**COURSE OUTLINE**

**(1) GENERAL**

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| **UNIVERSITY / Department** | * NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS / Department of History and Philosophy of Science   in collaboration with:   * ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI / Department of Philosophy and Education * UNIVERSITY OF PATRAS / Department of Philosophy * UNIVERSITY OF CRETE / Department of Philosophy and Social Studies | | | | |
| **STUDY LEVEL** | Postgraduate | | | | |
| **COURSE CODE** | 104 | | **SEMESTER OF STUDY** | 1st | |
| **COURSE TITLE** | HELLENISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY | | | | |
| **INSTRUCTOR(S)** | KATERINA IERODIAKONOU, ANNA TIGANI | | | | |
| **TEACHING ACTIVITIES** | | **TEACHING HOURS PER WEEK** | | | **ECTS** |
| Seminars | | 3 | | | 10 |
| **COURSE TYPE** | specialization, skills development | | | | |
| **PREREQUISITE COURSES** | – | | | | |
| **LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION and EXAMINATIONS** | English | | | | |
| **COURSE OFFERED TO ERASMUS STUDENTS** | No | | | | |
| **COURSE WEBSITE (URL)** | <https://eclass.uoa.gr/courses/PHS582/> | | | | |

**(2) LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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| **Learning Outcomes** |
| The topic of this course is Hellenistic Epistemology, focusing on the dogmatic theories of knowledge propounded by the Epicureans and the Stoics as well as on the sceptics’ reactions to them.  Upon successful completion of the course, students:   * will have gained familiarity with close reading and interpretation of the main philosophical texts presenting the philosophical doctrines and debates of the Hellenistic period; * will be able to apply their knowledge and understanding within the broader context of philosophy; * will learn how to develop scholarly arguments in written and oral form; * will have strengthened the necessary skills to continue their studies independently; |
| **General Skills** |
| * Independent work * Teamwork * Work in an international environment * Work in an interdisciplinary environment * Generating new research ideas * Exercise criticism and self-criticism * Promotion of free, creative and inductive thinking |

**(3) COURSE CONTENT**

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Week** | **Topic** | | **1** | Introduction | | **2** | Epicurean epistemology: Criteria of truth | | **3** | Epicurean epistemology: All impressions are true | | **4** | Epicurean epistemology: Scientific methodology | | **5** | Stoic epistemology: Common notions | | **6** | Stoic epistemology: Cognitive impressions | | **7** | Stoic epistemology: Proof | | **8** | Stoic epistemology: Sign inferences | | **9** | The emergence of scepticism: Academic scepticism | | **10** | Academic responses to the inactivity (*apraxia*) objection | | **11** | Pyrrhonian scepticism | | **12** | Pyrrhonian investigations and arguments | | **13** | Ancient and modern scepticism |   **Week 1: Introduction**  At first an introduction to the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic period: the political and social context, the philosophers, their works, our sources. Also, an introduction to the ancient philosophical discussions concerning the nature and possibility of knowledge, discussions that originate primarily in the Socratic tradition and culminate at Hellenistic times.  **Week 2: Epicurean Epistemology: Criteria of truth**  The course starts by examining in detail the attempts of Epicurean philosophers to show how perceptual and conceptual truths provide a secure foundation for certain knowledge of the kind philosophers try to attain. More specifically, we will examine the three Epicurean criteria of truth on the basis of which knowledge can be secured: preconceptions, affections and sense-impressions.  **Week 3: Epicurean Epistemology: All impressions are true**  The statement that often serves to epitomize Epicurean epistemology is usually quoted in English as "All impressions are true". Though this thesis was considered even in antiquity as an expression of naive confidence in sense-perception, and hence ridiculed or not even discussed seriously, it seems that it is more sophisticated than it first seems.  **Week 4: Epicurean Epistemology: Scientific methodology**  To arrive at knowledge of the world on the basis of their criteria of truth, the Epicureans made use of certain scientific methods of verifying or falsifying their beliefs: attestation, non-attestation, contestation, non-contestation, analogy, multiple explanation. These will be the topic of the fourth week of the course.  **Week 5: Stoic Epistemology: Common notions**  To better understand the emergence of reason in human beings the Stoics give an elaborate account of the formation of preconceptions and common notions, for which they reserve a place in their empiricist ontology. We will try to unpack the complexities in the Stoic theory of concept formation and suggest plausible readings of the ancient sources concerning the ontological status and the epistemic function of Stoic concepts.  **Week 6: Stoic Epistemology: Cognitive impressions**  According to the standard Stoic doctrine, it is cognitive impressions that constitute the criterion of truth, in the sense that their truth guarantees the truth of whatever can be known by human beings. Thus, Stoic cognitive impressions come to be thought of as the instruments for discovering the elementary truths that provide us with the foundations for human knowledge. But can human beings have cognitive impressions?  **Week 7: Stoic Epistemology: Proof**  The course on Stoic epistemology will continue with an account of the notion of scientific demonstration in Stoicism, which is meant as the method that advances scientific knowledge from the elementary truths known in virtue of cognitive impressions.  **Week 8: Stoic Epistemology: Sign inferences**  The course on Stoic epistemology will end with a discussion of the different kinds of signs used by the Hellenistic schools for the discovery of non evident truths: indicative and commemorative signs, common and peculiar signs.  **Week 9: The emergence of scepticism: Academic scepticism**  Academic Scepticism dominated Plato’s Academy from the 3rd c. to the 1st c. BCE. The Academics argued in the spirit of the Socratic elenchus against the the Stoic cognitive impressions. They led the Stoics to the conclusion that everything is inapprehensible; so, either the Stoic sage has to suspend assent (Arcesilaus), or it is necessary, even for the sage, to form beliefs (Carneades). Are these arguments totally dialectical, or do they commit the Academics to at least some theses or stances?  **Week 10: Academic responses to the inactivity (*apraxia*) objection.**  The Stoics argued that the sceptical arguments render rational and happy life and even everyday actions impossible (*apraxia*). Arcesilaus answered by arguing that actions can follow ‘the reasonable’, and Carneades by arguing that depending on the situation we follow the more convincing impressions and act rationally. Was Carneades committed to a fallibilist epistemological thesis, or was the point of presenting such a theory just to show that the Stoic ideal of wisdom is not inescapable?  **Week 11: Pyrrhonian scepticism**  In the 1st c. BCE Pyrrhonians developed a new sceptical philosophy, reacting against late Academics who espoused the view that things are inapprehensible. They called themselves σ*κεπτικοί*, underlining in this way their persistence in philosophical investigation. In contrast to the Academics, they speak for themselves and present their scepticism as an original philosophy and as a way of life. By posing the questions “Can the Pyrrhonian live his scepticism?” and “Can the Pyrrhonian have beliefs?” we will discuss the consistency and scope of Pyrrhonian scepticism.  **Week 12: Pyrrhonian investigations and arguments**  The Ten Modes and the network of the Five Modes are the tools of the Pyrrhonian investigations. But do these investigations aim at discovering the truth or do they aim solely at suspension of judgment? We will focus on the Pyrrhonian arguments according to which the Epicurean preconceptions and the Stoic common notions cannot provide us with basic truths, as well as on the Pyrrhonian general strategy against the criterion of truth. But is it possible for the Pyrrhonians to pursue any kind of philosophical investigation without a criterion of truth?  **Week 13: Ancient and modern scepticism**  The Stoic conceptual framework and the ancient sceptical arguments, as they were preserved in Sextus Empiricus and in Cicero, were rediscovered in modern era and had a crucial influence upon the rise and the development of modern philosophy and modern scepticism. However, there are crucial differences between ancient and modern scepticism: the dialectical character of sceptical arguments, the consequences that they have for everyday life, and finally conceiving scepticism as a way of life are peculiar to scepticism in antiquity. |

