

# CX112-15 Ancient Thought: Philosophy, Politics, Science

**22/23**

**Department**

Classics & Ancient History

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 1

**Module leader**

David Fearn

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

Multiple

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

---

## Description

### Introductory description

This module, taught in translation, introduces students to the breadth and variety of ancient thought – investigating the ways in which the ancient Greeks and Romans articulated their thinking and their beliefs, about themselves and the worlds around them. This module surveys the cultural and intellectual contours of the ancient Graeco-Roman world from the presocratics through to late antiquity, and investigates not just the origins and development of philosophical thinking, but also developments in scientific investigation. It offers an overview of the cultural and intellectual horizons of major advances in intellectual self-examination, across politics, ethics, aesthetics, and literary criticism, and Graeco-Roman value-systems, including in relation to gender, class, and race. It does not simply survey familiar names and ideas in ancient philosophy (e.g. Plato and Aristotle; Stoicism and Epicureanism) but also facilitates discussion of a variety of contributions to ancient self-reflection across a much wider range of ancient sources.

As well as expanding awareness of the range of materials that classicists study, the module will explore critically the range of methodologies and approaches used in the interpretation of this material, and the assessment of its own conceptual self-consciousness, and allow students to test out these skills in their own responses. For instance, what is it about presocratic thought that is so innovative and distinctive, and how might it be understood in context, both in the development of ancient attitudes to writing and to culture and religion? What range of materials might we use,

beyond Plato and Aristotle, to investigate the intellectual obsessions of Classical Athens? How might Plato's and Aristotle's attitudes to ethics, politics, and poetics be more broadly situated? How might the origins and developments of Roman thought be understood, and through what range of sources? How, in particular, might a distinctive Roman philosophical poetics be articulated, and what might that mean, with what consequences for ourselves as well as for our understanding of ancient Rome? How might the origins and developments of ancient medicine be understood, in context and beyond?

No previous knowledge is assumed, and this module is designed to inspire students, to broaden their intellectual horizons, and to provide them with a basis on which to choose their honours pathways after year 1. Each weekly 2-hr lecture will introduce a series of texts, themes and approaches, and two seminars will investigate two case studies in greater depth (one Greek, one Roman).

## **Module aims**

An introduction to the diverse ways in which the intellectual culture of ancient Greece and Rome might be understood.

## **Outline syllabus**

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1: Orientation; Understanding the world from Homer to the 5th Century BC

Week 2: Radical brainpower in fifth-century Athens: the sophists

Week 3: Philosophy as a way of life: Plato's Symposium – inc. seminar on Plato

Week 4: Ancient rhetorics and poetics: Aristotle

Week 5: Body and mind in ancient science

Week 6: reading week

Week 7: Searching for happiness: Epicurus and Epicureanism

Week 8: Life in the face of death: Roman Stoicism - inc. seminar

Week 9: Virtues and passions in Roman political thought

Week 10: Philosophical therapy: from Seneca to Boethius

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- have gained knowledge of the wide range of materials that classicists can study to understand ancient thought, including knowledge of major authors and forms of thought;
- have gained knowledge and understanding of the range of methodologies and approaches used in the interpretation of ancient intellectual ideas, in their social and cultural contexts;
- have developed an ability to engage critically with classical scholarship on ancient thought;
- put their knowledge about interpretative approaches and strategies into practice in their own responses to classical material;
- select and present material clearly, with coherent argumentation and appropriate referencing, both orally and in writing;

