**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 | | | | |
| **STUDY LEVEL** | Postgraduate | | | | |
| **COURSE CODE** | 109 | | **SEMESTER OF STUDY** | 1st | |
| **COURSE TITLE** | Truth and Falsehood in Ancient Philosophy | | | | |
| **INSTRUCTOR(S)** | Eleni Kaklamanou | | | | |
| **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** | N/A | | | | |
| **COURSE WEBSITE (URL)** | ++ | | | | |

**(2) LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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| The course has the following objectives:   * to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of how truth, falsehood, lying, and deception were conceptualized in ancient Greek philosophy, and how these ideas continue to be relevant in contemporary discussions; * to encourage students to critically examine the different arguments and develop their own interpretations; * to deepen students' understanding of diverse philosophical views and interpretive methods; * to give students the opportunity to support their opinions and critique the work of their peers.   Upon successful completion of the course, students:   * will understand and articulate the various conceptions of truth and falsehood in ancient Greek philosophy; * will analyze the ethical implications of lying and deception as discussed by ancient philosophers; * will critically assess different arguments about the nature of truth and falsehood; * will engage in informed debates about these arguments, using evidence from primary texts and secondary scholarship. |
| **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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| This course explores the concepts of truth, falsehood, lying, and deception within the context of ancient Greek philosophy. Through a close reading of key texts, we will engage with ancient debates on the nature of truth and falsehood, the ethics of lying, and the role of deception and self-deception in human life. It also addresses broader themes such as the relationship between truth and justice, the ethical implications of deception in political life, and the tension between truth and persuasion in rhetoric.  **Course requirements:** This course is collaboration between all participants. You will be regularly called upon to actively participate in class discussions and other activities. Accordingly, you are expected to read the weekly assignments (see suggested readings) and to prepare a project description (2 pages, outline of the final essay, including research question and working thesis (no later than week 7) and a final essay (see Student Evaluation).  **Week 1: Introduction to the key themes**  Truth, falsehood, belief, knowledge, lying and deception. The significance of truth and falsehood in philosophical inquiry. The early Greek concept of truth.  Suggested readings:  Szaif, J. (2018) ‘Plato and Aristotle on Truth and Falsehood’, in Glanzberg, M. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 9-15.  Cole, T. (1983) ‘Archaic Truth’, *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, 64, pp. 7-28.  **Week 2: Parmenides and Xenophanes**  In early Greek philosophy, two interrelated ideas emerge, fostering an interest in the concept of truth. Xenophanes emphasizes the limitations of human knowledge and the ongoing pursuit of truth, while Parmenides contrasts an unchanging, logically knowable truth with the misleading world of appearances. One of the issues to deal with is the problem of certainty in knowledge.  Suggested readings:  Kirk, G.S., Raven, J.E. and Schofield, M. (1983) *The Presocratic Philosophers*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 163-181, 263-285  **Week 3: The sophistic challenge: Gorgias**  Gorgias adopts a deeply skeptical view of truth and falsehood, challenging the existence of truth, the capacity to know it, and the ability to convey it. Instead, he highlights the power of persuasion in influencing beliefs, making falsehood just as influential as truth in human interactions.  Topics for discussion: Does Gorgias believe that humans are inherently incapable of understanding truth, or is it a problem with the methods we use? What is the role of falsehood in Gorgias' view of human interactions? What are the ethical implications of his view on rhetoric and falsehood?  Suggested readings:  Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*  Segal, C.P. (1962) ‘Gorgias and the Psychology of the Logos’, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 66, pp. 99-155.  **Week 4: Self-knowledge, Self-Deception and Ignorance**  This week, we explore Socrates' views on ignorance, self-deception, and the importance of the examined life, particularly as presented in the *Apology* and Xenophon's *Memorabilia.