

## Sample Syllabi

Caleb Cohoe

These sample syllabi are outlines of courses that I have taught. The content and arrangement of the courses is flexible and can be modified to fit the needs of your students. I am also happy to structure courses to fit with departmental aims and requirements.

### History of Ancient Philosophy

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#### Course Description:

In this course we will discuss the ideas and arguments of major ancient Greek and Roman philosophers. We will focus on the thought of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and consider developments prior to Socrates and after Aristotle in relation to these three foundational figures. The course starts with Socrates and the beginnings of philosophical ethics. We will then consider the questions about ethics, knowledge, and the nature of reality that Plato raises in his dialogues. This will lead into a close study of Plato's greatest masterpiece: the *Republic*. After Plato, we will turn to Aristotle's natural philosophy and metaphysics, including his comments on his Pre-Socratic predecessors. We will then consider Aristotle's ethics. We end with a survey of philosophical activity in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. This course will introduce students to the history and continued relevance of the first centuries of western philosophy.

#### Texts:

S. Marc Cohen, Patricia Curd, and C. D. C. Reeve (editors), *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy (Fourth Edition) from Thales to Aristotle* (Indianapolis: Hackett, Fourth Edition 2011). Additional readings (some required, some optional) will be made available on the Blackboard website under Course Materials. Many of these readings are also available online.

#### Reading/writing assignments:

Required weekly readings will typically amount to about 20-60 pages. The required readings will all be primary texts taken from ancient philosophers. Optional readings will include modern commentary as well as additional historical material. Although the readings are relatively short, they are difficult, requiring close study and multiple readings. The best approach is to read each text both before and after we discuss it in class. Reread each piece several times if necessary.

You will be asked to write three papers: a shorter first paper (700-1200 words), a longer second paper (1200-2000 words), and a final paper (1750-3000 words), for which you will be required to complete a research bibliography. There will be no exams. You will also be asked to complete a number of short reading responses, consisting of (1) a brief one paragraph summary of the main claims of the reading and the evidence offered in support of them and (2) a question you have in response to the reading. Several classes during the semester will be set aside for group discussion and presentations. These presentations will form a large part of your course participation grade.

#### Grading:

First Paper: 15%, Second Paper: 25%, Final paper: 35%, Course Participation and Reading Responses: 25%

**Course Outline:**

1. *Introduction: The Emergence of Philosophy: the Pre-Socratics in relation to Traditional Greek Thought*
2. *Socratic Definition in the Euthyphro*, August 21-26
  - a. Plato, *Euthyphro*
3. *Socrates' Trial and Conviction*, August 28
  - a. Plato, *Apology*
4. *No One Does Evil Willingly*, September 4-9
  - a. Plato, *Protagoras*, 348c-362a
5. *Learning as Recollecting*, September 11-16
  - a. Plato, *Meno*
    - i. Optional secondary source: Gail Fine, "Inquiry in the Meno"
6. *The Phaedo's Introduction of the Forms and Argument for the Immortality of the Soul*, September 16-18
  - a. Plato, *Phaedo*
7. *Plato's Republic*, September 23-October 7
  - a. Why Be Moral? (Books One to Two)
  - b. Justice in City and Soul (Books Two to Four)
  - c. Parts of the Soul (Book Four)
    - i. Optional secondary source: Hendrik Lorenz, "The Analysis of the Soul in Plato's Republic"
  - d. Theory of Forms: Line, Sun, and Cave (Books Six and Seven, 503b-518b)
    - i. Optional secondary source: Myles Burnyeat, "Plato on Why Mathematics is Good for the Soul"
  - e. The limits and uses of mimetic arts (Books Two to Three and Ten)
    - i. Optional secondary source: Alexander Nehamas, "Plato and the Mass Media"
8. *Aristotle's Natural Philosophy and Metaphysics*, October 9-November 6
  - a. Aristotle's Categories (*Categories* and *De Interpretatione* 1 and 9)
    - i. Optional secondary source: Verity Harte, "What's a particular, and what makes it so? : some thoughts, mainly about Aristotle"
  - b. Aristotle's Theory of Change (*Physics* I 1, 7-9; Selections from Parmenides and the Atomists)
  - c. On Nature and the Four Causes (*Physics* II 1-3, 7-9; Selections from the Pre-Socratics)
    - i. Ursula Coope, "Aristotle on the Infinite"/"Aristotle: Time and Change"
  - d. On the Soul (*De Anima* II 1-4)
  - e. On Wisdom, Matter, and Form (*Metaphysics* I 1-3, VII 1-4, 17)
  - f. Perception and Understanding (*De Anima* II 5-6, 12; III 4-5)
  - g. God and the Order of Reality (*Metaphysics* XII 6-9)
9. *Aristotle's Ethics*, November 11-November 20

