

PHIL 0110: Ancient Greek Philosophy

Professor: Dr. Emily Kress (emily_kress@brown.edu)

Office Hours: MW 2-3 (on the lawn on the Prospect St. side of Corliss Brackett House; in case of rain/snow/cold, in Corliss Brackett 214; please sign up in advance on Canvas)

Course Meetings

Lectures: MW(F) 1-1:50 in Friedman Hall 202

Discussion Sections (provisional and subject to change until enrollment is finalized):

- A. F 1-1:50
- B. F 1-1:50
- C. F 12-12:50
- D. F 2-2:50

Teaching Assistants

Anna Tsvetkov (anna_tsvetkov@brown.edu) – *office hours:* M 12-12:50

Frank Li (yanxiang_li@brown.edu) – *office hours:* F 3-4

Description

This class will introduce you to some of the major figures and themes in ancient Greek (and a bit of Roman) philosophy, including selected early Greek philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, and selected Hellenistic philosophers. We'll work through these figures (roughly) chronologically, focussing in on a few topics to guide our inquiries. Our overarching question will be about the **nature and value of philosophical activity**, with a special focus on the role of philosophical training in an **education**—including yours. We'll therefore think about what our ancient philosophers are trying to do, why one might want to do it at all, and what role philosophizing might play in our efforts to educate ourselves and to live a good human life. We'll also look at several approaches to philosophical practice and writing.

Against this broader background, we'll delve into four more specific questions: about **virtue, souls, explanation, and knowledge**. These questions will offer you an opportunity to see how philosophical puzzlement can develop out of our ordinary pursuits and projects: of trying to live good lives, of wondering why we act as we do, of investigating the social and natural worlds we find ourselves in—especially when we seek an education.

Imagine, for instance, that you're pursuing an education with the aim of becoming a better, more **virtuous** person: to be wiser, more courageous, more just. What will you need to learn? Is it a kind of **knowledge**—or is it an entirely different sort of thing? And *how* will you learn it—in school or in some other way? And, now that you think about it, what *is* virtue: what's involved in being courageous and just and wise anyways? Can you be one without being all the rest? (Are you really being courageous if you're treating others unjustly?)

Now, imagine that you eventually succeed. What will you be like then? Perhaps you'll end up developing a certain kind of **soul**: one that values and feels in particular ways, that knows certain things, and that causes you to do particular sorts of actions. How does a soul do this? What sort of thing must it be: what *is* a soul? And then imagine, on the other hand, that sometimes you fail: you *know* you shouldn't give into your fears, but you do, or you are sure you ought to have just one cookie and save the rest for later, but you end up eating them all. How can this happen? (If you ate all the cookies, could you really have known that you ought to eat just one?)

What role might *philosophical* study play in all of this? Will it make you more virtuous—and if so, *why* (not) and *how*? What sort of **knowledge** does *it* aim at acquiring? Might it be a knowledge of certain **causes and**

explanations: an understanding of *why* things are the way they are and *why* things (including us!) do what they do? (What makes an acorn develop into an oak tree and not a maple? What makes me perform this action rather than that one?) Why is this sort of knowledge worth trying to acquire? Why do philosophy at all?

These questions raise further puzzles for other areas of philosophy: about how we should inquire, what things there are, the relationship between the soul (or mind?) and body, what a good life is, and more. For this reason, this course is also suitable as an *introduction to philosophy and philosophical thinking*.

Course Goals

In addition to introducing you to these figures and ideas, this course aims to help you develop the skills and habits you'll need to engage productively with them. You will therefore be invited both to interpret the views of these ancient philosophers in their historical contexts and to respond philosophically to them: to wonder whether they've asked the right questions and whether they've answered them correctly.

We will focus especially on strategies for **reading** philosophical texts (especially identifying and analyzing arguments and other philosophically important features of our texts, and then raising good questions about them), for **talking** about philosophical texts (especially for developing these questions further), and for **writing** about philosophical texts (especially the skill of using our papers to advance and carefully develop ideas that arise in our conversations together). By working on all these skills, you will put yourself in a position to think critically about the nature and value of **education** and especially **philosophical education**—in line with our overarching goals.