**(4) TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS – ASSESSMENT**

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| **TEACHING FORMAT** | Face to face, in classroom. |
| **USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES** | Learning process support through the e-class online platform. |
| **TEACHING STRUCTURE** | |  |  | | --- | --- | | ***Activity*** | ***Semester Workload*** | | Lectures, Seminars | 39 | | Presentation preparation | 21 | | Independent study | 120 | | Project (paper preparation and submission | 120 | | **Total**  (30 hours of work per credit unit) | ***300*** | |
| **STUDENT EVALUATION** | 1. Active participation in the course and presentation (20%)  2. Final take-home exam (80%)  Assessment for the course will be based on performance throughout the semester, including participation and presentation, as well as on a final take-home exam (4.000-5.000 words) |

**(5) RECOMMENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Galluzzo (eds), *Universals in Ancient Philosophy*, Pisa 2013, 255-97  S. Everson, “Epicurus on the truth of the senses”, in his *Epistemology*, Cambridge 1990, 161-83  D.K. Glidden, “Epicurean *prolepsis*”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 3 (1985), 175-218  K. Ierodiakonou, “The notion of *enargeia* in Hellenistic philosophy”, in B. Morison & K. Ierodiakonou(eds), *Episteme etc.: Essays in Honour of Jonathan Barnes*, Oxford 2011, 60-73  D. Konstan, ‘Commentary on Morel’, *Proceedings of the Boston Areaolloquium in Ancient Philosophy* XXIII (2008), 49-55  P.-M. Morel, “Method and evidence: On Epicurean preconception”, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* XXIII (2008), 25-48  D. Sedley, “Epicurus on the common sensibles”, in P.M. Huby & G.C. Neale (eds.), *The Criterion of Truth*, Liverpool 1987, 123-36  G. Striker, “Epicurus on the truth of sense-impressions”, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 59 (1977), 125-42  C.C.W. 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Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, Cambridge 2003, 206-33  V. Caston, “Something and nothing: The Stoics on concepts and universals”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 17 (1999), 145-213  T. Ebert, “The origin of the Stoic theory of signs in Sextus Empiricus”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 5 (1987) 83-126  M. Frede, “Stoics and skeptics on clear and distinct impressions”, in his *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, Oxford 1989, 151-76  M. Frede, “The Stoic notion of a *lekton*”, in S. Everson (ed.), *Epistemology*, Cambridge 1990, 109-28  M. Frede, “The Stoic conception of reason”, in K. Boudouris (ed.), *Hellenistic Philosophy*, Athens 1993-4, vol. II, 50-63  M. Frede, “Stoic epistemology”, in K. Algra et al. (eds), *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic* *Philosophy*, Cambridge 1999, 295-322  J.-B. Gourinat, *La dialectique des stoïciens*, Paris 2000  R. J. Hankinson, “Stoic epistemology”, in B. 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Morison, Benjamin, "Sextus Empiricus", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/sextus-empiricus/>. |