

## **HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY**

Philosophy 4530 = Classics 4350

Fall 2012

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-1:00

Wilson 104

Eric Brown

Wilson 213

Tues. and Thurs., 1:30-2:30,

and by app't.

935-4257

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### ***Description***

The Hellenistic Age, traditionally dated from the death of Alexander and his (Macedonian) Empire at 323 BCE to the birth of Augustus' (Roman) Empire in 31 BCE, gave the West three of its most innovative and influential schools of philosophy: Epicureanism, Skepticism, and Stoicism. Special attention is paid to the still-relevant debates about the possibility of knowledge, about the issues of freedom, responsibility, and determinism, and about ethics.

### ***Prerequisites***

This class is an in-depth survey, designed primarily to give graduate students in philosophy a broad introduction to the philosophical achievement of ancient Stoicism and skepticism.

Officially, it is open to graduate students in other fields and to undergraduates who have completed at least one philosophy class at the 300-level (or its equivalent at another university) and at least two philosophy courses overall. The official prerequisites are not as important as the informal ones, however. Simply put, it will be difficult to keep up with this course if one does not have (1) some comfortable acquaintance with philosophy, (2) some comfortable acquaintance with ancient philosophy, and (3) a significant amount of time in which to study the required readings.

### ***Grades and Requirements***

A. Participation. Because the class is designed to provide an advanced survey, the instructor will do a lot of talking to cover an extensive amount of ground. But he expects to be interrupted with questions at any moment, and will be disappointed if he is not interrupted. Like a fight at a hockey game, discussion could break out at any moment. All students are expected to be ready and willing to participate. (bonus points at instructor's discretion)

B. Writing. There are two options.

- (1) Two short papers (maximum 2500 words each, excluding notes), one due at noon on Sunday, 14 October, and the other due at noon on Friday, 14 December. The papers should be submitted as e-mail attachments, and they should include a word count. Some topics will be made available in class, but students are free to write on a topic of their own choosing, so long as that topic was clearly raised in class or is approved by the instructor. (100 points each)
- (2) One longer, research paper (maximum 7500 words, excluding notes), due at noon on Friday, 14 December. As a research paper, this should take account of the literature in the field. (200 points)

The second option is available only by petition, and petitions are due by October 9. If you are interested, express your interest to me in an email by then.

C. Exam. There will be a final exam to test for acquaintance with the Hellenistic philosophers' philosophical achievement. The test will consist of identifying ten of twelve short passages from primary texts assigned in this course. Identifications must explain what is being said, the significance of what is being said to the philosopher(s) who say it, and the broader significance of what is being said to philosophy. The last of these three desiderata requires situating the view expressed in the passage in relation to some philosophical question of enduring interest and in relation to some other answer to the question or some other reasoning for the same answer. (100 points)

The deadlines are firm, and tardiness will be penalized by ten points per twenty-four hours or fraction thereof. An incomplete for additional work on a research paper is available by a written petition that specifies a new deadline, but the standards for papers handed in later will be significantly higher.

It should not be necessary to say, but all work submitted for credit in this class must be the student's own and written for this particular class. If ideas or words are borrowed without attribution from another person or are borrowed from work done for another class, or if there is any other violation of the academic integrity policy printed in the course listings, the student will automatically fail the course and be referred to the committee on academic integrity.

### *Texts*

I have ordered seven required texts at Mallinckrodt:

1. Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *On Moral Ends*. tr. Woolf, ed. Annas. Cambridge UP.  
ISBN-13: 9780521669016

2. Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *On Academic Scepticism*. tr. Brittain. Hackett. ISBN-10: 0-87220-774-9. ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-774-5.
3. Diogenes Laertius. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Vol. 2: Books 6-10. tr. Hicks. Loeb Classical Library. Harvard UP. ISBN-10: 0674992040. ISBN-13: 978-0674992047.
4. Inwood, Brad, and Lloyd Gerson, eds. *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*. 2nd ed. Hackett. ISBN-10: 0-87220-378-6. ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-378-5.
5. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, tr. Smith. ISBN-10: 0-87220-587-8. ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-587-1.
6. Perin, Casey. *The Demands of Reason*. Oxford UP. ISBN-10: 0-19-965517-0. ISBN-13: 978-0-19-965517-5.
7. Sextus Empiricus. *Outlines of Scepticism*. 2nd ed. tr. Annas and Barnes. Cambridge UP. ISBN-13: 9780521778091.