Because we will work on developing and applying these skills, this class is suitable both for beginners and for students with some prior experience in philosophy.

In short, by taking this class, you will:

- develop an understanding of key views, arguments, and approaches in the works of selected ancient philosophers, especially in connection with the nature of philosophy and philosophical education, with a particular focus on virtue, knowledge, explanation, and the soul
- refine your ability to work with difficult primary texts
- refine your ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate philosophical arguments, distinctions, and concepts
- refine your skills for careful, rigorous, and thoughtful argumentative writing
- practise discussing philosophical issues with respect, civility, and care; and reflect on what makes for a good philosophical conversation
- consider the nature of philosophical thinking and its place in your own life.

Prerequisites: none (philosophical beginners are most welcome!)

Course Materials

Plato, *A Plato Reader: Eight Essential Dialogues*. Edited by C.D.C. Reeve. Hackett, 2012. (\$24 print book, \$19.95 e-book.)

Plato, *Protagoras*. Translated by Stanley Lombardo and Karen Bell, with introduction by Michael Frede. Hackett, 1992. (\$11 print book, \$8.95 e-book.)

Aristotle, *Aristotle: Introductory Readings*. Translated and Edited by Terence Irwin and Gail Fine. Hackett, 1992. (\$19 print book, \$15.95 e-book.)

****It is very important that you get copies of *these specific translations*.****

Print copies (including used copies) are available at the bookstore. For e-books, see www.hackettpublishing.com/ebooks. Additional readings are posted on Course Reserves (on Canvas). Optionally (especially if you are interested in learning more about our earliest philosophers), you may wish to purchase: *Early Greek Philosophy*, translated by Jonathan Barnes (Penguin, 2001).

Learning Activities, Assessments, and Allocation

The Big Picture. Our overarching aim is to make real progress in understanding these ancient texts and the philosophical questions they raise. The assignments are structured accordingly. They include two short writing assignments (discussion prompt answers), two longer papers, a final exam, and your contributions to conversation. Students must submit all major written work (discussion prompt answers and papers) and hand in the final exam to be eligible for credit. Once this threshold is met, grades will be calculated as follows:

- 10% 2 Discussion Prompt Answers (1 page each; 5% each)
- 55% 2 Papers (5 pages each; 25% and 30% respectively)
- 15% Contributions to Conversation (contributions in your discussion section and comments in your section's Google Doc)
- 20% Final Exam (in the exam period)

The grading scheme is as follows. For papers and contributions to conversation, an A+ will be assigned a score of 98, an A 95, an A- 92, a B+ 88, A B 85, a B- 82, and so on (with, e.g. A/A- [93.5], A-/B+ [90], etc. grades also available and assigned corresponding scores). Discussion prompt answers will be graded out of 5 points, with grades of 5, 4.5, 4, 3.5, etc., available. Final exam questions will be graded out of the number of points available for each question. Final grades of 97+ will count as an A+, 94+ an A, 90+ an A-, 87+ a B+, 84+ a B, 80+ a B-, etc. (though final grades at Brown do not include the + and -, and so the cut-off for a final A grade is 90). "Distinction" (S_DIST) requires a final grade of A- (90+) in the course as a whole.

If you wish to audit the class, please contact me to make arrangements; in general, you will be expected *at least* to attend the lecture and possibly to contribute to a discussion section (space permitting).

The Details. Here's how this will work.

Lectures. Lectures will take place on Monday and Wednesday (and, until the end of the shopping period, Friday). Their aim is to help you learn to analyze the structure of our texts (including identifying arguments and other philosophically important features, and then beginning to reconstruct them), to develop good questions, and to take some early steps towards answering them. Sometimes lectures will also introduce you to different perspectives or interpretations.

