

PHIL 110—Figures in Western Philosophy
General Syllabus

Course Number and Prefix:	PHIL 110
Title:	Figures in Western Philosophy
Credits:	3 credits
Prerequisites:	None
Course Description:	An introduction to philosophy through a study of three to five of the following: Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Hobbes, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Foucault, Arendt.
Course Objectives:	This course is designed to introduce students to philosophy by acquainting them with the ideas of some of the major figures in the history of Western philosophy. The study of the ideas of such figures not only opens up an important part of Western cultural history, but also enhances skill in critical thinking <i>via</i> the study of techniques of argument identification and argument analysis and serves as a good general introduction to the issues and methods characteristic of philosophy as a discipline. (NOTE: Though students may elect this course for credit only once, the figures examined may, as indicated in the course description, vary from section to section at the discretion of the instructor.
Outline of Course Content:	For a possible section using texts by Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant: Preliminaries on the origins of philosophy in ancient Greece and on the value and nature of argument evaluation; Plato and Aristotle on the nature of human excellence and the metaphysical status of human beings; Descartes's quest for certainty in the sciences and for a way to make metaphysics a genuine science; Kant on the limits of human knowledge, the origins of our concepts of space, time, objects in general, the soul, the world, and God, and the problem of what part, if any, of metaphysics is capable of being a science; Descartes and Kant on what it is to be a person.
Course Requirements:	In every section of this course, students will be required, at a minimum, to write either a term paper or two or more shorter papers; additional assignments may be used at the discretion of the instructor. In the sample section described above, the requirements are as follows: occasional brief unannounced quizzes, weekly contributions to a class newsgroup, two 3-4 page papers, three hour tests, and a combination fourth hour text/comprehensive final examination.
Method of Evaluation:	Letter grade

Required Texts:

For the sample section on Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant:

Aristotle. *Introduction to Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. Second revised and enlarged edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and Meditations*. Trans. Laurence J. Lafleur. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1960.

Kant, Immanuel. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Trans. rev. and with an introduction by Lewis White Beck. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1950.

Plato. *Great Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. W.H.D. Rouse. Ed. Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse. New York: New American Library, 1999.

Trelogan, T.K. *Study Guide*. 3rd. ed. Privately printed: 1998.

Additional Required Materials Available On-line:

“Greek Philosophy: The Presocratics.” *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, James Fieser, gen. ed., 2001.

<www.utm.edu/research/iep/g/greekphi.htm>

Dunkle, Roger. “Philosophical Background of the Fifth Century, B.C.” From the study guide for the Brooklyn College Core course on “The Classical Origins of Western Culture,” 1986.

<ablemedia.com/ctcweb/netshots/introduction.html>

Parmenides. Fragments of “On Nature.” Originally published in Arthur Fairbanks, ed. and trans., *The First Philosophers of Greece* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1898).

<history.hanover.edu/texts/presoc/parmends.htm>

Trelogan, T.K. “Arguments and Their Evaluation.” 2nd. ed. Privately printed, 1996.

<www.unco.edu/philosophy/arg.html>

Zeno of Elea. Fragments and Testimonia. Originally published in Arthur Fairbanks, ed. and trans., *The First Philosophers of Greece* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1898).

<history.hanover.edu/texts/presoc/zeno.htm>

Readings Week by Week:

For the sample section on Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant:

Week 1

The on-line materials listed above on early Greek philosophy: the origins of philosophy in ancient Greece; the new interest in argument and origins of logic.

Week 2

Trelogan, “Arguments and Their Evaluation” (available on-line): the anatomy of arguments; distinguishing good arguments from bad; contradiction, logical impossibility, and truth.

Week 3

Plato, *Apology* and *Crito*: philosophy as the love of wisdom; the ideal of the examined life.

Weeks 4-5

Plato, *Phaedo*: life, death, body, soul, and the problem of the nature of a human being.

First hour test (week 5)

Weeks 6-7

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*: the good life and the problem of the nature of excellence.

Weeks 8-9

Aristotle, *On the Soul*: the problem of the nature of living things in general and its relation to the basic problem of metaphysics (first philosophy): that of the nature of beings *qua* beings.

Second hour test (week 9)

Weeks 10-12:

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*: the new concept of science and Descartes's quest for certainty in the sciences and a way to make metaphysics a genuine science; Descartes on what it is to be human.

First essay due (week 10)

Third hour test (week 12)

Weeks 13-15:

Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*: Kant on the limits of human knowledge and the origins of our concepts of space, time, objects in general, the soul, the world, and God; Kant's critical reflections on metaphysics as science; Kant on what it is to be human.

Fourth hour test/comprehensive final; second essay due (finals week)

Disability Statement:

Students who believe they may need accommodations in this class will be encouraged to contact the Disability Access Center (970) 351-2289 as soon as possible to ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.