**COURSE OUTLINE**

**(1) GENERAL**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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** | 105 | | **SEMESTER OF STUDY** | 2nd | |
| **COURSE TITLE** | Philosophy of Late Antiquity | | | | |
| **INSTRUCTOR(S)** | George Karamanolis | | | | |
| **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)** | ++ | | | | |

**(2) LEARNING OUTCOMES**

|  |
| --- |
| **Learning Outcomes** |
| The topic of this course is Principles in later ancient Platonism and in particular how they conceived of matter as a principle. More specifically, we will examine how Platonists tend to make sense of Plato’s search for principles in works such as the Republic, the Timaeus and the Parmenides,. Students are advised to read these dialogues in advance, especially the Timaeus.  Upon successful completion of the course, students:   * will have gained familiarity with ancient Platonist tradition and the different varieties of Platonism * will be able to appreciate central metaphysical questions addressed in Plato’s works * will be able to appreciate different exegetical strategies employed by ancient Platonists * will develop an understanding of later ancient philosophy and the different ways of philosophizing at that time * will develop their writing skills and their argumentative skills. |
| **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**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| In this seminar we will focus on the topic of principles in later ancient Platonism and we will concentrate especially on the role that matter plays as principle of the world. Once Platonists turned their attention to the *Timaeus* at the end of the 1st c. BCE and especially in the 1st CE with figures like Eudorus, Plutarch, and Moderatus, they were confronted with the problem of which the principles of the world-order, the *kosmos*, are in Plato’s work and how they relate to each other. One such principle is the divine demiurge (*Tim*. 28ab), an intellect, that is presented as the main principle of the world’s coming into being (*Tim*. 29e4), and as the principle of order and goodness. Platonists follow Aristotle’s identification of Plato’s receptacle with matter (*Physics* I.9) and they acknowledge also matter as a principle (Plutarch, *De animae procreation in Timaeo* 1013C, Numenius fr. 52 Des Places, Alcinous, *Didasc*. 162.24-163, Apuleius, *De Platone et ejus dogmate* I.5). The issue that arises is whether matter indeed qualifies as a principle next to the divine demiurge, and if this is the case, how exactly it relates to the demiurge. In the *Timaeus* the receptacle is presented as a cause that is independent of God the demiurge and the latter collaborates with it in order to bring the world about. But it is quite open how this collaboration works and can be conceived.  One important philosophical question here is how God the demiurge, an intellect that accounts for the goodness and order of the world, can possibly need a principle such as matter, which is intrinsically chaotic and indefinite (*Tim.* 48a, 51ab) in order to bring the world about. If we take the *Timaeus* literally on this, we will end up assuming that God’s power, ability, and authority is limited. Platonists such as Eudorus, Moderatus and Neopythagorean Platonists proposed a monistic view, according to which matter is, in one or the other way, derivative from the demiurgic intellect of the *Timaeus*. Other Platonists, though, like Plutarch, Numenius, and Atticus resisted this tendency and assumed two principles, God and matter, or three principles, God, matter and the Forms (Alcinous). They take matter to be uncreated and coeternal with God and argue that each principle accounts for one side of the world, God for order and goodness, matter for disorder and evil, respectively. They tend to argue that it is absurd to derive matter from God, given how disparate the two are. Dualists like Plutarch inevitably compromise God’s authority and power, despite their argument that God has a far greater power than matter and is in a position to put limits to it.  Matter remains an issue for the next generation of Platonists. Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus invest much energy on this issue and disagree with each other on what matter is and how it operates causally. Christian philosophers such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa inherit the difficulties that beset ancient Platonism to the extent that they also assume a demiurgic intellect. They tend to adopt a monistic view, arguing that matter as such is not a principle but only God is. And they tend to argue that matter is an epiphenomenon resulting from the combination of forms, a strategy that we find in Porphyry and Gregory of Nyssa.  Matter is not the only issue in this regard. The other relevant issue is the nature of God. Is the demiurge of the *Timaeus* the source of all being? Should we, then, identify him with the Form of the Good of *Republic* 508e-509b, which is the source of being (509b)? But how can this be possible if the demiurge carries with himself the Forms, the *paradeigma* of *Timaeus* 27ab, and thinks of them as models of everything that is to be created? For the Form of the Good is not just another Form like all others but the source of all Forms. Some Platonists maintain then that the demiurge of the *Timaeus* is not the highest principle, despite the fact that he is good (*Tim*. 29a), but there is above him the Form of the Good, from which the goodness of the demiurge derives. Besides, they argue, the demiurge as an intellect is a complex entity, while the Form of the Good is utterly simple and must be ontologically prior. Some Platonists distinguish, then, between a principle of being (Form of Good) and a principle of becoming (the demiurge), while others conflate the two -Numenius and Plotinus belong to the former group, Plutarch and Atticus to the latter. The former scheme of principles is hierarchical, while the latter is not. The former prioritizes unity and simplicity over plurality and complexity but creates the problem of how the hierarchical scheme of principles works. The latter avoids that question but it does not sufficiently account for the unity of the world, if the highest principle is not utterly simple.  