

PHIL 356 The Concept of Life in Ancient Greek Philosophy and its Relevance

Today Fall 2018

Dr. Evgenia Mylonaki & Dr Thodoris Dimitrakos

Course Information

No prerequisites required. Meeting time: 13:15-14:55 T/Th , Location: CB-2

Contact Information

Office hours: (at the Faculty Lounge 3rd Floor Main Building) & by appointment

Contact information:

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Course Description

In the first part we will explore **Plato's** account of the political life and Aristotle's first systematic account of life. To do this we will examine **Aristotle's** understanding of **nature** as having its own ends, his distinction between **genus** and as **species**, his account of **the logic of life** and his distinction between **forms of life [vegetative (plants), sensitive (animals), rational (humans)]**.

In the second part we will see that the concept of life plays a crucial role in the formation of the **ancient Greek philosophy of ethics, politics and culture**, and that this philosophy of life is both an **influence** and an **alternative** to **modern and contemporary philosophies of ethics, politics and culture**.

Dr Dimitrakos will teach the first part of the class and **Dr Mylonaki** will teach the second part of the class.

Course Resources and Activities

Philosophical Readings: We will read:

- Aristotle's physical, biological, logical and metaphysical works, and Aristotle's and Plato's ethical and political works.
- Modern and contemporary philosophical works.

Works of art: In this class we will engage with Works of art which themselves communicate the philosophical ideas we will be discussing as we move along.(Film, literature, theatre, etc.)

On site classes: Classes on site in the areas where Socrates, Plato and Aristotle did philosophy.

Discussions: In this class philosophy is being taught as an activity and not a mere body of doctrine. As a consequence we will all try to do what Socrates, Plato and Aristotle did: engage in dialogue with each other, starting from what we know and experience and trying to move on to a philosophical understanding of each of the concepts and problems we will be reading about in class.

Writing: The dialogue of this class will also take place in writing. Writing will be divided between free writing (free reflections) and academic writing (two papers).

Guest Lectures: In this class you will have the opportunity to engage directly with guest lecturers who are renowned specialists in some of the subject matters we will be dealing with. Names, dates and times will be announced at the first day of classes.

Reading List

Assigned course texts will be distributed to students by the CYA librarian or found online on **moodle**. Reserved texts are located in the library. You will be notified about them on the first day of class. Some of the assigned books will be read in their entirety and some in part.

Indicative Bibliography

1. Plato: *Apology, Crito, Republic*
2. Aristotle: *Parts of Animals, Movement of Animals, Generation of Animals, De Anima, Nicomachean Ethics, Politics*
3. Michael Thompson: *The Representation of Life*
4. Jonathan Lear: *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*
5. Jonathan Coetzee: *The Lives of Others*
6. Iris Murdoch: *The Sovereignty of the Good*
7. Michel Foucault: *The Birth of Biopolitics*

Course Objectives

It is the ambition of this class to present ancient Greek philosophy as both a philosophy of life and as a living philosophy and to enable all of us to do philosophy together.

In this class you will be able to:

1. Familiarize yourselves with philosophy as a discipline.
2. Familiarize yourselves with ancient Greek philosophy.
3. Get a sense of how the problems and concepts of ancient Greek philosophy figure in contemporary philosophical discussions.
4. Appreciate how philosophical discussions figure in contemporary movements in art.
5. Appreciate how your own questions relate to these philosophical discussions.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to report for classes promptly. CYA regards attendance in class and on-site as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately in the Student Life Office.

Class Participation

Participation is mandatory.

Participation Rule: No-one is allowed to look down on anyone in this class. Lack of respect and tolerance will not be tolerated.

Policy on Original Work

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own, original work. Any excerpts from the work of others must be clearly identified as a quotation, and a proper citation provided. (Check Student handbook, pg. 9)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a registered (with your home institution) student with a disability and you are entitled to learning accommodation, please inform the Director of Academic Affairs and make sure that your school forwards the necessary documentation.

Use of Laptops

In-class or on-site use of laptops and other devices is permitted only if there is text we are reading online. On no other occasion.

Course Requirements

Weekly Reflections:

You will be asked to turn in **one weekly 1-2 page free report or reaction** to the readings of the upcoming class that will be delivered to my email address every section a day before the first *or* the second class of the week. The reports will not be graded separately. You will be graded just for turning them all in on time. You will get an A+ if you've turned them all in on time and an F if there is more than two reports unjustifiably missing or written in such a manner as to convey that the reading was not actually done.

Paper(s):

You will also be asked to write a midterm paper of 3 to 5 pages and a final paper of 5 to 7 pages. The deadline for the **midterm** paper will be on the **23rd of October 2017** and the deadline for the **final** paper will be on the **11th of December 2017**.

The option of re-writing will be open *only* for midterm papers. (The particulars of the process will be discussed in class.) Guidelines for writing a paper will be discussed in class as we move on and you turn in more reading reports. Paper topics will be selected freely by you, after prior consultation with me.

Class participation was discussed above.

There will be no exams for this class.

Optional Assignments

1) 25 Minute Presentations:

You have the option to present material you think is relevant to each class. The material is decided by you after prior consultation with the instructor.

2) Symposium: for presentation of your midterm or final papers to your peers.

3) Peer review: In this class you will have the chance to read and comment on each other's final papers before they are due.

- 10 OCT 10 **The Good Life as the excellent activity of the human soul
In Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Book I**
- 11 OCT 12 **The human excellences/virtues in Aristotle's Nicomachean
Ethics Book II**

Part III: The Modern Conception of the Soul

- 12 OCT 17 **"A New Understanding of Nature: The Scientific
Revolution"**
- 13 OCT 19 **"A New Understanding of Nature: The Scientific
Revolution"**
- 14 OCT 23
MONDAY **The Human and the Animal in Descartes' *The Passions of
the Soul***
DEADLINE FOR MIDTERM PAPERS

OCT 24-
28 **No Classes: Field Trip Peloponnese**

Part IV: Life as Existence

- 15 OCT 31 **Jonathan Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals***
- 16 NOV 2 **Life as Existence in Heidegger's *Being and Time***
- 17 NOV 7 **Kierkegaard's *Sickness Unto Death*
Tolstoy's, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich***

Part V: Life in Danger

- 18** **NOV 9** **Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the face of Cultural Devastation***
- 19** **NOV 14** **Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism***
- 20** **NOV 16** **Human Life and Alienated Life in Marx's *Grundrisse* and *The German Ideology***
- NOV 17-26** **FALL RECESS**
- 21** **NOV 28** **Biopolitics in Michel Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics***
- 22** **NOV 30** **Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*
Read Primo Levy's, *If This is a Man***
- 23** **DEC 5** **Judith Butler, *Precarious Life***
- 24** **DEC 7** **Concluding Discussion**

DEC 11 -- DEADLINE FOR FINAL PAPERS