## Indicative reading list

- Allen, D. S. 2010. *Why Plato Wrote*. Blackwell Bristol lectures on Greece, Rome and the classical tradition. Chichester; Malden, MA.
- Buxton, R. (ed.) 2002. *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*. Oxford.
- Bynum, W. 2008. *The History of Medicine: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford.
- Cruse, A. 2006. *Roman Medicine*. 2nd ed. Stroud.
- Dean-Jones, L. A. 1994. *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*. Oxford.
- Dickie, M. 2001. *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*. London.
- Dillon, J. and Gergel, T. 2003. *The Greek Sophists*. London.
- Edwards, C. 1993. *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*. Cambridge.
- Ford, A. 2002. *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece*. Princeton.
- Goldhill, S. 2002. *The Invention of Prose*. Oxford.
- Gruen, E. S. 2010. *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, Princeton.
- Gunderson, E. 2000. *Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World*. Ann Arbor.
- Guthrie, W. K. C. 1971. *The Sophists*. Cambridge.
- Hadot, P. 2002. *What is Ancient Philosophy?* trans. M. Chase, Harvard.
- Halliwell, S. 1998. *Aristotle's Poetics*. Bristol.
- Hobbes, A. 2000. *Plato and the Hero: Courage, Manliness and the Impersonal Good*. Cambridge.
- Kerferd, G. B. 1981. *The Sophistic Movement*. Cambridge.
- Kirk, G. S., Raven, J. E., and Schofield, M. 1983. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. 2nd ed. Cambridge.
- Janaway, C. 1995. *Images of Excellence: Plato's Critique of the Arts*. Oxford.
- Langlands, R. 2006. *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome*. Cambridge.
- Lloyd, G. E. R. 1987. *The Revolutions of Wisdom: Studies in the Claims and Practice of Ancient Greek Science*. Berkeley, CA.
- Monserat, D. (ed.) 1997. *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings. Studies of the Body in Antiquity*. London and New York.
- Murray, P. 1995. *Plato on Poetry*. Cambridge.
- Romm, J. 2014. *Dying Every Day. Seneca at the Court of Nero*. New York.
- Russell, D. A. 1981. *Criticism in Antiquity*. London.
- Russell, D. A. & Winterbottom, M. (eds.) 1972. *Ancient Literary Criticism. The Principal Texts in Translation*. Oxford.
- Rutherford, R. B. 1995. *The Art of Plato: Ten Essays in Platonic Interpretation*. London.
- Sedley, D. 1998. *Lucretius and the transformation of Greek wisdom*, Cambridge.
- Szlezák, T. 1999. *Reading Plato*. London.
- Walker, J. 2001. *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*. Princeton.
- Wardy, R. 1996. *The Birth of Rhetoric: Gorgias, Plato and their Successors*. London.
- Warren, J. 2009. *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*. Cambridge.
- Wyke, M. (ed.) 1998. *Parchments of Gender: Deciphering the Bodies of Antiquity*. Oxford.

## Subject specific skills

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- have gained knowledge of the wide range of materials that classicists can study to understand ancient thought, including knowledge of major authors and forms of thought;
- have gained knowledge and understanding of the range of methodologies and approaches used in the interpretation of ancient intellectual ideas, in their social and cultural contexts;
- have developed an ability to engage critically with classical scholarship on ancient thought;
- put their knowledge about interpretative approaches and strategies into practice in their own responses to classical material;
- select and present material clearly, with coherent argumentation and appropriate referencing, both orally and in writing.

## Transferable skills

Problem solving

Active lifelong learning

Communication

Information Literacy

ICT skills

Professionalism

---

## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Seminars	2 sessions of 1 hour (1%)
Private study	70 hours (47%)
Assessment	60 hours (40%)
Total	150 hours

### Private study description

Reading and independent research required for the module, in preparation for seminars, and assessed coursework.

## Costs

Category	Description	Funded by	Cost to student
Books and learning materials	£20 for core seminar texts in translation, as	Student	£20.00

Category	Description	Funded by	Cost to student
	directed by lecturer		

---

## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Close-reading exercise	40%	20 hours	Yes (extension)
2x close reading responses to texts studied (i.e. gobbets: 2x 1 from choice of 3, one Greek, one Roman). One assessment point, Friday term 1 week 10 (with feedback on both amalgamated together, provided at start of term 2).			
2,500-word essay	50%	30 hours	Yes (extension)
2,500-word essay, to be submitted at the start of term 2.			
Attendance log	10%	10 hours	No
% of recorded attendance, across both lectures & seminars			

### Assessment group R

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Module engagement	100%		No
Reflective piece on engagement with the module			

### Feedback on assessment

Face-to-face 1-1 feedback sessions on written feedback

---

## Availability

### Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 1 of UCXA-VV17 Undergraduate Ancient History and Classical Archaeology (Part-

Time)

- Year 1 of UCXA-Q82P Undergraduate Classical Civilisation
- Year 1 of UPHA-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of UCXA-VV16 Undergraduate Ancient History and Classical Archaeology
- Year 1 of UCXA-VV18 Undergraduate Ancient History and Classical Archaeology with Study in Europe
- Year 1 of UCXA-Q820 Undergraduate Classical Civilisation
- Year 1 of UCXA-Q821 Undergraduate Classical Civilisation with Study in Europe

This module is Core option list A for:

- Year 1 of UCXA-Q800 BA in Classics
- Year 1 of UCXA-Q802 Undergraduate Classics (Latin) with Study in Europe

This module is Core option list B for:

- Year 1 of UCXA-QQ37 Undergraduate Classics and English