Optional texts (2):

1. Long, A.A., and Sedley, D.N., eds. *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1, Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary*. ISBN-10: 0521275563. ISBN-13: 978-0521275569.
2. Long, A.A., and Sedley, D.N., eds. *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 2, Greek and Latin Texts with Notes and Bibliography*. ISBN-10: 0521275571. ISBN-13: 978-0521275576

Another required text I did not order at Mallinckrodt, and you will need to procure a copy on your own:

1. Epictetus, *The Handbook (The Encheiridion)*. tr. N. White. Hackett. ISBN-13: 978-0915145690.

That's the translation of Epictetus I recommend, but you won't lose much if you go with one of the public-domain translations on the web.

### ***Note for Readers of Greek or Latin***

If there is interest, I will be happy to meet once a week to read (in Greek) and discuss (in English) a short passage of that week's required reading, and to meet once a week to read (in Latin) and discuss (in English) another short passage of that week's reading. For passages that do not come from Long and Sedley, vol. 2, I will make the text available.

## *Syllabus*

IG = Inwood and Gerson cited by page or passage number

LS = Long and Sedley cited by section

You are encouraged to examine crucial passages in more than one translation, as most of them can be found in LS and IG (and some in one of our other required texts, as well). Use the index of sources in LS and the index of passages translated in IG to find what you are looking for.

Tu Aug 28	Introduction
	UNIT ONE: EPICUREANISM
Th Aug 30	<u>Epicureanism as a Way of Life</u> Diogenes Laërtius X, esp. 1-30 and 139-154 Epicurus, <u>Vatican Sentences</u> (IG 36-40)
Tu Sep 4	<u>Epicurean Ethics</u> Primary: Epicurus, <u>Letter to Menoecus</u> (Diog. Laërt. X 121-135) Cicero, <u>On Moral Ends I</u> But also: Diogenes Laërtius X 117-121 and 136-138 Various testimony at IG 44-45 Cicero, excerpts from the <u>Tusculans</u> at IG 56-57, 60-61 Various fragments at IG 74-80 and 95-102
Th Sep 6	NO CLASS
Tu Sep 11	Review previous assignments, and add: Cicero, <u>On Moral Ends II</u>
Th Sep 13	(Discussion continues)
Tu Sep 18	<u>Epicurean Physics</u> Primary: Epicurus, <u>Letter to Herodotus</u> (Diog. Laërt. X 34-83) Lucretius, <u>On the Nature of Things I</u> But also: Various at IG 45-56, 72-74, 85-95

- Th Sep 20 Review previous assignments, and add:  
Lucretius, On the Nature of Things II
- Tu Sep 25 Epicurean Psychology  
Review previous assignments, and add:  
Lucretius, On the Nature of Things III
- Th Sep 27 Epicurean Epistemology  
Primary:  
Lucretius, On the Nature of Things IV  
Diogenes Laërtius X 31-34  
But also:  
Various at IG 81-85
- Tu Oct 2 Epicurean Science  
Primary:  
Epicurus, Letter to Pythocles (Diog. Laërt. X 83-116)  
Lucretius, On the Nature of Things V
- Th Oct 4 (Discussion continues)
- UNIT TWO: STOICISM
- Tu Oct 9 Stoics and their Philosophy  
Primary:  
Diogenes Laërtius VII, esp. 1-41 and 160-202
- Deadline to notify instructor of plan to write research paper**
- Th Oct 11 NO CLASS
- Su Oct 14 **First Essay Due**
- Tu Oct 16 Stoic Epistemology and Logic  
Primary:  
Diogenes Laërtius VII 41-83  
IG 124-131