* Part of the discussion is the dangers of ignorance and self-deception in ethical decision-making.  Topics for discussion: How does self-deception relate to Socratic ignorance? How does Socrates view the relationship between knowledge and virtue?  Suggested readings:  Plato’s *Apology*  Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* 4.2  **Week 5: Another Challenge: *Hippias Minor***  In the *Hippias Minor*, Socrates challenges the sophist Hippias by discussing whether a person who lies intentionally is better or worse than someone who lies unintentionally. This discussion leads to a paradoxical conclusion, where Socrates argues that the person who lies intentionally is actually better than the one who lies unintentionally. This raises the question of whether having the ability to lie effectively (because one knows the truth) makes one morally superior, or at least more capable, than someone who lies out of ignorance.  Topics for discussion: Does knowing the truth make one more morally responsible when lying? What is the role of ignorance in determining moral blameworthiness? What is the relationship between skill and morality in the context of lying?  Suggested readings:  *Hippias Minor*  **Week 6: *Theaetetus* Part I: Plato vs Protagoras**  Over the next three weeks (6-8), the focus is on two platonic dialogues, the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*. In these two dialogues, Plato examines the nature of truth and falsehood, exploring the complexities of knowledge, belief, and reality. In the *Theaetetus*, he challenges relativistic views of truth and tackles the difficulties of defining knowledge and accounting for false beliefs. In the *Sophist*, he provides a more nuanced metaphysical framework, explaining how falsehood can arise and differentiating the sophist's deceptive practices from the philosopher's genuine pursuit of truth.    Suggested readings:  *Theaetetus* 151d-160e  **Week 7: *Theaetetus* Part II*:*  On False Belief**  One of the central puzzles in the *Theaetetus* is how false belief is possible at all. Plato presents a problem that arises when trying to explain how someone can mistake one thing for another. If a person believes that X is Y, how can they think something false if they must know both X and Y to make the comparison? If they know both, how could they confuse them? Further, Plato raises the issue that believing something false might involve "judging what is not." This prompts the question: how can one think about or believe in something that is false if what they believe in does not exist? How can non-being or falsity be the object of thought?  Suggested readings:  *Theaetetus* 187d-201c  \* Paper abstract due (2 pages, excluding bibliography)  **Week 8: Plato’s *Sophist* on Falsehood**  The main problem Plato addresses in the *Sophist* is how it is possible to talk about or think something that "is not." Parmenides had argued that non-being is unthinkable and unsayable because to speak or think about something implies that it exists in some way. This creates a paradox: if false statements refer to things that are not true, how can they even exist as thoughts or statements? How can we make sense of the idea of falsehood if it seems to rely on non-being, which does not exist?  Suggested readings:  *Sophist* 236d-245e, 260a-268d  **Week 9: Truth, Lies and Deception in Plato’s *Republic***  Plato’s treatment of lying and deception in the *Republic* could well be argued as paradoxical. On one hand, he condemns lies as inherently harmful and corrupting to both the soul and society. On the other hand, he acknowledges that in certain cases, such as the "noble lie," deception might be necessary to maintain social order and harmony. This dual perspective on lying reflects Plato's broader philosophical inquiry into the tension between truth and lies and deception, challenging readers to consider the ethical complexities of deception.  Topics for discussion: Does the "noble lie" undermine Plato's commitment to truth and justice? How does Plato address (or fail to address) the risks associated with allowing rulers to determine when deception is acceptable? How does Plato's treatment of lying reflect the tension between philosophy and politics?  Suggested readings:  *Republic* 282a-e, 414b-415c  **Week 10: Aristotle on truth and falsehood**  This week we examine Aristotle’s definition of truth and falsehood and the claim that it is an early expression of the correspondence theory of truth.  Topics for discussion: Can all Statements be classified as True or False? How do we handle contradictions and paradoxes? How do we evaluate truth in non-factual discourses?  