

PH140-15 Ancient Philosophy

24/25

Department

Philosophy

Level

Undergraduate Level 1

Module leader

Thomas Crowther

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

20% coursework, 80% exam

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This module introduces thinkers, ideas and arguments from ancient philosophy that have been foundational for the western philosophical tradition. Thinkers studied include Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Students are introduced both to the primary texts and to secondary literature. The module focuses specifically on metaphysics, epistemology and ethics, and emphasizes contrast and continuity between treatments of these topics in the ancient literature. The module contrasts the Milesian naturalism of the first philosophers with the Athenian non-naturalism of Socrates and Plato, and goes on to focus on Aristotle's attempts to combine these two different traditions of thinking. The module provides a foundation both for further study of Greek philosophy, and for study of contemporary philosophical literature that engages with these traditional themes.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

The main module aim is to introduce students to the ideas, arguments, and themes of a number of important works of ancient philosophy. The method is to do this by interactive lectures, seminars and guided close reading and analysis of the primary texts and of issues raised by these texts. By the end of the module, students should be able to (i) understand the main philosophical issues and arguments presented in a number of important texts of ancient philosophy (ii) critically engage with the main ideas and arguments of these texts, and articulate their own views about the relative

strengths or weaknesses of these arguments.

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.

Representative topics

Milesian naturalism and the birth of philosophy

Heraclitus on flux

Parmenides on 'what is'

Socrates and the Socratic method in Plato's Early Dialogues

Plato's Meno: Epistemology and the Paradox of Enquiry

Forms and the Soul in Plato's Phaedo

Aristotle on Nature and the Four Causes in the Physics

Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: The Good Life and the Function Argument

Learning outcomes

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

- (i) understand the main philosophical issues and arguments presented in a number of important texts of ancient philosophy
- (ii) critically engage with the main ideas and arguments of these texts, and articulate their own views about the relative strengths or weaknesses of these arguments.
- (iii) Develop the skills of close reading of ancient philosophical texts, including an ability to understand and explain technical vocabulary from ancient philosophical texts and an awareness of debates about the interpretation of certain key terms in ancient texts.

Indicative reading list

Introductory Texts

Shields, C. 2012. *Ancient Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction*. 2nd ed. London, Routledge. (Or 3rd edition, 2022)

Graham, Daniel W. 2020. *Ancient Philosophy: The Fundamentals*. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell.

Primary Texts

Barnes, J. (ed.). 2002. *Early Greek Philosophy*. London, Penguin.

Cooper, J. (trans.) 2002. *Plato, Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*. Indianapolis, Hackett.

Waterfield, R. (trans.) 2009. *Meno and Other Dialogues*. Oxford, O.U.P.

Ackrill, J. (ed.) 1987. *A New Aristotle Reader*. Oxford, O.U.P. A very reliable collection of selected works, containing all of the Aristotle material relevant to this course.

Waterfield, R. 2008. *Aristotle, Physics*. Oxford, O.U.P. Contains helpful introductory material.

Secondary Texts

Barnes, J. 1982. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. London, Routledge.

- Long, A. A. 1999. The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy. Cambridge, C.U.P.
- Irwin, T. 1988. Aristotle's First Principles. Oxford, O.U.P.
- Kraut, R. (ed.) 1992. The Cambridge Companion to Plato. Cambridge, C.U.P.
- Barnes, J. (ed.) 1995. The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle. Cambridge, C.U.P.
- Fine, G. (ed.) 1999. Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology. Oxford, O.U.P.
- Fine, G. (ed.) 1999. Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion and the Soul. Oxford, O.U.P.
- Fine, G. 2003. Plato on Knowledge and Forms. Oxford, O.U.P.
- Shields, C. 2014. Aristotle. London, Routledge.

Subject specific skills

- (i) The capacity to read classic works of Ancient philosophy, centrally those of Plato and Aristotle and to understand key ideas in those texts.
- (ii) The capacity to explain key arguments found in classic philosophical texts, such as those in Plato and Aristotle.
- (iii) To develop an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments, and to be able to communicate these strengths and weaknesses in written work.

Transferable skills

- (i) To acquire the capacity to read difficult material effectively and critically.
 - (ii) To develop the capacity to explain demanding ideas and arguments clearly, briefly and accurately.
 - (iii) To think creatively about problems by deploying the capacity for clear thinking and reasoning
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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 1 hour (5%)
Private study	124 hours (83%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

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

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group D4

	Weighting	Study time
1000 word essay	20%	
Online Examination	80%	
~Platforms - AEP		

- Online examination: No Answerbook required

Feedback on assessment

Detailed written feedback will be provided on 20% essay, including advice on how to improve written work.

An exam report will also be provided, giving a general account of successful ways of answering a question and some common problems, but it will not comment on individual answers.

[Past exam papers for PH140](#)

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
- UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy
 - Year 1 of V700 Philosophy
 - Year 1 of V700 Philosophy

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
- Year 1 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 1 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 1 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy

- Year 1 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- UIPA-V5L8 Undergraduate Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development
 - Year 1 of V5L8 Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development
 - Year 1 of V5L8 Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development
- Year 1 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
- Year 1 of UPHA-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 1 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)
 - Year 1 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 1 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 1 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 1 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 1 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
- UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 1 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 1 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law