- Th Oct 18            Stoic Physics and Metaphysics  
 Primary:  
                         Diogenes Laërtius VII 132-160  
                         IG 161-178  
 Secondary:  
                         IG 139-160
- Tu Oct 23            Stoic Ethics  
 Primary:  
                         Diogenes Laërtius VII 84-131  
                         Stobaeus II 7, on Stoic ethics (IG 203-232)  
 But also:  
                         IG 232-233 and 253-260
- Th Oct 25            Review the previous, and add:  
                         Cicero, *De Finibus* III
- Tu Oct 30            (Discussion Continues)
- Th Nov 1             NO CLASS
- Tu Nov 6             Stoic Determinism and Epictetus  
 Primary:  
                         IG 179-190  
                         Epictetus, *Encheiridion*
- Th Nov 8             Cicero's Critique of Stoic Ethics  
 Primary:  
                         Cicero, *De Finibus* IV
- UNIT THREE: ACADEMICS
- Tu Nov 13            Antiochus  
                         Cicero, *On Moral Ends* V  
                         Cicero, *Lucullus* 1-63 (*On Academic Scepticism*, pp. 3-37)
- Th Nov 15            Academic Skepticism  
                         Cicero, *Lucullus* 64-111 (*On Academic Scepticism*, pp. 38-65)
- Tu Nov 20            Cicero, *Academic Libri* I 1-46 (*On Academic Scepticism*, pp. 87-107)  
                         Cicero, *Lucullus* 112-148 (*On Academic Scepticism*, pp. 65-86)

Th Nov 22 NO CLASS — Thanksgiving

UNIT FOUR: PYRRHONISM

Tu Nov 27 Pyrrhonism as a Way of Life  
 Diogenes Laërtius IX 61-79  
 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines* I  
 Perin, *The Demands of Reason*, chp. 1

Th Nov 29 The Five Modes and the Necessity of Suspension  
 Sextus, *Outlines* I 1-30 and 164-186  
 Diogenes Laërtius IX 88-101  
 Perin, *The Demands of Reason*, chp. 2

Tu Dec 4 The Scope of Skepticism  
 Sextus, *Outlines* I 1-30 and 187-209  
 Diogenes Laërtius IX 61-79 and 102-108  
 Perin, *The Demands of Reason*, chp. 3

Th Dec 6 Living as a Skeptic  
 Sextus, *Outlines* I  
 Perin, *The Demands of Reason*, chp. 4

F Dec 14 **Final Essay Due**

TBA **Optional Review Session**

TBA **Final Exam**

## SOME GUIDELINES FOR WRITING

These guidelines should help any writer who seeks to persuade his or her audience of a contestable point. They also explain the grading priorities in this class.

### MATTERS OF FORM

1. There is no excuse for typographical **errors**, orthographical errors, or grammatical errors. Nor is there any excuse for those errors of diction that are not easily ensnared in the nets of grammar and orthography. You can avoid most of these errors by sticking to words that you know very well in their written form, remaining on friendly terms with a good dictionary, and editing carefully. When you edit, you should look for the common errors of grammar and style that William Safire summarizes as follows:

No sentence fragments. Avoid run-on sentences they are hard to read. A writer must not shift your point of view. Reserve the apostrophe for its proper use and omit it when its not needed. Write all adverbial forms correct. In their writing, everyone should make sure that their pronouns agree with its antecedent. Use the semicolon properly, use it between complete but related thoughts; and not between an independent clause and a mere phrase. Don't use no double negatives. Also, avoid awkward or affected alliteration. If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times: Resist hyperbole. If any word is improper at the end of a sentence, a linking verb is. Avoid commas, that are not necessary. Verbs has to agree with their subjects. Avoid trendy locutions that sound flaky. And don't start a sentence with a conjunction. The passive voice should never be used. Writing carefully, dangling participles should be avoided. Unless you are quoting other people's exclamations, kill all exclamation points!!! Never use a long word when a diminutive one will do. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out. Use parallel structure when you write and in speaking. You should just avoid confusing readers with misplaced modifiers. Place pronouns as close as possible, especially in long sentences—such as those of ten or more words—to their antecedents. Eschew dialect, irregardless. Remember to never split an infinitive. Take the bull by the hand and don't mix metaphors. Don't verb nouns. Always pick on the correct idiom. Never, ever use repetitive redundancies. "Avoid overuse of 'quotation "marks."' " Never use prepositions to end a sentence with. Last but not least, avoid clichés like the plague.

Editing can be tricky business. Seek out a friend for a fresh perspective on your writing or the Writing Center in Eads Hall 111 (935-4981) for help in learning how to learn to edit.

