Ancient Philosophy (PHIL10181)

Course Organiser: Dr Damian Caluori
Email: dcaluori@ed.ac.uk
Office Hours: Monday 11:00-12:00 and Tuesday 14:10-15:10
Location: DSB 6.07

Course Secretary: Ms Anne-Marie Cowe
Email: philinfo@ed.ac.uk

1. Course Aims and Objectives
The aim of this course is to gain an understanding of, and to critically evaluate, the major ethical theories of antiquity.

2. Intended Learning Outcomes
On completion of this course, students will be able to:
   o identify and understand the main approaches to ethics in ancient philosophy.
   o understand and evaluate the differences between the different approaches.
   o think carefully and systematically about the relation between human nature and the good life, as conceived of by the ancients.
   o think carefully and systematically about the role of reason, emotion, and character in a good life, as conceived of by the ancients.
   o think carefully and systematically about the possibility of ethics and of a good life, as conceived of by the ancients.

3. Structure
The course involves a weekly seminar and a weekly tutorial (starting in Week 2). In tutorials, we will discuss material from the previous week’s lecture.

   Seminar: Friday, 14:10-16:00, 7 George Square F.21

   Tutorials (start in Week 2):
   Monday, 13:10-14:00, DSB 3.10
   Monday, 15:10-16:00, DSB 3.11
   Tuesday, 12:10-13:00, DSB 1.20
   Tuesday, 13:10-14:00, DSB 3.11

4. Assessment
1,500-word midterm essay (40%), due 27th February, at noon; 2,500-word final essay (60%), due 23th April, at noon. Essay topics to be distributed via Learn.

5. Course Description
In this course, we will discuss the beginnings of ethics in the Western tradition: Plato, Aristotle and the Hellenistic schools: Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics. We will ask (and try to answer!) questions such as
the following: was Socrates the first ethicist, and if so, what distinguishes him from the popular morality of his time? What is Socratic ethics? What role do Platonic Forms play in a good Platonic life? What is human nature according to Aristotle, and what does this mean for ethics? Is a good life a life of Epicurean pleasures, or is it a virtuous life of reason? What role do emotions play in a good life? Ought we to worry about death or is it nothing to us? And finally: is it possible at all to answer any of these questions? The sceptics had their doubts. They even doubted that we can have reasons for preferring one way of life to another. This leads to the question of whether the sceptics can live their scepticism.

6. Schedule of Lectures

Week 1. Greek Popular Morality and the Socratic life
- **Core Reading**
  - Plato: *Apology*.
- **Secondary Readings**
  - T. Irwin: *Plato’s Moral Theory*, ch. 2 (‘The Background’).
  - T.C. Brickhouse & N.D. Smith: *Socrates on Trial*.
  - C. D. C. Reeve: *Socrates in the Apology*.
  - K. J. Dover: *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle*.

Week 2. Socrates: The unity of virtue and why there is no ‘weakness of will’ (akrasia)
- **Core Readings**
  - Plato: *Protagoras* 317e-334c; 345c-362a.
  - Plato: *Gorgias* 466a-468e.
  - Plato: *Meno* 77b-78c.
- **Secondary Readings**

Week 3. Plato: The benefits of being bad and justice in the city
- **Core Readings**
  - Republic I.
  - Republic II, 357a-362c; 368a-376c.
  - Republic IV, 427c-434d.
- **Secondary Readings**
Week 4. Plato: The human soul, its virtues, and happiness

- **Core Readings**
  - Republic IV, 435a-444e.
  - Republic IX, 577c-end.

- **Secondary Readings**

Week 5. Plato: The Form of the Good and the life of a philosopher

- **Core Readings**
  - Republic VI, 484a-497a; 502c-511e.
  - Republic VII, 514a-521b.

- **Secondary Readings**

Week 6. Aristotle: The Human Good

- **Core Reading**
  - Nicomachean Ethics I, 1-5, 7-10, 13.

- **Secondary Readings**

Week 7. Aristotle: Character Virtue and the Doctrine of the Mean

- **Core Readings**
  - Nicomachean Ethics II.
  - Nicomachean Ethics III, 6-9.

- **Secondary Readings**

Week 8. Aristotle: Intellectual Virtue and Contemplation

- **Core Readings**
• Nicomachean Ethics X, 6-8.

• Secondary Readings

Week 9. Epicurus and the Cyrenaics: A life of pleasure and why death is nothing to us

• Core Readings
  o Long & Sedley: The Hellenistic Philosophers 21, 24-25.

• Secondary Readings

Week 10. Stoics: A life of reason and the place of emotions in reason

• Core Reading
  o Long and Sedley: The Hellenistic Philosophers, 57-61, 63, 65.

• Secondary Readings
  o T. Brennan: The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate.

Week 11. A Sceptical Way of Life

• Core Reading

• Secondary Readings

7. Readings
All should do the recommended primary reading. Secondary reading is optional (but recommended especially for those planning to write an essay on a topic). Many of the books listed below have relevant chapters on the various topics discussed. Additional reading may be recommended during the course.

References to primary texts are as follows:
• Plato: numbers refer, not to page numbers of the various translations, but to numbers found in the margins of the text. In the case of the Republic, book numbers are added as Roman numerals.
• Aristotle: numbers refer to book and chapter numbers.
• Long & Sedley: numbers refer to the chapter numbers.
• Diogenes Laertius: numbers refer to book numbers, followed by the numbers found in the margins of the text.
• Sextus Empiricus: numbers refer to the numbers found in the margins of the text.

7.1. Primary texts
The primary texts are listed in section 6 (Schedule of Lectures).

• J. Cooper (ed.): Plato. Complete Works.
• R. Crisp (ed.): Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics.
• A. A. Long & D. Sedley: The Hellenistic Philosophers.
• Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers.
• Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Pyrrhonism.

7.2. Background readings
7.2.1. Ancient Philosophy
• C. Meinwald: Plato (2016).

7.2.2. Ancient Ethics
• J. Annas: The Morality of Happiness.
• B. Reis (ed.): The Virtuous Life in Greek Ethics (2006).

7.2.3. Podcast
• https://historyofphilosophy.net/classical

7.2.4. Socrates and Plato
• T. Brickhouse & N. Smith: The Philosophy of Socrates.
• G. R. F. Ferrari (ed.): The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic.
• T. Irwin: Plato’s Ethics.
• G. Vlastos: Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher.

7.2.5. Aristotle
• S. Broadie: Ethics with Aristotle.
• G. Hughes: Routledge Guidebook to Aristotle on Ethics.
• A. O. Rorty (ed.): Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics.
7.2.6. Hellenistic Schools

- J. Urmson: Aristotle’s Ethics.

- K. Algra et al. (eds.): The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy.
- J. Rist: Epicurus: An Introduction.
- F. Sandbach: The Stoics.
- R. Sharples: Stoics Epicureans and Sceptics.