Course Guide

PHIL10049: Ancient Theories of Existence 2016/17

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1. Course Aims and Objectives

The course will examine different ancient theories of existence. We discuss some Presocratic approaches to the problem of being; Plato's theory of Forms; and Aristotle's theory of substance.

2. Course description

The topics discussed in this course include the concepts of ontological principle; causes and causation; substances - their identity criteria; matter; universal, form; unity of particulars.

3. Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should have acquired an understanding of some major issues in ancient theories of existence; an understanding of how these issues relate to continuing debates; and an ability to read closely, analyse and criticise ancient philosophical texts. They should also have further developed written skills, and the ability to take part in group discussion and defend arguments.

4. Seminar Content

**Week 1.** Thales; Anaximander


**Week 2.** Anaximenes


**Week 3.** Parmenides; (Zeno of Elea)


**Week 4.** Empedocles; Atomism

5. Readings

The primary readings are the metaphysical works of the philosophers under examination in the course, which are available in:


http://pm.nlx.com.ezproxy.webfeat.lib.ed.ac.uk/xtf/view;jsessionid=7FDAC6468CFDB6AD4E424F6CD5A07F4?docId=plato/plato.00.xml;chunk.id=div.plato.pmpreface.1;toc.depth=1;toc.id=div.plato.pmpreface.1;brand=default

http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/searchresults?q=plato
Useful Discussion of the ancient metaphysical themes: Adamson History of Philosophy:
http://www.historyofphilosophy.net/home

Further reading on the Presocratics from the following:

General:


More specific:


**Further reading on Plato from the following:**

**General:**


**More specific:**


Further reading on Aristotle from the following:

General:
Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy:
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-categories/
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-causality/
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-natphil/

More specific:
Frede, Michael, 1987, Essays in Ancient Philosophy, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
6. Assessment Information

Assessment will be by 2-hour examination in the May diet (100%).