In the seminar we will first look at the main passages of Plato’s work that give rise to this discussion from the *Timaeus,* the *Republic* and the *Parmenides*. Then we will move to ancient Platonists starting with Eudorus, Moderatus, and Plutarch, moving to Numenius and Plotinus. We will also consider some relevant early Christian texts, mainly from Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, who are informed of from the debates of Platonists and they set out to avoid their problems.  **Week 1**: **Ιntroduction to the Philosophy of Late Antiquity. Principles in Platonism**  Reading: M. Frede, “Epilogue”, in K. Algra et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Cambridge 1999, 771-797,  G. Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, London 2021 (2nd ed.), ch. 2, 55-65  Reference work: L. Gerson (ed.), *History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2010  **Week 2: Principles in Plato’s *Timaeus***  D. Zeyl, “Plato’s *Timaeus*”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online  T. Johansen, “The *Timaeus* on the Principles of Cosmology”, in G. Fine (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, Oxford 2011, 463-483  G. Karamanolis, “Does Plato Advance a Bundle Theory in the *Timaeus*?”, in C. Jorgenson et al. (eds.), *Plato’s Timaeus. Proceedings of the Tenth Symposium Platonicum Pragense*, Leiden 2015, 149-168  G. van Riel, “Matter does not Matter: On the Status of Bodies in the *Timaeus* (30a-32b and 53c-61c), in C. Jorgenson et al. (eds.), *Plato’s Timaeus. Proceedings …*Leiden 2015, 169-186  **Week 3: Principles in the *Republic*. The Forms and the Form of the Good**  T. Penner, “The Forms in the *Republic*”, in G. Santas (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Plato’s Republic*, Oxford, Blackwell, 234-262  G. Santas, “The Form of the Good in Plato’s *Republic*”, *Philosophical Inquiry* 2 (1980), 374-403  D. Sedley, “An Introduction to Plato’s theory of Forms”, Royal Institute of Philosophy Department 78 (2016), 3-22.  **Week 4: Plato’s *Parmenides***  S. Peterson, “The *Parmenides*”, in in G. Fine (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, Oxford 2011, 383-410  E. Dodds, “The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One”, *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928), 129-142  **Week 5: Eudorus, Moderatus, Plutarch**  Texts: Fragments and testimonies of Eudorus and Moderatus, Plutarch, *On the generation of soul in Timaeus*, *On Isis and Osiris*  Literature: J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, London 1996 (2nd ed.), 114-135, 184-230, 344-351  G. Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to AD 250. An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation*, Cambridge 2018  G. Karamanolis, “Plutarch”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online, revised version December 2024  **Week 6: Numenius and Atticus**  Texts: Numenius’ fragments, Atticus’ fragments (E. Des Places, Les Belles Lettres)  J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, London 1996 (2nd ed.), 247-257, 361-378  G. Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to AD 250.*  G. Karamanolis, “Numenius”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online, revised version, October 2024  **Week 7: Alcinous**  Text: Alcinous’ *Didascalicos*, chs. 8-12  Literature J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, London 1996 (2nd ed.), 267-305  J. Dillon, *Alcinous. The Handbook of Platonism*, Oxford 1993  **Week 8:** **Plotinus**  Texts: *Ennead* II.4 and III.8  Literature: D. O’Meara, *Plotinus an Introduction to the Enneads*, Oxford 1993  D. O’Brien, “Plotinus on Matter and Evil’, in L.P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 171-195  J. Philipps, “Plotinus on the Generation of Matter”, *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 3 (2009), 103-137  C. Wildberg, “A World of thoughts: Plotinus on nature and contemplation. (*Enn.* III.8 [30] 1-6”, in R. Chiaradonna – F. Trabattoni (eds.), *Physics and Philosophy of Nature in Greek Neoplatonism*, Leiden 2009, 121-144.  **Week 9:** **Plotinus**  Text: *Ennead* V.1  Literature: E. Perl, *Plotinus Ennead V.1. On the Three Primary Levels of Reality*, Las Vegas 2016  D. O’Meara, *Plotinus an Introduction to the Enneads*, Oxford 1993  **Week 10**: **Origen**  Texts: *On Principles* book 1, Commentary on John book 1  Literature: G. Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, London 2021 (2nd ed.), 75-80  G. Boys-Stones, “Time, Creation and the Mind of God: The Afterlife of a Platonist Theory in Origen”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 40 (2011), 319-337  **Week 11:** Porphyry and Gregory of Nyssa on Matter  Texts: Porphyry fragments, Gregory of Nyssa *Apology for Hexameron*, *On the Creation of Man*  Literature: G. Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, London 2021 (2nd ed.), 84-88  Gerd Van Riel - Thomas Wauters, “Gregory of Nyssa’s Theory of Matter,”  Journal of Early Christian Studies, 28 (2020), 395-421  D. Hibbs, “Was Gregory of Nyssa a Berkeleyan Idealist?,” British Journal of Philosophy, 13 (2005), 425-435  J. Hill, “Gregory of Nyssa, Material Substance and Berkeleyan Idealism,” British Journal of Philosophy, 17 (2009), 653-683  **Week 12:** Proclus on matter  Text: Proclus, *On the Existence of Evils*  J. Opsomer – C. Steel, *Proclus on the Existence of Evils*, London 2003  Literature : J. Opsomer, “Proclus vs. Plotinus on Matter (*De mal. Subs*. 30-7)”, *Phronesis* 46 (2001), 154-188  J. Opsomer, “Some Problems with Plotinus’ Theory of Matter/Evil. An Ancient Debate Continued”, *Quaestio* 7 (2007), 165-189  **Week 13**: Essay Presentations |  |  |

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TEACHING FORMAT** | Face to face, in classroom and online |
| **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 (50%)  2. Final essay (50%)  [Assessment for the course will be based on performance throughout the semester, including participation and presentation, as well as a final essay. The presentations may serve as the foundation for the final essay, which is expected to be 6,000-9,000 words in length (including notes, but not the bibliography).] |