2. Writing that is free from error is not yet good writing. Prose **style** is difficult to cultivate except by practice, but there are some general guidelines worth learning. Great prose is concise (it wastes no words), precise (it says what it means), and concrete (it does not use hazy concepts whose meaning is contested). Several guidebooks provide helpful advice about how to achieve concise, precise, and concrete prose; in particular, Joseph Williams' Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace is worth reviewing periodically. Among the most helpful pieces of advice are these:

- avoid passive constructions in favor of active ones;
- forgo the verb 'to be' for more determinate verbs;
- be wary of abstract (Latin) nouns and prefer concrete (Anglo-Saxon) words;

shun jargon and technical vocabulary except where nothing less wieldy will do (and in these cases explain each term that you introduce);  
 prefer simple constructions to more ornate ones; and  
 use similes, metaphors, and intensifying adjectives and adverbs (e.g., 'very') sparingly.  
 Some common advice is potentially corrupting, though. You might have heard the following lies:

- (1) Formal writing avoids the first-person pronoun. Wrong. If you receive an invitation in the third person, you should reply in the third person. But this arcane etiquette does not apply to persuasive writing, and anyone who tries to make it apply will struggle to avoid pomposity.
- (2) Good writing needs a catchy introduction. Misleading. Good writing catches its intended audience's interest. But what will do that depends upon the intended audience's interests. We, for example, respond well to a crisp statement of a problem we find interesting.
- (3) A thesaurus is a great tool. Misleading. A thesaurus can help you find the right word if you use it to jog your memory or alongside a dictionary. Too many students use the thesaurus to find apparently impressive words that they barely understand.

In addition to collecting and reviewing advice, one who aspires to write great prose should cultivate taste for great prose. Make a habit of reading in The New Yorker, Harper's, or The Atlantic Monthly, and seek out the essays of past masters of English prose such as Orwell and E.B. White.

## MATTERS OF CONTENT

3. Of course, you are responsible for writing on **themes** of this course, and addressing one of the assigned topics.

4. You are also responsible for showing an **understanding** of the assigned readings. This requires two things. First, it requires that you not misinterpret what we are reading. Do not fail to distinguish one character's views from the author's views, and heed the context of every remark. Second, it requires that you cite the relevant text for any claim that you attribute to someone or for any claim or argument that you borrow from someone. Your citations should follow a style sheet in Gordon Harvey's Writing with Sources: A Guide for Students (Hackett, 1998) or The Chicago Manual of Style.

5. The most essential ingredient in a well-written argumentative paper is a clearly formulated **thesis**, that is, a contestable claim that the author intends to support. You should explicitly state the claim you are arguing for, and most of the time, you should state the thesis at the start of the paper. You should also organize your paper around the defense of your thesis, so choose your thesis carefully.

6. The first part of an adequate defense of any interesting thesis is a clear **argument** (or set of arguments) that supports the thesis. It should be obvious to the reader how many arguments you think you have in your favor, and what the premises of each argument are. Paragraphs should be constructed in such a way that the skeleton of the argumentative structure is obvious. Note that

the kind of argument you need depends upon the kind of thesis you are advancing. Sometimes, a piece of textual evidence counts as an argument. Sometimes, it does not.

7. The second part of an adequate defense of any interesting thesis is a consideration of the best possible **objection(s)** to the thesis and a reply to the objection(s). Considering and responding to objections is like showing your work on a math exam. If you are making textual claims, you should consider textual evidence that raises doubts about your claims. If you are making more fully developed arguments, you should consider possible objections to one or more of your premises (but hopefully not to your inferences, which should be unimpeachable). And you should always consider the best reason to deny your thesis itself.

8. If the thesis is clear, the argumentative structure well-conceived, the objection(s) and reply(ies) present, and if all of this is presented concisely and precisely and without errors, then the paper is very good. The difference between the very good papers and the great ones lies in the interest of the thesis, the style of the prose, and the cleverness, imagination, insight, and sheer intelligence of the argumentation.

#### SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE HELP

Do not skip on the background help available in the guidebooks mentioned here.

For help organizing your thoughts and editing your paper, use the Writing Center, located in Eads 111. It provides free writing help for all Wash U students; to make an appointment, call 935-4981. I am also available to help you organize your thoughts. Unfortunately, I cannot read drafts. But if you have some ideas but no clear thought about how to organize them, seek me out.

To test your prose style, read it aloud. Better: have someone else read it aloud to you.

To test the clarity of your thesis and argumentation, ask a friend to read the paper, and ask him or her what your main point is and why you advance it.

There is also a very helpful set of suggestions, by Jim Pryor (philosophy professor at NYU), at <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>.