Preparing for Lectures. To get ready, you'll start by looking at the syllabus to see what readings have been assigned. You should plan to complete the readings ahead of the class for which they are assigned. In working through them, you should consult the Reading Questions posted on Canvas. Their aim is to help you figure out what to focus on in preparation for the lecture—and more generally how to approach reading philosophical texts like these. In general, it is a good idea to read the assigned texts either more than once or very slowly and carefully over a few days; you may wish to take some notes as you go.

Discussion Sections. Discussion sections will generally take place on Friday (see above for times); there will be ten of them. Their aim is to put you in a position to continue the conversation begun in the lecture: to take some of the questions that arise from our texts and figure out what the next move is—and to do so in a *collaborative* discussion with your peers. This collective work will also help you develop your skills for evaluating philosophical arguments and important claims. Discussion section conversations will take

off from discussion prompts that will be announced in every lecture; to prepare, you'll want to write these down and think about more after them after the lecture. Here's how this will go:

Discussion Prompt Answers. Sometimes, it will be your turn to write a one-page answer to a discussion prompt. (You will write a total of two in the course of the term.) Sign-up will be in your section's Google Doc (under "Collaborations" on Canvas). Your answer should be submitted in Google Assignments (under "Assignments" on Canvas). You will *also* share it in your discussion section Google Doc, 24 hours ahead of your section meeting time. (At least one must be submitted by the date listed on the Course Outline.)

Comments on Discussion Prompt Answers. If it's not your turn to submit an answer to the discussion prompt, you'll post one comment (using Google Docs' commenting feature) on the answers that have been shared, *one hour before* the start of your discussion section (unless your TA sets a different deadline). Generally, a couple of sentences will do, if you're thoughtful and to-the-point. The purpose of these comments is to help you practise engaging carefully with other points of view, which is very important in philosophical conversations. It will also make sure that you are included in the conversation you'll have in your discussion section, even if you're feeling shy.

Conversations about Discussion Prompt Answers and Comments. In your discussion section, your TA will guide you and your colleagues in a conversation about the work you began in the Google Doc. You'll work on asking thoughtful questions, listening carefully to your colleagues' ideas, expressing confusion, asking for or introducing clarifications, making objections, offering examples, calling attention to details, calling attention to the big picture, and so on. You'll also do a little "philosophy of conversation"—trying to figure out what you want in conversation and how to achieve it! Civility and respect will be absolutely essential. (I invite you to meet with me or with your TA if you have any questions about what good conversations look like, to develop strategies for contributing to them, and to discuss any concerns or accommodations. We are very open to a variety of approaches to contributing to philosophical conversation, so please reach out to discuss your ideas or just share them with the group! See below for how such contributions are evaluated.)

Papers. The two papers will give you an opportunity to return to a philosophical or interpretive issue that arose from our readings (often both) and to develop your own answer. This work will help you to build on the interpretative and analytical skills you developed in preparing for the lectures, participating in the lecture, and in writing and discussing your discussion prompt answers. You are strongly encouraged to discuss your ideas with a writing partner *and* your TA as you are working on the paper.

Final Exam. The purpose of the (three-hour) exam is to help you review and consolidate the knowledge and philosophical skills you have acquired throughout the term. It will consist primarily of short-answer questions that will ask you to explain key arguments and concepts from the readings.

Notes on Contributions to Conversation. Such contributions include (1) in-class contributions (in your section or in the lecture) (2) comments on discussion prompt answers. They will be evaluated *holistically, pluralistically, and flexibly*. Most practically, this means that (a) whatever else you do, you should aim to write a minimum of one well-developed Google Doc comment (or series of shorter comments) per week (to make sure everyone has an equal opportunity to "kick off" our conversation), and (b) you should also plan to contribute regularly in other ways (in oral conversation or in additional comments). It also allows for two sorts of flexibility regarding (a) and (b):

- It allows you to think about the best way for you to focus your other contributions (over and above your weekly Google Doc comment), given your unique skills, situation, and learning goals. For instance, you might be particularly interested in thinking about how to get us ready for the discussion section, and so you might put in some *additional* effort in the Google Doc before class, perhaps doing

more listening than speaking in section. Alternatively, if you'd like to practise learning from conversation, you might stick to writing just one comment a week, but be especially active in helping us orient our conversation in section or participate more in the lecture. There are also lots of ways of contributing effectively in class (see below). We are very open to a variety of approaches, so please feel free to reach out to discuss your ideas!