- a. The Human Good and Happiness (*Nicomachean Ethics* I 1-5)
  - b. The Human Work Argument (*Nicomachean Ethics* I 7-9, 13)
  - c. Aristotle on Lack of Control (*Nicomachean Ethics* VII 1-3)
  - d. Aristotle on Contemplation and Happiness (*Nicomachean Ethics* X 6-8)
10. *Later Greek and Roman Philosophy*, November 20-December 4
- a. Epicurean Ethics and Natural Philosophy (Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Selections)
  - b. Stoic Ethics and Natural Philosophy (Epictetus, *Handbook*, Selections)
  - c. The Impotence of Reason: Pyrrhonian Skepticism (Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines* I, Selections)
  - d. Augustine on Good, Evil, and Happiness (*Confessions*, Selections, *City of God*, XIX and XX, Selections)

## Metaphysics and Mysticism in Ancient and Medieval Western Philosophy

Caleb Cohoe

### Course Description:

What are the implications different views of ultimate reality have for conceptions of, speech about, and attitudes towards the divine? In this course we will examine the connection between Western metaphysics and mysticism by closely looking at the role that the divine plays in the metaphysics of a number of key figures in the Western tradition. We will see the diverse ways in which mysticism is understood and practiced, from philosophical and theological theorizing to visions and sensory experience to systematic ways of organizing one's life. We will also examine disputes about the nature and import of mystical experiences. While mystical theology is sometimes opposed to rational philosophy, we will see that three of the most important ancient Greek philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, all advocated the superiority of the divine over the human and put forward conceptions of the divine that were influential not just in philosophy but also in the theology of the three Abrahamic religions. We will examine several important mystics and metaphysicians in the Islamic tradition, the Jewish tradition, and both Eastern and Western Christianity.

### Texts:

1. *The Essential Plotinus*, Plotinus, Trans. Elmer O'Brian, (Indianapolis: Hackett, Second Edition 1964), ISBN 978-0-915144-09-9
2. *The Journey of the Mind to God*, Bonaventure, Trans. Philotheus Boehner (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), ISBN 978-0-87220-200-9
3. Course Packet
4. Selected Online Resources

### Reading/writing assignments:

Required weekly readings will typically amount to about 15-60 pages. The required readings will all be primary texts taken from metaphysicians and mystics. Optional readings will include modern commentary as well as additional historical material. Although the readings are relatively short, they are difficult, requiring close study and multiple readings. The best approach is to read each text both before and after we discuss it in class. Reread each piece several times if necessary.

You will be asked to write two short papers (1000-1750 words) and one longer paper (3000-4000 words). You will also be asked to complete a number of short reading responses, consisting of (1) a brief one paragraph summary of the main claims of the reading and the evidence offered in support of them and (2) a question you have in response to the reading. Several classes during the semester will be set aside for group discussion and presentations. These presentations will form a large part of your course participation grade.

### Grading:

Short Papers: 30%, Long Essay: 40%, Course Participation: 30%

**Course Outline:**

1. Introduction:
  - a. Preliminary characterizations of metaphysics and mysticism
  - b. Overview of the history of metaphysics and mysticism in the West
  - c. Documentary on the monks of Grand Chartreuse: *Into Great Silence*
2. The Nature of Mysticism
  - a. Types of Mystical Texts
    - i. Vision or Revelation: Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (Selections)
    - ii. Theological Treatise: Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Mystical Theology* (Selections)
  - b. Interpretations of Mysticism
    - i. "The Numinous," Rudolf Otto
    - ii. "Feminists, Philosophers, and Mystics," Grace M. Jantzen
3. What are the Implications of Mystical Experience?
  - a. "Mysticism and Religious Experience," William J. Wainwright
  - b. "Mysticism and Experience," Grace M. Jantzen
4. Ancient Greek Philosophy and Mysticism
  - a. Xenophanes' Critique of Traditional Greek Religion
  - b. Metaphysics and Mysticism in Plato's *Republic* and *Timaeus*
  - c. Divine Intellect in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Lambda
  - d. Plotinus's *Enneads*
    - i. Beauty (I, 6 [1])
    - ii. The Intelligence, The Ideas, and Being (V, 9 [5])
    - iii. The Descent of the Soul (IV, 8 [6])
    - iv. The Three Primal Hypostases (V, 1 [10])
    - v. The Post Primals (V,2 [11])
    - vi. The Good or the One (VI, 9 [9])
    - vii. Contemplation (III, 8 [30])
5. Eastern Christian Mysticism
  - a. Maximus the Confessor (Selections)
  - b. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads* (Selections)
6. Medieval Islamic Metaphysics and Mysticism
  - a. Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), *Metaphysics of the Healing* (Selections)
  - b. Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (Selections)
7. Medieval Jewish Metaphysics and Mysticism
  - a. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed* (Selections)
8. Western Christian Mysticism
  - a. Bonaventure, *The Journey of the Mind to God*
  - b. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle or the Mansions* (Selections)

**VT: 381T Aristotle and Metaphysics**

Caleb Cohoe

**Course Description:**

This class will examine Aristotle's account of the structure of reality. We will look carefully at Aristotle's views on the nature of being, change, time, and substance. We will consider how figures such as Thomas Aquinas develop the Aristotelian metaphysical tradition and bring some of Aristotle's views into dialogue with contemporary thought in these areas.

