

PH3C6-15 Philosophy and Tragedy

24/25

Department

Philosophy

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Eliza Little

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Philosophy and tragedy have a long and complex relationship in the history of Western philosophy. This module aims at getting this relationship into view. We will do so by looking at some of the most historically notable ways in which philosophers have engaged with tragedy in their work, as well as by reading some tragic plays. Along the way, we will consider questions such as: What is the difference between philosophy and poetry? Does tragic drama 'think' in a different way than a philosophical text? How does poetic language represent the world? Does tragedy deal with a specific sort of ethical dilemma? What does tragedy tell us about how to live? Philosophical texts to be read include all or parts of Plato's Republic and Ion, Aristotle's Poetics, Hume's "Of Tragedy", and Hegel's Lectures on Fine Art, as well as contemporary work by Stanley Cavell, Martha Nussbaum, and Bernard Williams. Tragic dramas to be read include Sophocles's Oedipus Rex and Antigone, Euripides's Medea, and Shakespeare's King Lear.

Module aims

The principal module aim is to give students an opportunity for in-depth engagement with key texts and issues in the history of philosophy. This module will ask students to consider foundational disciplinary questions regarding the relationship between philosophical and literary thinking, and the proper approach to ethics in relation to a set of historical debates. The benefits of this module will include the opportunity to engage with a range of important texts in the history of philosophy

and to develop complex understanding of how the discipline of philosophy has understood itself over time. This module will complement students' work in other modules in philosophy: by highlighting the various features of works (e.g., use of thought experiments, formal argument, metaphor, impersonal address, emotional appeal) that may not be given explicit attention in philosophy modules, and by giving works classified as literature a chance to be studied for their philosophical significance. The module also aims to promote constructive conversation across the disciplines, including in philosophy, literature, history, and classics.

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.

After an introduction to the goals of the module, the module will focus on a series of philosophical texts and tragic plays, devoting 1-2 weeks to each text or set of texts. The philosophical texts and tragedies will be paired in order to illuminate various themes. Possible themes include: representation and reality, representation and action, poetic vs. philosophical language, the role of emotion in aesthetic cognition, and the ethical implications of tragedy.

Learning outcomes

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

- **Key Skills:** use written communication skills to analyse and respond critically to main issues; use research skills, drawing on print and electronic resources, to initiate and de-limit a scholarly project; take responsibility for learning, showing ability to manage time and prepare for class meetings and assignments
- **Subject knowledge and understanding:** develop and communicate knowledge of exemplars that combine philosophical and literary projects; consolidate complex understanding of methodological and substantive issues that emerge from study of key texts and theories
- **Cognitive Skills:** ability to distinguish relevant features of texts and to consider underlying questions raised by them; ability to apply abstract concepts; ability to seek and use forms of evidence relevant to theoretical questions; ability to develop an argument that addresses a key question in a focused way
- **Subject-Specific Skills/Professional Skills:** ability to carry out close reading of texts of different kinds, showing sensitivity to forms of language and discourse; ability to consider connections and contrasts between literary and philosophical methods and goals; competence in consistent, scholarly citation of research sources

Indicative reading list

Tragic dramas:

Sophocles, *Antigone*
Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*
Euripides, *Medea*
Shakespeare, *King Lear*

Philosophical Texts:

Plato, Republic

Plato, Ion

Aristotle, Poetics

Hume, "Of Tragedy"

Hegel, Lectures on Fine Arts

Stanley Cavell, Disowning Knowledge

Peter Euben, The Tragedy of Political Theory

Stephen Halliwell, The Aesthetics of Mimesis

Martha Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness

Bernard Williams, Shame and Necessity

Research element

Essay assignment, requiring research

Interdisciplinary

Incorporates study of philosophy and literature

International

Source texts will be drawn from international literary and philosophical traditions (working in translation with texts written in languages other than English).

Subject specific skills

Subject-Specific Skills/Professional Skills: ability to carry out close reading of texts of different kinds, showing sensitivity to forms of language and discourse; ability to consider connections and contrasts between literary and philosophical methods and goals; competence in consistent, scholarly citation of research sources

Transferable skills

Key Skills: use written communication skills to analyse and respond critically to main issues; use research skills, drawing on print and electronic resources, to initiate and de-limit a scholarly project; take responsibility for learning, showing ability to manage time and prepare for class meetings and assignments

Cognitive Skills: ability to distinguish relevant features of texts and to consider underlying questions raised by those features; ability to work with abstract concepts and show understanding of forms of evidence relevant to theoretical questions; ability to develop a focused argument that addresses a question

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

Reading and note-taking for each week's lectures and seminar; research and writing for one presentation, one short essay, and one longer essay.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

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

Assessment group A

| | Weighting | Study time | Eligible for self-certification |
|---|-----------|------------|---------------------------------|
| Essay Plan | 10% | | Yes (extension) |
| 1-2 page outline for the 80% essay assessment. | | | |
| 2500 word essay | 80% | | Yes (extension) |
| Research essay showing independent response to a key question on the module | | | |
| Seminar participation | 10% | | Yes (extension) |
| Student will be assessed based on participation in seminar. | | | |

Feedback on assessment

Written comments using either the feedback box on tabula or the Philosophy Department feedback form

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UPHA-L1CA Undergraduate Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of L1CA Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of L1CC Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Behavioural Economics Pathway)
 - Year 2 of L1CD Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Economics with Philosophy Pathway)
 - Year 2 of L1CE Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Philosophy and Psychology Pathway)
 - Year 3 of L1CA Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of L1CC Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Behavioural Economics Pathway)
 - Year 3 of L1CD Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Economics with Philosophy Pathway)
 - Year 3 of L1CE Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Philosophy and Psychology Pathway)
- UPHA-L1CB Undergraduate Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (with Intercalated Year)
 - Year 4 of L1CG Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Behavioural Economics Pathway) (with Intercalated Year)
 - Year 4 of L1CH Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Economics with Philosophy Pathway) (with Intercalated Year)
 - Year 4 of L1CJ Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Philosophy and Psychology Pathway) (with Intercalated Year)
 - Year 4 of L1CB Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (with Intercalated Year)
- UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy
 - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
 - Year 3 of V700 Philosophy
- Year 4 of UPHA-V701 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UPHA-V702 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Work Placement)
- Year 4 of UPHA-VL80 Undergraduate Philosophy with Psychology (with Work Placement)
- Year 2 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
- UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 3 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
- Year 4 of UPHA-V7MX Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Core option list A for:

- Year 3 of UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 3 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic

and Foundations

This module is Core option list B for:

- Year 2 of UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 2 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list C for:

- Year 4 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list F for:

- Year 4 of UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year

This module is Option list A for:

- UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
 - Year 2 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
 - Year 3 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology

This module is Option list B for:

- UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 2 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 3 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
- Year 2 of UPHA-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics
- Year 2 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics

This module is Option list C for:

- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
- UPHA-V7MM Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 4 of V7MS Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major) (with Intercalated Year)
 - Year 4 of V7MQ Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite) with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of V7MM Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite) (with Intercalated year)

This module is Option list D for:

- UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of V1V5 History and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of V1V5 History and Philosophy
- Year 4 of UHIA-V1V6 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad)
- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V7 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with a term in Venice)
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics

- Year 2 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)
- Year 3 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)