Suggested readings:  *Metaphysics* IV.7, VI.4, IX.10  **Week 11: Aristotle on Truth and the Ethics of Lying**  In *Nicomachean Ethics* Book IV.7 Aristotle presents truthfulness as an intellectual and moral virtue essential to ethical life. He argues that truthfulness is a mean between boastfulness and self-deprecation, promoting sincerity and integrity.  Topics for discussion: What role does sincerity play in Aristotle's concept of truthfulness? What challenges might arise in practicing truthfulness according to Aristotle's conception? How does truthfulness relate to Aristotle’s intellectual virtues, particularly *phronesis* (practical wisdom)?  Suggested readings:  *Nicomachean Ethics* IV.7  **Week 12 : Epicurus on Truth and Falsehood**  In the penultimate meeting, we examine Epicurus’ views on truth and falsehood.  Topics for discussion: What were his concepts of truth and falsehood, and how did he explain them? According to his perspective, what does it mean for something to be true or false, and what aspects of the world determine this?  Suggested readings:  Brown, A. (2016) ‘Epicurus on Truth and Falsehood’, *Phronesis*, 61, pp. 463-50.  **Week 13: Essay presentations**  Essay presentations and discussion. |

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

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| **TEACHING FORMAT** | Face to face, in classroom.  Questions should ideally be brought to me in person, either at meeting or during my office hours.  If you would prefer to correspond via email, my email address is kaklamanel@uoc.gr. I will respond to emails within one business day. |
| **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 class (20%) 2. Abstract (20%) 3. Presentation (20%) 4. Final essay (40%)   [Assessment for the course will be based on performance throughout the semester, including participation and presentation, as well as final essay (including an essay abstract no later than week 7). The presentations and abstracts may serve as the foundation for the final essay, which is expected to be 5,000-6,000 words in length (including notes, but not the bibliography).] |

**(5) RECOMMENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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| **Α. Primary Sources:**  Barnes, J. (ed.) (1984) *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vols. I and II. Princeton: Princeton University Press.  Cooper, J.M. (ed.) (1997) *Plato: Complete Works*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.  Coxon, A.H. (2009) *The Fragments of Parmenides: A Critical Text with Introduction and Translation, the Ancient Testimonia, and a Commentary*. Edited and with new translations by Richard McKirahan. Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing.  Diels, H. and Kranz, W. (1974) *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. 3 vols. Original edn. 1903; reprint of 6th edn., Berlin: Weidmann.  Kirk, G.S., Raven, J.E. and Schofield, M. (1983) *The Presocratic Philosophers*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  Lesher, J. (1992) *Xenophanes of Colophon: Fragments*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.  Long, A.A. and Sedley, D.N. (1987) *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  Top of Form  Bottom of Form  **Β. Secondary Bibliography:**  Ahbel-Rappe, S. and Kamtekar, R. (eds.) (2005) *A Companion to Socrates*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.  Allen, B. (1995) *Truth in Philosophy*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.  Asmis, E. (1984) *Epicurus’ Scientific Method*. Ithaca, New York. ——— (1999) ‘Epicurean Epistemology’, in Algra, K., Barnes, J., Mansfeld, J., and Schofield, M. (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 260–94.  Baima, N.R. (2017) ‘*Republic* 382a–d: On the Dangers and Benefits of Falsehood’, *Classical Philology*, 112(1), pp. 1-19.  Barnes, J. (2007) *Truth, Etc.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.  Beversluis, J. (2000) *Cross-Examining Socrates: A Defense of the Interlocutors in Plato’s Early Dialogues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  Blake, H. (2003) ‘A “Conception” of Truth in Plato’s *Sophist*’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 41(1), pp. 1-24.  Bondeson, W. (1972) ‘Plato’s *Sophist*: Falsehoods and Images’, *Apeiron*, 6(2), pp. 1-6.  Brown, A. (2016) ‘Epicurus on Truth and Falsehood’, *Phronesis*, 61, pp. 463-50.  Brown, L. (2008) ‘The *Sophist* on Statements, Predication, and Falsehood’, in G. Fine (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 437-62.  Meibauer, J. (ed.) (2018) *The Oxford Handbook of Lying*. Oxford: Oxford University Pres  Cole, T. (1983) ‘Archaic Truth’, *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, 64, pp. 7-28.  