

Faculty of Arts
Department of Philosophy

PH 8115 – Ancient Philosophy
Winter 2014
Thursdays 11am – 2pm in JOR - 440

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Calendar Description

This course involves a critical study of selected themes and doctrines in ancient Greek philosophy, with a focus on such seminal thinkers as Socrates, Plato, and/or Aristotle. Typical issues include: the nature of reality; the relation between universals and particulars; the nature of the soul and its relation to the body; the difference between knowledge and true belief, and between the different kinds of knowledge (philosophical, practical, mathematical, knowledge of the natural world); the nature of the good life and of virtue; the roles that reason, emotions, and appetites play in the virtuous person; the kinds of social, economic, and political structures that characterize the best society.

Course Details

This class is about Plato's so-called "theory of ideas," as it may be found in Plato's dialogues *Phaedo* and *Parmenides*.

Aristotle tells us that Socrates was the first to ask for *definitions* of general notions such as justice, beauty, and courage. In Plato's early dialogues, Socrates usually asks someone who claims to be some sort of expert to give an account of their expertise, and he fails to get a satisfactory answer. He often refers to the thing he is looking for as an *idea*, but he never says much about what ideas are. It appears that Plato later developed his hints into something like a "theory of ideas." In the *Phaedo*, for instance, he says that we look at ideas when we classify things, and that we can recognize something as an instance of a general type only by remembering an idea that we acquired before we were born. For instance, we recognize that something is beautiful by comparing it to the idea of absolute beauty. Since we have never seen absolute beauty during our lives, Plato argues, we must have acquired this idea before the beginning of our lives.

In the *Parmenides*, however, Plato presents a series of rather strong arguments against the assumption of ideas. Some of these arguments are later used by Aristotle in order to refute Platonism. Yet, even though Plato knew of powerful arguments against his own theory, he did not abandon it after all. He keeps referring to it in dialogues written after the *Parmenides*.

We will read parts of the *Phaedo* and the *Parmenides* with the following questions in mind:

- What exactly is the “theory of ideas” that Plato develops in the *Phaedo*?
- What are ideas and what are they for?
- Is this really the same theory as the one rejected in the *Parmenides*?
- Are the arguments in the *Parmenides* successful? And if so, what could be done in order to save the theory of ideas?

This is a class focused on group discussion. All participants are expected to thoroughly prepare for each session. You should read all assigned texts more than once. You should be able to explain what happens in them, and point out where and why an argument is strong, weak, clear, or obscure.

For each session, one student will be asked to prepare a brief recap to be presented in the following week.

I strongly recommend the following editions:

- Plato, *Meno and Phaedo*, translation and introduction by David Sedley and Alex Long. Cambridge University Press 2010.
- Plato, *Parmenides*, translation and commentary R. E. Allen. Yale University Press 1998.

Other editions may be used, but *only if they have Stephanus page numbers in the margin or in the text*. (For the *Phaedo*, these numbers should be 57a-118; for the *Parmenides*, it is 126a-166c.)

A course website (Blackboard) is accessible via <http://my.ryerson.ca>.

Tentative Schedule

#	Date	Topic	Reading
1	01/16	Introduction	
2	01/23	<i>Phaedo</i> : Introduction, Socrates' Apology	<i>Phaedo</i> 57a - 69e
3	01/30	<i>Phaedo</i> : Arguments from Opposites and Recollection	<i>Phaedo</i> 70a - 84b
4	02/06	<i>Phaedo</i> : Simmias' Objection	<i>Phaedo</i> 84c - 95a
5	02/13	<i>Phaedo</i> : The Second Sailing	<i>Phaedo</i> 95b - 102a
	02/20	<i>Study week</i>	
6	02/27	<i>Phaedo</i> : Final Argument	<i>Phaedo</i> 102b - 107b
7	03/06	<i>Parmenides</i> : Zeno's Paradox	<i>Parmenides</i> 126a - 131a
8	03/13	<i>Parmenides</i> : Dilemma of Participation	<i>Parmenides</i> 131a - e
9	03/20	<i>Parmenides</i> : Largeness Regress	<i>Parmenides</i> 131e-132b
10	03/27	<i>Parmenides</i> : Thoughts, Paradigms	<i>Parmenides</i> 132b - 133a
11	04/03	<i>Parmenides</i> : Separation, Conclusion	<i>Parmenides</i> 133a - 135d
12	04/10	Wrap up	

Evaluation

Grades will be calculated as follows:

- General participation: 25 %
- Recap for one session: 15 %
- Final paper: 60 %

The recap should be presented in 5-10 minutes at the beginning of a class and in addition turned in in writing (1-2 pages). The aim is to remind us of what happened, what was settled and what was left open in the preceding session.

