

Greats: From Plato to the Enlightenment

19/20
Semester 2

An introduction to some of the great texts in the history of philosophy.

Course Organiser:

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Office hours: TBA

Course Secretary:

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Lecture Times and Location

Monday	10:00–10:50	Gordon Aikman Lecture Theatre
Wednesday	10:00–10:50	Gordon Aikman Lecture Theatre
Friday	10:00–10:50	Gordon Aikman Lecture Theatre

Lecture Topics and Readings

The course will be divided into four sections, in the following order:

I. Plato, *Apology* and *Republic*

Lecturer: Dr. Damian Caluori

We will first examine Socrates' life, presented in the *Apology* as a paradigmatic philosophical life, uncompromisingly devoted to the pursuit of truth. We will ask: why should we devote our lives to the pursuit of truth? We will then turn to the *Republic*, where Glaucon challenges Socrates with the common-sense view that morally bad people are perfectly capable of having happy and successful lives. Indeed, often it may be advantageous, it appears, not to do what morality requires. To meet this challenge, Socrates develops a rich and complex account of justice in both society and individual, proposes a theory of motivation, dives into metaphysical questions, and gives reasons to think that an ideal society ought to be ruled by philosophers.

II. Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*

Lecturer: Dr. Damian Caluori

In this work, Aristotle provides an answer to the question of what it means for a life to be good. In order to answer this question, Aristotle thinks, we need an account of what a human being is – for when we ask what a good life is, we ask what a good *human* life is (whatever a good life for gods or goats may be). There are some crucial aspects of human life that need to be considered to this end: responsibility, pleasure, friendship, and virtue are, in Aristotle’s view, among the most important.

III. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*; Descartes and Elisabeth, *Correspondence*

Lecturer: Dr. Jonathan Cottrell

The seventeenth century was a time of exciting and rapid intellectual change: philosopher-scientists such as Galileo Galilei, René Descartes, and Isaac Newton sought to overthrow the centuries-old Aristotelian worldview that had dominated late medieval Europe, and laid the foundations for our modern, mathematical science of the physical world. In the *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes asks how scientific knowledge is possible. Pursuing this question leads him into a wide-ranging inquiry concerning knowledge, certainty and doubt; the existence of God; the nature of the self; and the nature of the physical world. Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia read Descartes’s *Meditations* and wrote to him with powerful objections to his philosophical views; Descartes replied; and thus began a philosophically rich correspondence about the nature of human beings, the passions, and happiness. We will study the *Meditations*, together with selections from this correspondence.

IV. Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*

Lecturer: Dr. Jonathan Cottrell

The “new science” of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries revealed a vast and awe-inspiring physical universe which seemed, to many thinkers, to show signs of being intelligently designed. Thus, scientific developments seemed to provide support for traditional beliefs about God. David Hume’s *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* critically examine this “design argument.” The *Dialogues* ask: What, if anything, can we know about the cause of the universe, based on empirical observation and the kinds of reasoning that we use in ordinary life and science? The dialogue form allows Hume to explore how friendship is possible among people who deeply disagree about important religious matters.

Lecture notes and other materials will be available on [Learn](#).

Further advice on Readings

Encyclopaedias are a very good source of extra reading. Avoid Wikipedia (it is often inaccurate on philosophy) but there are good internet encyclopaedias that can be useful:

[The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) (SEP)

[The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) (IEP)

Websites

We also recommend the following as starting points for your research:

[PhilPapers](#)

[Philosophy Compass](#)

[The Diversity Reading List](#)

You will need to know how to track down sources, including electronic journals, using the library search engine [DiscoverED](#).

Tutorials

In addition to three course lectures per week, you will have weekly tutorials. These give you a chance to further discuss topics and issues in the course and its lectures. Tutorials will take place, at times and places to be arranged, during weeks 2 through 11 of the semester.

Attendance at tutorials is compulsory for all students on this course. The class tutor will maintain a register of attendance. Unexplained absences will be brought to the attention of your Personal Tutor.

You will be allocated a suitable tutorial group by the Timetabling Department based on your timetable. Should you wish to change the group you have been allocated to, you will need to fill in the *Group Change Request form* on the Timetabling Department's webpage. This form will be open until the end of Week 3 – if you wish to change groups after this time please contact the Teaching Office directly (philinfo@ed.ac.uk).