Crivelli, P. (2012) *Plato’s Account of Falsehood: A Study of the Sophist*. Cambridge: Cambridge UniversityPress. ——— (2004) *Aristotle on Truth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  Culverhouse, Z. (2021) *Plato's Hippias Minor: The Play of Ambiguity*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.  Curd, P. and Graham, D.W. (eds.) (2008) *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.  Davidson, D. (1996) ‘The Folly of Trying to Define Truth’, *Journal of Philosophy*, 93(6), pp. 263-78.  Denyer, N. (1991) *Language, Truth and Falsehood*. Cambridge: Routledge.  Dombrowski, D. (1997) ‘Plato’s Noble Lie’, *History of Political Thought*, 18(4), pp. 565-578.  Everson, S. (ed.) (1990) *Companions to Ancient Thought 1: Epistemology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  Finkelberg, A. (1999) ‘Being, Truth and Opinion in Parmenides’, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 81, pp. 233-48.  Fine, G. (1979) ‘False Belief in the *Theaetetus*’, *Phronesis*, 24(1), pp. 70-80.  Frede, M. (1992) ‘Plato’s *Sophist* on False Statements’, in Kraut, R. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 397–424.  Gorgias (1982) *Encomium of Helen*. Trans. Douglas MacDowell. Glasgow: Bristol Classics.  Hesk, J. (2000) *Deception and Democracy in Classical Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  Ierodiakonou, K. (2011) ‘The Notion of Enargeia in Hellenistic Philosophy’, in Morison, B. and Ierodiakonou, K. (eds.) *Episteme, Etc.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 60–73.  Irwin, T. (1977) *Plato’s Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  Künne, W. (2003) *Conceptions of Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  Lesher, J.H. (1978) ‘Xenophanes’ Scepticism’, *Phronesis*, 23(1), pp. 1-28.  Matthen, M. (1983) ‘Greek Ontology and the “Is” of Truth’, *Phronesis*, 28, pp. 113-35.  McDowell, J. (1982) ‘Falsehood and Not-Being in Plato’s *Sophist*’, in Schofield, M. and Nussbaum, M. (eds.) *Language and Logos: Studies in Ancient Greek Philosophy Presented to G. E. L. Owen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 115-134.  Nieuwenburg, P. (2004) ‘Learning to Deliberate: Aristotle on Truthfulness and Public Deliberation’, *Political Theory*, 32(4), pp. 449-467.  Page, C. (1991) ‘The Truth About Lies in Plato’s Republic’, *Ancient Philosophy*, 11, pp. 1-33.  Rangos, S. (2009) ‘Falsity and the False in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Δ’, *Rhizai: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science*, 6(1), pp. 7-21.  Rudebusch, G. (1990) ‘Does Plato Think False Speech is Speech?’, *Noûs*, 24(4), pp. 599-609.  Schofield, M. (2006) *Plato: Political Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.  Sedley, D. (2004) *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato's Theaetetus*. New York: Oxford University Press.  Segal, C.P. (1962) ‘Gorgias and the Psychology of the Logos’, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 66, pp. 99-155.  Szaif, J. (2018) ‘Plato and Aristotle on Truth and Falsehood’, in Glanzberg, M. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 9-49.  Taylor, C.C.W. (1980) ‘“All Perceptions Are True”’, in Schofield, M., Burnyeat, M., and Barnes, J. (eds.) *Doubt and Dogmatism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 105-124.  Thanassas, P. (2011) ‘Parmenidean Dualisms’, in Cordero, N.-L. (ed.) *Parmenides, Venerable and Awesome*. Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, pp. 289-308.  Thorp, J. (1982) ‘Aristotle on Being and Truth’, *De Philosophia*, 3, pp. 1-9.  Weiss, R. (1981) ‘Expert Knowledge in the *Apology* and the *Laches*: What a General Needs to Know’, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 3, pp. 79-115.  Williams, D. (2013) ‘Plato's Noble Lie: From Kallipolis to Magnesia’, *History of Political Thought*, 34(3), pp. 363-392.  Wolfgang, F. (1966) ‘On the Concept of Truth’, in Moran, D. (trans.) *The True and the Evident*. London: Routledge.  Woodruff, P. (1999) ‘Rhetoric and Relativism: Protagoras and Gorgias’, in Wardy, R. and Woodruff, P. (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 290–310.  Zembaty, J.S. (1988) ‘Plato's Republic and Greek Morality on Lying’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 26(4), pp. 517-545. ——— (1993) ‘Aristotle on Lying’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy,* 31(1), pp. 7-29.  **C. Resources on the Web:**   1. Perseus Digital Library: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper> 2. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/> 3. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://iep.utm.edu/> 4. JSTOR: <https://www.jstor.org> 5. Project Muse: <https://muse.jhu.edu/> 6. Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: <https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/> 7. Oxford Bibliographies: <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/> |