The paper should be 10-20 pages. Keep in mind that your paper will be better the more you engage in discussion. Students will be asked to submit a draft version of the final paper by mid-term. This version will be commented on, but not be part of the grade. The draft is due February 27th, the final paper April 1st. Recap, paper draft, and final paper are to be submitted via Blackboard as a Turnitin assignment.

Missed Classes and/or Evaluations

Students are required to inform their instructors of any situation which arises during the semester which may have an adverse effect upon their academic performance, and must request any considerations and accommodations according to the relevant policies and well in advance. Failure to do so will jeopardize any academic appeals.

- *Medical certificates* – If a student misses the deadline for submitting an assignment, or the date of an exam or other evaluation component because of illness, he or she must submit a Ryerson Student Medical Certificate AND an Academic Consideration form within 3 working days of the missed date. Both documents are available at www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf. If you are a full-time or part-time degree student, then you submit your forms to your own program department or school. If you are a certificate or non-certificate student, then you submit your forms to the staff at the front desk of the Chang School. If you need clarification, speak to your professor.
- *Religious observance* – If a student needs accommodation because of religious observance, he or she must submit a Request for Accommodation of Student Religious, Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance AND an Academic Consideration form within the first 2 weeks of the class or, for a final examination, within 2 weeks of the posting of the examination schedule. If the required absence occurs within the first 2 weeks of classes, or the dates are not known well in advance as they are linked to other conditions, these forms should be submitted with as much lead time as possible in advance of the required absence. Both documents are available at <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/reobservforminstr.pdf>. If you are a full-time or part-time degree student, then you submit the forms to your own program department or school. If you are a certificate or non-certificate student, then you submit the forms to the staff at the front desk of the Chang School. If you need clarification, speak to your professor.
- *Students with disabilities* – In order to facilitate the academic success and access of students with disabilities, they should register with the Access Centre <http://www.ryerson.ca/studentervices/accesscentre/index.html>. Before the first graded work is due, students should also inform their instructor through an “Accommodation Form for Professors” that they are registered with the Access Centre and what accommodations are required.

Student Code of Academic Conduct

The Ryerson Student Code of Academic Conduct (www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf) defines academic misconduct, the processes the University will follow when academic misconduct is suspected, and the consequences that can be imposed if students are found to be guilty of misconduct. Further information is also available at www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity.

Academic misconduct includes:

- plagiarism (the claiming of words, ideas, artistry, drawings or data of another person, which includes submitting your own work in whole or in part for credit in two or more courses),
- cheating,
- misrepresentation of personal identity or performance,
- submission of false information,
- contributing to academic misconduct,
- damaging, tampering, or interfering with the scholarly environment,
- unauthorized copying or use of copyrighted material,
- violations of departmental policies on professional behavior and/or course requirements.

All papers will be checked for plagiarism. One of the means for doing this will be turnitin.com. This is a plagiarism prevention and detection service to which Ryerson subscribes. It is a tool to assist faculty members in determining the similarity between student work and the work of other students who have submitted papers to the site (at any university), internet sources, and a wide range of journals and other publications. While it does not contain all possible sources, it gives faculty some assurance that students' work is their own. No decisions are made by the service; it simply generates an "originality report". Faculty must evaluate that report to determine if something is plagiarized.

Students who do not want their work submitted to this plagiarism detection service must, by the end of the second week of class, consult with the instructor to make alternate arrangements.

Important Resources Available at Ryerson

Use the services of the University when you are having problems writing, editing or researching papers, or when you need help with course material:

- The Library (LIB 2nd floor) provides research workshops and individual assistance. Enquire at the Reference Desk or at www.ryerson.ca/library/info/workshops.html
- The Writing Centre (LIB 272- B) offers one-on-one tutorial help with writing and workshops www.ryerson.ca/writingcentre/workshops.htm
- Learning Success (VIC B-15) offers individual sessions and workshops covering various aspects of researching, writing, and studying. You must book these directly through their website <http://www.ryerson.ca/student services/learningsuccess/>
- English Language Support (VIC B-17) offers workshops to improve overall communication skills www.ryerson.ca/student services/els/

There is one general site where you may see and register for all of the workshops offered by all of these areas: <http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity/workshops.html>