**Texts:**

1. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Translated C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2016). ISBN: 9781624664397
2. Aristotle, *Physics*, Trans. R. Glen Coughlin (South Bend, IN: Saint Augustine's, 2005). ISBN: 9781587316296
3. Thomas Aquinas, *Selected Writings*, Trans. Ralph McInerny (New York, NY: Penguin, 1999). ISBN: 9780140436327
4. Articles posted on Blackboard

**Reading/writing assignments:**

Required weekly readings will typically amount to about 15-50 pages. Although the readings are relatively short, they are difficult, requiring close study and multiple readings. The best approach is to read each text both before and after we discuss it in class. Reread each piece several times if necessary.

You will be asked to write one medium paper (2000-4000 words) and one longer paper (3000-5000 words), you will also be submitting drafts of both papers for feedback and evaluation. In addition to regular class participation, you will be asked to complete a number of short reading responses, consisting of (1) a brief one paragraph summary of the main claims of the reading and the evidence offered in support of them and (2) a question you have in response to the reading. You will also be asked to do an in-class presentation on one of the class readings.

**Grading:**

First Paper: 25%, Long Essay: 40%, Course Participation: 35%

**Course Outline:**

1. The Fundamentals of Aristotelian Philosophy: Categories, Matter, Form, and the Four Causes, weeks 1-4
  - a. *Categories* 1-5
  - b. *Physics* I 1-2; 7-9, II 1-3
  - c. *Metaphysics* A 1; a 1-3, E 1.
  - d. *Optional*: Sean Kelsey, "Hylomorphism in Aristotle's 'Physics'"

2. Change and Motion, weeks 1-5
  - a. Parmenides of Elea and Zeno of Elea, *Selections*
  - b. "The Problem of Temporary Intrinsic," David Lewis
  - c. "Aristotelian Endurantism: A New Solution to the Problem of Temporary Intrinsic" Jeffrey E. Brower
  - d. *Physics* III 1-8
  - e. Ursula Coope, "Change and its Relation to Actuality and Potentiality"
  - f. Ursula Coope, "Aristotle on the Infinite"
  - g. Selections from *Physics* V-VI and VIII
  - h. Caleb Cohoe, "Why Continuous Motions Cannot Be Composed of Sub-motions: Aristotle on Change, Rest, and Actual and Potential Middles"
  - i. *Optional*: Max Black, "Achilles and the Tortoise,"
3. The Nature of Time, weeks 5-8
  - a. Augustine, Selections from *Confessions* XI
  - b. Aristotle, *Physics* IV, 10-14
  - c. Ursula Coope, "Aristotle: Time and Change"
  - d. David Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel"
  - e. Dean Zimmerman, "The Privileged Present: Defending an 'A-Theory' of Time"
4. The Implications of Time, weeks 8-9
  - a. "Why Is Death Bad?" Anthony Brueckner and John Martin Fischer
  - b. "Against Time Bias," Preston Greene and Meghan Sullivan
5. First Philosophy, weeks 9-13
  - a. The Goal of First Philosophy: *Metaphysics* A 2, G 1-3
  - b. Thomas Aquinas, "On Being and Essence"
  - c. Substance: Composite, Matter, or Form: Selections from *Metaphysics* Z
    - i. Verity Harte, "What's a particular, and what makes it so?: some thoughts, mainly about Aristotle"
    - ii. "Individuals in Aristotle"; "Substance in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*," Michael Frede
    - iii. "Aristotle on Matter, Form, and Ontological Strategy," Michael Loux
    - iv. "Aristotelian Essentialism Revisited," Charlotte Witt
  - d. Potentiality and Actuality: *Metaphysics* Θ
    - i. Selections from Jonathan Beere, *Doing and Being*
  - e. Divine Substance: Selections from *Metaphysics* Λ
    - i. Selections from *Symposium Aristotelicum* ed. David Charles and Michael Frede
6. Human Nature, Survival and Personal Identity, weeks 13-15
  - a. Aristotle, *De Anima*, II 1-5, III 4-5
  - b. Thomas Aquinas, "On the Soul Commentary"
  - c. "The Unimportance of Identity"/"We Are Not Human Beings" Derek Parfit