History of Philosophy I (PHIL213)

Summer 2026, Philosophy, Boğaziçi University

Syllabus (*tentative*)

Course description

This course is about Ancient Greek Philosophy, offering a critical survey of the key ideas of major thinkers from the early philosophical traditions in Ionia to Late Antiquity. We will focus on views discussed in the works of, or testimonies about, philosophers such as the Presocratics, Sophists, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Socratics, and Hellenistic thinkers. We will explore such themes as the nature of knowledge and its limits, being and change, soul and body, cosmology, ethical life, political thought, critiques of social norms, and skepticism.

Contact information

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Office Hours: By appointment via email

Teaching pattern

The course is mainly delivered through lectures, with some sessions held as seminars. During lectures, students will receive handouts containing textual evidence for the views of the philosophers discussed in class. For seminars, there are essential *advance* readings, and for all meetings helpful readings. In seminars, students will work through a set of questions related to the assigned readings and discuss their responses with their peers.

Course literature

- Peter Adamson, *Classical Philosophy: A History of Philosophy without Any Gaps*, Vol. I (OUP, 2014)
- Peter Adamson, *Philosophy in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds: A History of Philosophy without Any Gaps*, Vol. II (OUP, 2015)
- Alternative: Adamson's podcasts: Classical Greek Philosophy
- Excerpts from the works of select thinkers for seminars, which will be emailed in due time.

Completion

The course will be completed with *two* written exams: a midterm and a final. The dates and locations for these exams will be communicated via email in due time.

Assessment

Your final grade is based on the midterm and final exams, each contributing 50% to the overall assessment. Exams will cover subjects discussed in class, coursebook chapters, and seminar readings. While attendance is recorded only in seminars, your exams will be graded in the light of your class attendance and participation—consistent engagement may be reflected positively while frequent absence or lack of participation may affect your grade. Lectures will cover material beyond the course literature, and seminars will require active student participation, so attendance is strongly recommended. To foster class engagement, brief assignments *may* be introduced, contributing 10% to the overall grade and reducing each exam's weight to 45%.

Course goals

By the end of this course, students will develop familiarity with the key philosophical views of ancient thinkers across a wide range of subjects. They will be able to discern the philosophical significance of these views, and learn to articulate and evaluate them using key concepts prevalent in ancient philosophy. Moreover, through the distribution of handouts during classes, students will develop the analytical skills necessary for reading primary philosophical texts.

Weekly schedule: topics and readings

N.B. The chapters referred to below correspond to Adamson's above-cited books. If you are using the podcasts instead, please note that episode numbers, due to the inclusion of additional interviews, do not always match chapter numbers. You can search by chapter title to find the corresponding episode.

Week I

Lecture 1: Introduction; the Presocratics and their legacy; Milesian school: Thales (Adamson, vol 1, ch. 1)

Lecture 2: Milesian school (cont.): Anaximander and Anaximenes. (Adamson, vol 1, ch. 2)

Lecture 3: The Italians: Pythagoras; Ephesian school: Heraclitus (Adamson, vol 1, chs. 4, 5)

Week II

Lecture 4: The Eleatics: Parmenides; and the Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus (Adamson, vol 1, chs. 7, 8)

Lecture 5: Anaxagoras and Empedocles (Adamson, vol 1, chs. 9, 10)

Lecture 6: The Sophists: Protagoras and Gorgias (Adamson, vol 1, ch. 12, 13)

Week III

Lecture 7: Socrates (Adamson, vol 1, ch. 14)

Lecture 8: TEXT SEMINAR on Plato's *Meno*

Lecture 9: Plato: On his dialogues; on Epistemology and Metaphysics (Adamson, vol 1, chs. 15, 18, 19, 20)

Week IV

Lecture 10: Plato: Epistemology and Metaphysics (cont.) (Adamson, vol 1, ch. 22)

Lecture 11: Plato: Epistemology and Metaphysics (cont.)

Lecture 12: Aristotle: Logic and Epistemology (Adamson, vol 1, chs. 29, 30, 31)

Week V

Lecture 13: Aristotle: Logic and Epistemology (cont.)

Lecture 14: Aristotle: Metaphysics and Physics (Adamson, vol 1, ch. 32)

Lecture 15: Aristotle: Metaphysics and Physics (cont.)

Week VI

Lecture 16: Socratic Schools: Cynics (Adamson, vol 2, chs. 1, 2)

Lecture 17: Socratic Schools (cont.): Cyrenaics (Adamson, vol 2, ch. 3)

Lecture 18: Hellenistic Philosophy: Introduction, and Epicureans (Adamson, vol 2, chs. 4, 7)

Week VII

Lecture 19: Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics (Adamson, vol 2, chs. 8, 9, 10)

Lecture 20: Hellenistic Philosophy: Academic and Pyrrhonian Skeptics (Adamson, vol 2, chs. 15, 16, 18)

Lecture 21: TEXT SEMINAR on Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Scepticism* (I.1-27)