

KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE
OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Philosophy 71: Philosophy in the Classical Age

Professor Barnhart

Office Hours: Tuesday 11:30 AM- 12:30 PM

Wednesday 9:10 - 10:10 AM

Thursday 10:20-11:20 AM

Texts:

Philip Wheelwright, editor, *The Presocratics* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966)

G.M.A. Grube, translator, *Plato, Five Dialogues*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1981)

Barbara Stoller Miller, translator *The Bhagavad-Gita* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986)

Stephen Addiss and Stanley Lombardo, translators, *Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993)

This course surveys the ancient roots of contemporary world philosophy focusing on major texts from the early Greek, Indian, and Chinese cultural traditions including early Greek fragments, Plato's dialogues, the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Tao Te Ching*.

We will pursue a number of questions and themes common to the civilizations of the classical period [roughly 500 BCE to 200 CE]. Specifically, these fall under three broad categories: the nature of reality and its relation to human experience, the nature of the self or human person and its place in the world, and finally the nature of ethical conduct.

Requirements

There will be two short papers, a midterm, and a final examination, specific due dates to be determined in class. All exams are "essay type." Topics for essays will sometimes be provided in advance. However, I may experiment with various types of additional writing exercises as well as change both the number and nature of the various papers and exams.

In addition, since this is a philosophy course, class attendance and participation in discussion is also emphasized. Besides due dates and topics for papers, the week's readings are also posted in class. So, should a class be missed, it is important to check to see what assignments, if any, were made.

Grades are determined on the basis of three graded factors: performance on the two written essays, the examination, and participation in class discussion.

Academic Policy

All due dates are determined in class well in advance. If some difficulty in meeting the deadlines is encountered, I must be notified in advance to make alternative arrangements. Otherwise, due consideration of the tardiness is given in assessing the work's merits. Missed tests will be graded with an F, again, unless prior arrangements are made in advance.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. I retain the right to fail any student caught using sources without attribution. All source material must be appropriately footnoted. If you have any questions regarding the acknowledgment of sources please see me before turning in your assignment in order to avoid unnecessary trouble.

A class functions smoothly and provides an atmosphere appropriate to learning when all observe certain rules of conduct. (1) Show up on time. Students arriving after attendance has

been taken will be counted as present only at the discretion of the instructor. (2) No excessive absences (more than five). (3) No private conversation or unnecessary disturbances (this includes eating) during the class. (4) Please turn off all electronic devices while class is in session. Failure to follow these basic rules will have academic consequences.

I strongly urge you to take advantage of office visits especially if you are having difficulties with the course material.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Week #1: Introduction: What is Philosophy? Survey of the Classical Age; introduction to the history and culture of ancient Greece

Reading: Wheelwright, *Presocratics*, Intro. Chap. 1, pp. 1-40

2: Early Greek Philosophers: Thales, Anaximander, Pythagoras, Xenophanes The nature of reality, what lies behind appearance? Monotheism and monism Reading: Wheelwright, Chaps. 1,2, and 7

3: Parmenides and Zeno: Monism and the primacy of Being. Heraclitus and the primacy of Becoming. Reading: Wheelwright, Chaps. 4 and 3

ESSAY TOPICS distributed

4: Heraclitus, the Sophists. Philosophical truth and the issue of perspective. Reading: Wheelwright, Chaps. 3 and 8

FIRST ESSAYS DUE

5: Plato: Human wisdom and moral action. Reading: Grube, *Plato, Five Dialogues*, "Meno," "Apology"

6-7: Plato: Truth and the Soul, an individualist perspective. Reading: *Five Dialogues*, "Phaedo" MIDTERM EXAM

8: The Indian Hindu Tradition: history and culture of India, the Vedic tradition, introduction to the *Bhagavad Gita*. Reading: Miller, *Bhagavad-Gita* Chaps. 1,2; handouts

9: *Gita*: Atman, Brahman, and the True Self. Comparable to Parmenides' Being? Socrates' soul? Reading: Miller, *Bhagavad-Gita*

ESSAY TOPICS distributed

10: Concluding discussion of *Gita*, introduction to ancient Chinese civilization, history and culture. Reading: Handouts, Intro. to Addiss and Lombardo, *Tao Te Ching* by Burton Watson

11-12: Discussion of major themes from the *Tao Te Ching*. Images of the self and reality, nature or Tao, Te, and wu-wei. Comparison with previous readings. Reading: *Lao*

Tzu, Tao Te Ching
FINAL ESSAYS DUE in eleventh week

FINAL EXAMINATION