

PAR 304-01: **Justice, Power, & Human Nature in the Ancient Greek Polis** Fall 2007
 Class Time: TR, 9:30-10:45 Classroom: MK 133
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It seems to be the spirit of the age or of American culture to question the importance of studying about anything connected with the distant past. So it's not hard to imagine a critic raising the question 'Why bother studying the ancient Greeks? After all, what possible relevance can such a study have to modern American culture, one that is superior, both technologically and intellectually, to such obsolete interests and goals?'

Historians call this critical attitude 'presentism', the tendency of many modern thinkers to interpret the past in presentist terms, and a shifting of historical interest away from the distant past toward the contemporary period. Several problems emerge then for the presentist: s/he is not being self-critical, and this view encourages the worst kind of moral complacency and self-congratulation.¹ So as correctives to presentism, I would argue that this course should inspire a healthy respect for the past, as centered in the Golden Age of classical Greece, and that such a study ought also to build on the sense of wonder, native curiosity, and humility stressed in the disciplines composing the humanities.

In his eulogy for those first soldiers who fell in the Peloponnesian War, the great democratic statesman Pericles praised the Athenian way of life: "We cultivate beauty with simplicity, and we do philosophy without lacking in firmness." Beginning as early as Homer, we find Greek words that use **phileô** [love for] to designate the disposition to be devoted to a given activity: **philoposia** means the pleasure one takes in drinking; **philotimia** refers to the propensity for one to acquire honors; and **philosophia** thus implies the love one has for wisdom. After the age of Homer (mid-8th century BC) and prior to the classical age (late 5th century BC) of Socrates, the Greeks began carrying out systematic, rational study of both the natural and moral order. While previous cultures around the Mediterranean utilized poetic narratives or stories [**mythos**] of the gods to explain the events of nature, the universe, and human interactions, thereby relying on ancient scriptures or poems, some Greeks began to use reason [**logos**], speculation, and sensory observation to interpret reality. Accordingly, a tradition of critical rationality developed, beginning with Thales, continuing through Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Democritus, Protagoras, and culminating in Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. So one reason for studying ancient Greek thought is that we want to understand the origins of the Western traditions of science, philosophy, democracy, and the arts.

Aristotle is one of the first historians of philosophy, who notes that the early naturalist philosophers (or, 'students of nature': **physiologoi**) were those who abandoned mythology to ask about the nature [**physis**] of things.

The school of Hesiod, and all the theologians [**theologoi**], considered only what was persuasive to themselves, and gave no consideration to us. For they make the first principles gods or generated from gods, and say that whatever did not taste of the nectar and ambrosia became mortal....

However it is not worthwhile to consider seriously the subtleties of mythologists [**muthikôs**]....²

Despite Aristotle's own presentism, we will use his language and organizational schema to arrange the thinkers we will study this semester.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. **Diligent Reading:** Improved ability in reading for pivotal points or passages of texts; learning to detect ambiguities, irony both dramatic and Socratic, core ideas and arguments of complex texts.
2. **Critical Reasoning:** Increased ability at analyzing and assessing arguments; uncovering hidden assumptions, faulty reasoning, logical organization of ideas and theories.
3. **Moral Reflection:** Increased recognition of diverse moral and political assumptions, theories, and implications of ancient Greek playwrights, historians, and philosophers.
4. **Historical Discernment:** Sensitivity to historical, cultural forces influencing ancient Greek thinkers; learning the ancient Greek view of history, and respecting their past as part of our Western heritage.

¹ See Lynn Hunt, "Against Presentism", the President's column in the May 2002 issue of *Perspectives*, official publication of the American Historical Association. [Find at <http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/issues/2002>]

² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. III.iv. 12-14, trans. H. Tredennick, Harvard U. Press, Loeb Classical Library, pp. 125, 127).

Schedule of Readings:

August	21 --	From Mythos to Logos : Pre-Socratics, Origins of Western Science/Philosophy; Medical Writers, Poets, & Historians; Sophists, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle
Prelude:		Religio-Poetic Background: The World of Homer, Hesiod & the <i>Theogoi</i>
	23 --	Homer: The Ideal Person, <i>Aretê</i> , Gods, & <i>Kosmos</i> [Irwin, <i>Classical Thought</i> , 6-19, at http://paws.wcu.edu/dhale/PAR304]; Pre-Socratics and Sophists [CCR 1-7]
I.		Pre-Socratic Philosophy and Science: <i>Hoi Physikoi</i> – Students of Nature
	28 --	Milesians [CCR 8-14]; Pythagoreans [CCR 15-20]
	30 --	Heraclitus [CCR 24-34]; Parmenides [CCR 35-41]; Zeno of Elea [CCR 57-61] Atomism: Leucippus and Democritus [CCR 62-69]
II.		Socrates in Classical Athens: <i>Philosophos</i> or <i>Sophistês</i>?
September	4,6 --	Plato: <i>Meno</i> [CCR 185-210]
	11,13 --	<i>Gorgias</i> [Gorgias 447a -461a; Polus 461b-481b; Callicles 481b-527e]
	18 --	<i>The Greeks: Crucible of Civilization</i> [video; but read story of Socrates' trial in <i>Apology</i> CCR 106-124, and his arguments against escape in <i>Crito</i> CCR 125-135]
III.		Conflicts within in the Greek World: Justice or Power? <i>Dikê</i> or <i>Machê</i>?
	20 --	Thucydides: <i>Justice, Power & Human Nature</i> ; Debate at Sparta 432 [17-29]; Pericles' War Speech [31-37]; Mytilenean Debate [67-71]
	25 --	<i>Justice, Power & Human Nature</i> ; Melian Dialogue [102-109]; Sicilian Expedition [123-125]; Alcibiades' Escape [127-129]; Athens' Defeat [129-130]; Nicias' Exhortation [146-154]; Aftermath [155-160]
IV.		Ancient Greek Ideal Society: <i>Plato's Republic [Politeia]</i> as Well-Ordered <i>Kallipolis</i>
	27 --	Plato: <i>Republic</i> , Bk. I; Sophists: Protagoras [CCR 75]; Antiphon [CCR 80-82]
October	2 --	<i>Republic</i> , Bk. II
	4 --	<i>Republic</i> , Bk. III
	9 --	<i>Republic</i> , Bk. IV
	11-14 --	FALL BREAK
	16 --	<i>Republic</i> , Bk. V
	18 --	<i>Republic</i> , Bk. VI
	25 --	<i>Republic</i> , Bk. VII
	30 --	<i>Republic</i> , Bks. VIII, IX
November	1 --	<i>Republic</i> , Bk. X
	6 --	Plato: <i>Timaeus</i> (CCR 442-472)
V.		Aristotle: <i>Reason, Nature & Virtue in the Life of Eudaimonia</i> [Human Flourishing]
	8 --	Aristotle: <i>Parts of Animals</i> (CCR 577-585); <i>Categories</i> 1-5 (CCR 484-490)
	13,15 --	<i>Physics</i> , I. 1,5-9; II; III.1-3; VIII.6 (CCR 522-554)
	20 --	<i>Metaphysics</i> , I.1-4, 6,9; XII.6-9 (CCR 586-599; 628-636)
	21-25 --	THANKSGIVING BREAK
	27,29 --	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , I.1-5,7-9,13; II. 1-6; III. 1-5; V.1-2; VI.1-2, 5, 7, 12-13; X.6-9 (CCR 660-703; 709-719)
December	4,6 --	<i>Politics</i> , I.1-2; I.1-5; III.1,4,6-12; VII.1-3,13,15 (CCR 720-50)
WED., DEC.	12 --	FINAL EXAM, 12:00-2:30 MK133

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. We will have a multiple-choice/short answer quiz on Homer and the Pre-Socratic philosophers (Prelude-Section I) on about Sept. 4. Another quiz will be given on the video on *The Greeks: Crucible of Civilization* at the beginning of the next class period – so take good notes of key contributions of the classical Greeks to Western civilization. Yet another quiz will be given on the *Republic*, especially the main characters in the early part of the book. Cumulatively, these quizzes will constitute 10% of your grade.

2. A short paper (4-5 pages) on Plato's *Gorgias* and/or *Meno*. Who is the true lover of wisdom, Socrates or the Sophists? Is being clever or a persuasive speaker or a political opportunist sufficient for one to be counted as a wise person? Examine the Sophist movement, i.e. do some research on the importance of the Sophists (in education, ethics, oratory, political activity, etc.) in relation to Socrates' comments in the *Gorgias*. Use the *Meno* as a Socratic commentary on Sophism. Due Sept. 20. This counts for 20% of your grade.
3. Examine one of the key debates in our readings from Thucydides. What definition(s) of justice are tried out in the debate? How is power being understood in this debate – mere brute force, legitimate authority, effectiveness of action, or yet something else? How does this debate on justice and power (and/or perhaps other historical or cultural events of the time) relate to Plato's writing of *Republic*, Bk. I? Due Oct. 4 -- this counts for 20% of your grade.
4. A short paper on a topic in Plato's *Republic* (topics distributed in class); due Nov. 6, worth 20% of your grade. One topic to orient your reading and writing around – How does Plato's vision of an ideal Republic ruled by philosopher-kings or –queens enable human beings to realize both the Good of the community and their own individual goods? Is human nature likely to be a help or hindrance in attaining this good?
5. A final short paper on a topic in Aristotle's metaphysics, ethics, or politics. Due Dec. 6 – worth 20% of your grade. Consider the following as a pivot point for your paper -- Does Aristotle's ethical and political theory truly empower one to fully attain a life of human flourishing? What is enticing and what is lacking in his account of the good life? OR: Is Aristotle's theory of substance or nature or of God (as Unmoved Mover) a helpful philosophical perspective? Or is his view of substance, nature or God too formal or scientific? What would need to be added?
6. Final exam: brief multiple-choice and identification of various thinkers and movements (atomism, Sophists, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) we have studied throughout the semester. This is worth 10% of your grade.

