

**PHIL5593 Topics in Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies:  
Myth, religion and philosophy in ancient Greece**

**Course Outline**

**Mode of Teaching:** Face-to-face Teaching

**Term:** 2024-25 Term 1

**Time :** Tuesday 18:30-21:30

**Location :** ELB 302

**Course overview (as shown on CUSIS)**

This course addresses philosophical problems and issues from an interdisciplinary approach. Topics may vary from year to year and may include such themes as "Science, Technology and Philosophy", "Philosophy and the Social Sciences", "Myth, Religion and Philosophy", etc. This course can be taken twice.

**Topics/Schedule (Tentative)**

**1. Introduction – Man and God in Homer**

- Reading: selected passages from *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

**2. Hesiod—mythological account of the genesis of the universe**

- Genealogy of gods and the world order under the reign of Zeus
- Comparison with the Homeric conception of god and man
- Reading: selected passages from *Theogony* and *Works and Days*

**3. The Milesians—Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes**

- General features of the Milesian cosmology (natural philosophy)
- The god of Milesian natural philosophers

**4. Heraclitus of Ephesus and the ever-changing universe**

- Doctrine of flux and Plato's *radical* interpretation
- Doctrine of unity in opposites—Heraclitus' *logos*
- Cosmology
- The Heraclitean god

**5. Pythagoras of Samos**

- Immortality and reincarnation of soul
- The cult of Pythagoras—the Pythagorean way of life

**6. Parmenides of Elea and his doctrine of being (*eon*)**

- The true nature of being—everlasting, continuous, monotonous and unchanging ...
- The identity of being and thinking
- The negation of changes and phenomena
- Cosmological account of the phenomenal world

**7. God and Theory of Ideas in Plato**

- Reception of Heraclitus' theory of flux and Parmenides' theory of being

- Plato's criticism of the sophistic movement.
- Doctrine of ideas—metaphysics
- Being and thinking—epistemology
- The tripartite soul—psychology
- Genesis of the universe—Plato's god and cosmology
- Love of beauty and immortality—*Symposium* and the re-working of the Eleusinian Mysteries
- Selected passages from Plato's dialogues, esp. *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*

### **8. The Aristotelian God**

- Theory of forms andhylomorphic conception of human beings—metaphysics and psychology
- Pure intellect as god, intellectual activities as the highest form of life—from metaphysics to theology

### **Learning outcomes (as shown on CUSIS)**

1. Acquire knowledge of conception of gods and men in Greek mythology and religion.
2. Acquire knowledge of the origin of Western philosophical thinking.
3. Demonstrate familiarity with the primary/secondary source texts.
4. Be able to articulate and defend a philosophical thesis of their own.

### **Learning activities**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lecture and discussion</li> <li>- Group presentation of selected original sources</li> <li>- Discussion in class</li> <li>- Mid-term essays and term papers</li> </ul> |
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### Assessment scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
Essays	Mid-term essay (ca. 2000 characters in Chinese or 1200-1500 words in English)	30%
	Final Term paper (ca. 3500-4000 characters in Chinese or 2500 words in English)	50%
Others	Presentation	10%
	Class performance	10%

### Remarks on Assessment Scheme (if any)

### Grade Descriptor

Please refer to: [http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade\\_descriptors.pdf](http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf)

### Details of course website

Relevant announcements and course documents will be posted on Blackboard.

### Recommended learning resources (Tentative)

#### Homer

**Emily Kearns.** *The Gods in the Homeric epics*, in the *Cambridge Companion to Homer* pp. 59-73

**Michael Clarke.** *Manhood and Heroism*, in the *Cambridge Companion to Homer* pp. 74-90  
***The essays of Kearns and Clarke provide clear introduction to the concepts of man and god in Homer.***

#### Hesiod

**Mondi, Robert.** *Chaos and the Hesiodic Cosmology* in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 92 (1989) pp. 1-41

***A detailed and creative interpretation of Hesiod's concept of chaos, the first principle of universe.***

#### Presocratic philosophers

**A.A. Long** *The Scope of Early Greek Philosophy* in the *Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* pp. 1-21

***A good and brief introduction to the scope of Presocratic thinking. While stressing the importance of natural philosophy, the author also calls for attention to the diversity of themes and variety of styles in the Presocratic philosophy.***

**Kahn, Charles H.** *The Achievement of Early Greek Philosophy: A Drama in Five Acts: From Thales to Timaeus in Early Greek Philosophy The Presocratics and the Emergence of Reason* 1-17

**Clear, easy-to-follow introduction to the development of Presocratic thinking**

### **Thales and Anaximander**

**Keimpe, Algra.** *The beginnings of cosmology in The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* pp. 45-65.

### **Heraclitus**

**Graham, Daniel W.** *Heraclitus: Flux, Order and Knowledge*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*, 169-188.

**A brief and clear introduction to Heraclitus.**

### **Pythagoras**

**Gemelli Marciano M. Laura.** *The Pythagorean way of life and Pythagorean ethics in A History of Pythagoreanism* 131-148.

**A clear and concise introduction to Pythagoras and his sect.**

### **Parmenides**

**Perl, Eric D.** *Thinking Being: Introduction to Metaphysics in the Classical Tradition* pp.7-17.  
**The part on Parmenides in Perl's excellent book on metaphysics in ancient Greece.**

### **Sophists**

Gagarin, Michael and Woodruff, Paul. *The Sophists*, *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*, pp.365-382.

**A concise introduction to the sophistic movement in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE.**

### **Plato**

**Kraut, Richard.** "Plato", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/plato/>>.

### **Aristotle**

**Shields, Christopher.** "Aristotle", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.),

URL= <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/aristotle/>>.

**Contact details for teacher(s) or TA(s)**

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For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.