Please inform your tutor and the Teaching Office of any absences. Students who miss tutorials may be required to do additional written work.

Assessment

This course will be examined based on two pieces of assessed work:

Mid-term coursework essay

The **essay** counts for **25%** of the overall assessment mark.

End-of-semester examination

The **exam** counts for **75%** of the overall assessment mark.

Coursework essay

The coursework essay is a single **1500 word essay** answering a question from an assigned list of questions. The deadline for the mid-term essay is **by 12pm (mid-day), Tuesday 25th February 2020**.

You should submit your essay electronically via Turnitin on the Learn page. Please contact the Course Secretary if you are having problems uploading your essay.

The word count of your essay, including footnotes but excluding bibliography, must not exceed the specified word limit. The precise word count must be written on the coversheet. Overlong essays will be penalised according to the following rule: 1% of the maximum obtainable mark will be deducted for every 100 words, or part thereof, over the word limit. So, exceeding the word limit by 1–100 words incurs a deduction of 1%; exceeding by 101–200 words incurs a deduction of 2%; and so on.

End-of-semester examination

The examination is a **two-hour examination** given under exam conditions. The Semester 2 exam diet takes place from 27th April – 22nd May 2020 (including Saturday 2nd, 9th and 16th May). It is the student's responsibility to ensure they are available for the whole of the exam diet.

Exact details of the date, time and location of the exam will be announced later in the semester.

Resits

The resit takes place in August and is 100% exam. It is the student's responsibility to check the resit timetable on the Student Administration website, find the time and location of the resit exam and ensure they are present for that resit. No formal registration is necessary and students will not be individually notified of the resit date and location of resit exams.

Visiting undergraduates

The assessment arrangements for visiting undergraduates are the same as for other students.

Mark Schemes

For Philosophy-specific marking guidelines go here:

[Grade-related marking guidelines for Philosophy](#)

For the University's general marking scheme go here:

[Common Marking Scheme](#)

Learning Resources

Learn

You should regularly check your university email and check for announcements on the course *Learn* page.

The course *Learn* page will provide information concerning:

- General information and announcement about the course
- Lecture notes and slides
- Tutorial arrangements
- Information about assessment arrangements

University of Edinburgh Library

The library's hard-copy and online resources can be searched online via *DiscoverEd*.

Exemplar essays

Anonymised exemplar essays will be on the Learn pages. These are essays written by past students that they have kindly agreed for us to use. We encourage you to read these essays in conjunction with the Philosophy-specific marking guidelines. In doing so think about the strengths and weaknesses of the essay, why the essays fell into their grade-band, and how they could have been improved.

There are many ways for an essay to fall into a particular grade-band. The Philosophy-specific marking guidelines provide explanation of the many, diverse, ways in which an essay can be a 1st, 2.i, 2.ii, and so on. The exemplar essays only show one way to achieve a certain grade; it is not the only way.

Autonomous Learning Groups

Each course has dedicated Autonomous Learning Groups. It is up to you, the members of the ALG, to organise the meetings. You decide how often to meet and what to do in your ALG. ALGs are designed to help you learn and get to know your classmates; they are not a formal requirement of the course. It is important to note that assessment in your courses is non-competitive: you aren't competing against your classmates, only against the general grade criteria. It is in your interests to help each other.

You could use ALG meetings to:

- Read and discuss the papers together
- Discuss essay-writing and time-management techniques
- Constructively critique draft essays or plans
- Work on presentations or discussion posts that the class may involve
- Share tips on career advice

Please email the Course Organiser if you feel that it would be useful for the group if they joined one of your sessions. Please contact the course secretary if you find it necessary during the semester to transfer into a different group.

PhilPALS

PhilPALS is a peer-assisted learning scheme to help Philosophy first year students.

[PhilPALS on Facebook](#)

Getting in Touch

If you have a question regarding lecture content you should ask it in your tutorial group and/or visit the relevant lecturer to discuss it during their office hour.

For other specifically academic matters you can contact the Course Organiser.

If you have questions not specifically about lecture content, you should contact the Course Secretary.

Prizes

Students who perform with excellence in Greats are eligible for the James Seth Prize.

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