Papers are to be typed, properly footnoted, with a separate bibliography page. If there are multitudes of errors in writing mechanics (grammar, spelling, punctuation), I will send you to the Writing Center and/or grade down your papers. For your papers on Plato and Aristotle, you must look at, and incorporate into your papers, 2 sources outside of the books used for this class. There are also 2 very helpful Websites at plato@evansville.edu ; and socrates.clarke.edu . And, a number of reputable, authoritative sources are listed at the back of our rental text, pp. 751-755.

The following journals are in our library and should prove helpful:

Ancient Philosophy
Journal of the History of Philosophy
Journal of the History of Ideas
Review of Metaphysics

SHORT LIST OF BOOKS FOR EARLY GREEK THOUGHT

The following is merely a short list of generalist books I happen to own and be quite familiar with from my days as a graduate student. I can also key you in to other important texts in special areas, written either by professors I had in graduate school or by other pivotal scholars in the area of Ancient Greek thought.

John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, Oswyn Murray, *Oxford History of the Classical World*

John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*

Eva Cantarella, *Pandora's Daughters*

Marshall Clagett, *Greek Science in Antiquity*

F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*

_____, *Before and After Socrates*

James Davidson, *Courtesans & Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens*

David Depew, ed., *The Greeks and the Good Life*

E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*

Elaine Fantham, et al., *Women in the Classical World*

W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods*

_____, *The Greek Philosophers*
 Edith Hamilton, *The Greek Way*
 Werner Jaeger, *Paideia* (3 vols.)
 Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*
 Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind in Greek Philosophy and Literature*
 Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*
 Eduard Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*

As we get into later Greek thinkers, I will supply you with lists of helpful commentaries on Plato and Aristotle. One textbook I have used in the past for this course, John Mansley Robinson's *An Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy*, has a very useful, annotated bibliography at the back of his book; it is divided into sections, corresponding to the particular thinkers in whom you might be interested. Also, our rental text has an invaluable index of ancient authors and texts, explaining the historical origins and import of these thinkers. Another, more recent and highly valuable anthology of ancient Greek primary texts is found in Julia Annas, *Voices of Ancient Philosophy: An Introductory Reader* (2001).

For anyone interested in Greek tragedy, I would highly recommend *Greek Tragedies*, a multivolume series edited by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (two fine members of that dying breed known as 'classicists'). Also, I would ardently push you to read the fine new translation of Homer's *Odyssey* carried out by Robert Fagles, a fine poet in his own right (and the wonderful introduction by Bernard Knox, one who dares to defend, rightly so, the importance of Homer in the Western canon). There is also a fine anthology of contemporary writers who explain the relevance of Greek tragedy to our current moral sensibilities; Erich Segal has edited *Greek Tragedy* which dialogues about such topics as the significance of suffering, weakness of the will, guilt, virtue, the gods and other related issues as they occur in the Athenian triumvirate of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. This semester, I will arrange for us to watch together and discuss the video presentation of Sophocles' *Antigone*; any other Greek dramatic pieces that interest you will be gladly welcomed. Bernard Knox also has several fine books on Greek tragedy and philosophy; E. R. Dodds wrote a groundbreaking book, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, that set the stage for arguing for the moral profundity of Greek poetry and tragedy; Bernard Williams (Dodds' student) has written a brilliant defense of the insights of Greek tragedy, *Shame and Necessity*. Yet another guiding light in our tour of ancient Greek thought is the work of Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, which incorporates key analyses of Sophocles' *Antigone* (as well as Euripides' *Medea*, and other Greek tragedies) into her reading of Plato and Aristotle.

COURSE TEXTBOOKS:

Rental: *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle*, ed. Marc Cohen, Patricia Curd, C. D. C. Reeve.

Supplemental:

1. Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl.
2. Plato, *Republic*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve: this translation is very student-friendly but scholarly, filled with helpful footnotes for modern students, and is reasonably priced. The introduction by C. D. C. Reeve is a first-rate introduction to the life, times, and main philosophical themes of Plato. No university student can be well-rounded in their education who has not read most, if not all, of this classic work.
3. Thucydides: *On Justice, Power and Human Nature*, trans. Paul Woodruff. This is a title given by Woodruff to these selections drawn from Thucydides' master narrative of the Athens-Sparta conflict, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. We will read important debates about the war which will prepare us to understand the cultural background to Plato's *Republic*.

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS: Avoid Plagiarism – Ignorance is no excuse! Become informed by consulting experts in the field of Writing. Otherwise, you can fail for the assignment or the course.