- It means that if circumstances make it difficult for you to contribute in a given modality in a particular week, you can let us know and then put additional effort into an alternative modality and/or make “extra” contributions—e.g. more or more thorough Google Doc comments—once you can participate again. (Longer gaps in contributions may require further accommodation; please be in touch.)

Whatever model you choose, your aim should above all be to be *helpful*: to your colleagues and to the inquiry we are engaged in together. This is also the standard according to which you will be evaluated. This standard is a pluralistic one, insofar as there are many ways of being helpful. It's holistic, insofar as your grade will be based on the overall effect of your efforts, rather than on any one component assigned a specific weight in advance of thinking about its effect on the whole. But what makes (a set of) contributions helpful? Here are some ideas:

Excellent *comments* and *in-class contributions* are excellent because they *help* us have a thoughtful conversation: one where we figure things out together. Importantly, this is an excellent conversation in the real world, among the particular individuals in our class, in the specific circumstances we find ourselves in. You are therefore encouraged to think about what skills and strategies you can bring to these conversations and the unique contribution you are positioned to make. There are *lots* of possibilities! Can you help us clarify what we're puzzled by when we get stuck? Can you listen carefully throughout class, and then help us tie it all together at the end? Can you remind us what we were trying to do? Do you have an example that helps us see what we're talking about? Can you help us focus in on a piece of text? Can you identify a new path forward? Can you offer encouragement to keep going? Can you help us to pause?

Time Commitment. Over the 13-week term, you can expect to spend about 6-8 hours each week completing readings and 3 hours attending lectures and contributing to discussion sections. You will also write two short discussion prompt answers (2-3 hours each), prepare for your discussion section (1 hour), write two papers (15 hours each), and prepare for a final exam (10 hours).

Policies for Submission and Missed Assignments (including Late Assignments)

1. Discussion Prompt Answers. You must complete two discussion prompt answers. At the start of term, you will sign up on Canvas for two “slots” when you will submit an answer (with no more than one submission per student per class period). Discussion prompt answers are due 24 hours *before* the associated class meeting; at least one must be submitted by the date listed on the Course Outline. Because discussion prompt answers are essential to your colleagues' learning, they *cannot* be accepted late, except in exceptional circumstances. If you expect not to be able to submit an answer on time, your first step should be to contact a colleague and ask to “swap” dates. (This will help to make the supply of answers evenly spread throughout the term.) If you are experiencing exceptional circumstances and it is not possible to swap dates, you may contact your TA to change to a different date or to ask for a different accommodation; we will always do our best to accommodate you.
2. Comments. Your goal should be to write a minimum of one comment per discussion section (flexibly construed, and where the exact number may vary depending on the style of comments you write; see above). Comments are due one hour before the discussion section (unless your TA sets a different deadline). If exceptional circumstances will prevent you from meeting the (flexibly construed)

one-comment-per-week goal, please contact us to work out an accommodation, e.g. submitting comments late. In general, late comments will only count towards your grade with such permission.

3. **Papers.** These are due by 11:59 p.m. on the dates listed in the Course Outline. Papers can be accepted late, but with a penalty of one step of a letter grade (e.g. B+ to B), for *unexcused* late assignments for each day after the deadline, beginning immediately. If you require an excuse or other accommodation, please contact us as soon as you are aware of the situation.
4. **Final Exam.** As per Brown policy, “only an [authorized dean](#) may excuse you from a scheduled final exam.” Please be in touch with a dean as soon as you are aware of the situation.

