state of Ohio. The staff also includes a board-certified consulting psychiatrist for you if you need medication or hospitalization. Free of charge, students can benefit from the same quality of service that's available in a private practice. Students who wish to get connected with a therapist should consult the website and/or call 513-745-3022, option 2, for more information.