

PHIL 20A: HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY FROM SOCRATES THROUGH ST. THOMAS

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Summer 2025
Units:	4
Hours:	4 lecture per week (48 total per quarter)
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 3: Arts & Humanities
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify significant theories held by major philosophers and/or philosophic schools of thought from the ancient through medieval periods.
- Explain and evaluate historically important philosophical arguments from ancient through medieval period.

Description

Examination of Western philosophy with an emphasis on Greek philosophy from Thales through Aristotle and selected medieval philosophers from Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Formulate and summarize the philosophical views of important Western philosophers in the periods of Greek antiquity, with an emphasis on metaphysical, epistemological, moral and political theories of the philosophers studied.
2. Compare the theories and supporting arguments of major philosophers studied.
3. Assess the importance of major ancient Greek and medieval philosophers in Western culture.

Course Content

1. The Pre-Socratics and the Mediterranean background of Greek philosophy
 - a. The Milesians
 - b. Pythagoras
 - c. Heraclitus
 - d. Parmenides
 - e. Empedocles and Anaxagoras
 - f. Democritus and Atomism
2. The Sophists

- a. The rise and nature of the Sophists; the relativism of sophists like Protagoras and Thrasymachus
 - b. Philosophical views and influence
3. Socrates
 - a. Life and personality
 - b. Socrates' aims and philosophical views as presented in the early Platonic dialogues
 4. Plato
 - a. Central metaphysical and epistemological doctrines including the theory of forms, knowledge and belief distinction, and the rational/irrational parts of the soul doctrine
 - b. Political philosophy
 5. Aristotle
 - a. Central metaphysical and epistemological doctrines
 - b. Comparison of Plato and Aristotle
 - c. Philosophy from Augustine to St. Thomas

Lab Content

Not applicable.

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

When taught as an online distance learning section, students and faculty need ongoing and continuous internet and email access.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

Short papers
Quizzes on the reading
Class participation
Oral reports

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Lecture
Discussion
Reading of primary and secondary literature

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Baird, Forrest E.. Philosophic Classics, Volume I, Ancient Philosophy, 7th ed.. 2019.

Cohen, S. Marc, Patricia Curd, and C.D.C. Reeve. Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy, 5th ed.. 2016.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Responding in writing to critical study questions designed to direct students to key issues

2. Comparative written analysis of philosophers based on a list of approved essay topics

Discipline(s)

Philosophy