Academic Integrity

“A student’s name on any exercise (e.g., a theme, report, notebook, performance, computer program, course paper, quiz, or examination) is regarded as assurance that the exercise is the result of the student’s own thoughts and study, stated in his or her own words, and produced without assistance, except as quotation marks, references, and footnotes acknowledge the use of printed sources or other outside help. In some instances an instructor or department may authorize students to work jointly in solving problems or completing projects; such efforts must be clearly marked as the results of collaboration. Where collaboration is authorized, students should be very clear as to which parts of any assignment must be performed independently” ([Academic Code](#), p. 5). Further details will be provided for all assignments. *Absolutely no use of AI (e.g. ChatGPT) is permitted in this course (including for summarizing readings, making outlines, drafting written assignments, improving drafts, and so on).*

Accessibility and Accommodations

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you may require accommodations or modification of any of course procedures. You may speak with me after class, during office hours, or by appointment. If you need accommodations around online learning or in classroom accommodations, please be sure to reach out to Student Accessibility Services (SAS) for their assistance (seas@brown.edu, 401-863-9588). Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the academic deans in the College.

Multilingual Students

Brown welcomes students from around the country and the world, and their unique perspectives enrich our learning community. To support students whose primary language is not English, an array of English support services are available on campus including language and culture workshops and individual appointments. For more information, contact english-support@brown.edu or (401) 863-5672.

Books, Supplies, and Materials

If your Brown undergraduate financial aid package includes the Book/Course Material Support Pilot Program (BCMS), concerns or questions about the cost of books and course materials for this or any other Brown course (including RISD courses via cross-registration) can be addressed to bcms@brown.edu. For all other concerns related to non-tuition course-related expenses, whether or not your Brown undergraduate financial aid package includes BCMS, please visit the Academic Emergency Fund in E-GAP (within the umbrella of “E-Gap Funds” in UFunds) to determine options for financing these costs, while ensuring your privacy.

Use of Technology to Support Student Learning

This course will use the following technological platforms: Canvas, Google Docs, Google Assignments, and Zoom. I am committed to ensuring access to online course resources by students. If you have any concerns or questions about access or the privacy of any of these platforms, please reach out to me. The IT Service Center (<https://it.brown.edu/get-help>) provides many IT Services including remote assistance, phones, tickets, and chat. Please also see the Online and Hybrid Learning Student Guide.

Course Outline

Below is a list of assigned readings, important dates, and other reminders. Readings should be completed *before* class. Readings marked “CR” are located on Course Reserves (inside Canvas). Don’t forget to consult the Reading Questions listed on Canvas as you prepare for class!

Early Greek Philosophy		
Sept 6 W	<i>Introduction</i> No readings, but you might have a look at the <i>Apology!</i>	
Sept 8 F	<i>Socrates</i> Plato, <i>Apology</i> and Protagoras (to 319a)	
Sept 11 M	<i>The Sophistic Movement</i> Gorgias, <i>Encomium of Helen</i> (CR) + Antiphon, <i>On Truth</i> , <i>Second Tetralogy</i> (CR)	
Sept 13 W	<i>The Milesians</i> Selections from Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes (CR) + Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> I.1-4 (skim: we return to this later!)	
Sept 15 F	<i>A Parmenidean Problem?</i> Selections from Parmenides (CR)	Discussion sections begin <i>next</i> week. Sign up for discussion prompt answers in your discussion section Google Doc on Canvas!
Plato		
Sept 18 M	<i>Can Virtue Be Taught?</i> Plato, <i>Protagoras</i> (to 329b)	
Sept 20 W	<i>Is Virtue One?</i> Plato, <i>Protagoras</i> (to 351a)	
Sept 22 F	<i>Discussion Section #1</i>	Discussion prompt answers due 24 hours ahead!
Sept 25 M	<i>The Power of Knowledge</i> Plato, <i>Protagoras</i> (to end)	
Sept 27 W	<i>What Philosophers Do</i> Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> (to 69e)	
Sept 29 F	<i>Discussion Section #2</i>	Discussion prompt answers due 24 hours ahead! Last chance to submit first discussion prompt answer.
Oct 2 M	<i>The Immortality of the Soul, Part 1</i> Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> (to 84ce)	
Oct 4 W	<i>Causes, Teleology, and Forms</i> Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> (to 105c) + selections from Anaxagoras (CR)	

Oct 6 F	<i>Discussion Section #3</i>	Discussion prompt answers due 24 hours ahead!
Oct 11 W	<i>The Immortality of the Soul, Part 2</i> Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> (to end)	
Oct 13 F	<i>Discussion Section #4</i>	Discussion prompt answers due 24 hours ahead!
Oct 16 M	<i>Educating a City</i> Plato, <i>Republic</i> II to III, 412b (focus on 357a-358d, 367b-370c, 374e-377c, 399e)	
Oct 18 W	<i>Putting Philosophers in their Place</i> Plato, <i>Republic</i> V, 471c to VI, 502c (focus on 472a-480a)	
Oct 20 F	<i>Discussion Section #5</i>	Discussion prompt answers due 24 hours ahead! Paper #1 Due at 11:59 p.m.
Oct 23 M	<i>Educating a Philosopher</i> Plato, <i>Republic</i> VI, 502d to VII, to 541b (focus on 504d-509d, 514a-521a)	
Aristotle		
Oct 25 W	<i>Aristotelian History of Philosophy</i> Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> I.1-4, 6, 9 + <i>Physics</i> II.3	
Oct 27 F	<i>Discussion Section #6</i>	Discussion prompt answers due 24 hours ahead!
Oct 30 M	<i>The Principles of Change</i> Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> I.1, I.7-8	
Nov 1 W	<i>Nature and Natural Things</i> Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> II.1-3	
Nov 3 F	<i>Discussion Section #7</i>	Discussion prompt answers due 24 hours ahead!
Nov 6 M	<i>Natural Teleology</i> Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> II.7-9 + <i>Parts of Animals</i> I.1, I.5 (optionally, read <i>Physics</i> II.4-6)	
Nov 8 W	<i>Souls: Nutrition</i> Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> I.1; II.1-4	
Nov 10 F	<i>Discussion Section #8</i>	Discussion prompt answers due 24 hours ahead!
Nov 13 M	<i>Souls: Perception and Intellect</i> Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> II.5-6, II.12; III.4-5	
Nov 15 W	<i>Happiness... and Human Nature</i> Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.1-2, 7-8; X.6-9 (focus on I.7)	
Nov 17 F	<i>Discussion Section #9</i>	Discussion prompt answers due 24 hours ahead!
Nov 20 M	<i>Virtues of Character, Deliberation</i> Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.13; II.1-7 (focus on II.4, II.6); III.2-4 (optionally, read <i>De Anima</i> III.10)	

Nov 27 M	<i>Virtues of Thought, The Power of Knowledge</i> Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , I.13; VI.1-2, 5, 8, 12-13; VII.1-3 (focus on VI.1-2, VI.12, VII.3)	
Hellenistic Philosophy		
Nov 29 W	<i>Epicureanism</i> Epicurus, <i>Letter to Menoeceus</i> (CR) + Selections from Cicero, <i>On Moral Ends</i> 1 (CR)	Paper #2 Due at 11:59 p.m.
Dec 1 F	<i>Discussion Section #10</i>	Discussion prompt answers due 24 hours ahead! Last chance to submit second discussion prompt answer.
Dec 4 M	<i>Stoicism</i> Selections from Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives</i> (CR) + Selections from Cicero, <i>On Moral Ends</i> 3 (CR)	
Dec 6 W	<i>Pyrrhonian Scepticism</i> Sextus, <i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i> I (CR)	
Dec 8 F	<i>(Optional) Review Session</i> (or, if we fall behind, a make-up class)	Please prepare questions for review.
Final Exam (3 hours) Scheduled by the Registrar (currently set for Dec 20, 2023, 2 p.m.; exam group 08)		