**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** | I | | **SEMESTER OF STUDY** | 2nd | |
| **COURSE TITLE** | Early Greek Philosophy: The Cosmological Debate | | | | |
| **INSTRUCTOR(S)** | Stavros Kouloumentas | | | | |
| **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/PHS581/> | | | | |

**(2) LEARNING OUTCOMES**

|  |
| --- |
| **Learning Outcomes** |
|  |
| The course analyses how early Greek philosophers conceptualised the cosmos as an orderly system and debated on problems pertaining to existence, cause, change, time and space. The following questions will be addressed: Why a vast array of natural phenomena are reduced to a single or a few principles (substances, opposites, personified forces) in most philosophical systems? What sort of laws govern the relationship between these principles? How the large-scale processes form and affect living beings? What sort of argumentative strategies are used in illustrating the structure, development and functioning of the cosmos? How each philosopher criticises his predecessors and attempts to overcome their doctrinal failures? Seminars offer a close examination of the relevant theories of the key figures (Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles, Democritus) and concentrate on topics to which they contributed significantly.  The course has the following objectives:  1. to introduce students to the study of fragmentarily preserved texts that have been transmitted and interpreted by later philosophers;  2. to encourage students to critically examine the earliest pieces of rational thinking and develop their own interpretations;  3. to deepen students' understanding of diverse philosophical practices and interpretive methods;  4. to offer students the opportunity to defend their judgements and evaluate the work of their peers;  5. to help students to enhance their skills by presenting and completing an essay.  Upon successful completion of the course, students:  1. will close reading and interpretation of philosophical texts;  2. will be able to understand how key concepts such as being and becoming, accident and design, movement and rest were first formed and debated;  3. will be familiar with the main philosophical questions raised and the various arguments formulated during sixth and fifth centuries BC;  4. will comprehend the main features of early Greek philosophy (fruitful exchange of ideas, diversity, interaction with other intellectual fields) that paves the way for the emergence of the philosophical systems of the classical era;  5. will acquaint themselves with the ideas, terminology and exegetical tools of Peripatetic and Neoplatonic authors who comment on their predecessors. |
| **General Skills** |
| * Independent work * Teamwork * Work in an international environment * Generating new research ideas * Exercise criticism and self-criticism * Promotion of free, creative and inductive thinking |

**(3) COURSE CONTENT**

|  |
| --- |
| **1. Introduction**  The first seminar offers an introduction to early Greek philosophy. We discuss the meaning of the common term "Presocratic", the hetergeneity and novelty of early philosophers and the basic features of their inquiry. Special emphasis is laid on the extant sources (the distinction between testimonies and fragments, the importance of the context, the collections of Presocratic texts) and the key figures (Aristotle, Theophrastus, Simplicius) who transmit and interpret them, as well as on the various forms of philosophical accounts (treatises, poems, maxims).  Suggested reading: Kahn 2003; Laks 2018; Vernant 1962.  **2. The pre-scientific world-view: Hesiod's *Theogony***  In this seminar we attempt to sketch out the pre-scientific world-view by examining Hesiod's *Theogony*, a typical example of the various mytho-poetic accounts that circulated in archaic Greece. We analyse the Hesiodic ideas about the origin of the gods, the creation and organisation of the cosmos as a result of the divine struggles, as well as the order established by Zeus and examine to what extent they preconceive philosophical concepts.  Suggested reading: Buxton 1999; KRS 1983: 7-46; West 1966.  **3. Anaximander I: the birth of philosophy and science**  Anaximander constitutes the earliest known philosopher who authored a treatise *On Nature* that included an elaborate theory about the structure, development and functioning of the cosmos*.* We discuss how this work differs from Hesiod's *Theogony* and provides a different view of how the cosmos is created and organised. The topics examined include the stages of the cosmogonic process, the symmetrical arrangement of the celestial rings and the stability of the earth.  Suggested reading: Kahn 1960: 3-165; KRS 1983: 100-17, 130-42.  **4. Anaximander II: the cosmos governed by law**  Anaximander conceives the cosmos as an orderly system governed by law-like norms. In this seminar we analyse these norms (physical necessity, reciprocity, equilibrium) in connection with the protagonists of Anaximander's system: the infinite, the innumerable worlds generated and destroyed, and the main pair of opposites.  Suggested reading: Kahn 1960: 166-239; KRS 1983: 117-30.  **5. Heraclitus I: *logos*, strife, justice, the wise**  We focus on a nexus of supplementary concepts that depict the dynamics of the Heraclitean system where opposite forces fight against each other, thus maintaining the overall balance. In analysing the relevant fragments, we examine to what extent Heraclitus criticises or builds upon Anaximander and what sort of models (polarity and analogy) he employs to diffuse his doctrines.    Suggested reading: Kahn 1979; Kirk 1954; Marcovich 2001.  **6. Heraclitus II: fire**  We discuss how the different functions of fire illustrate the Heraclitean ideas about the organisation of the cosmos: fire as a material substratum of elemental changes; fire as a symbol of the deep unity between life and death; fire as an intelligent and omnipotent principle; fire as a stuff of human soul that mirrors the cosmic processes. In analysing theses ideas, we also examine how religious concepts, especially Zeus and the Erinyes, are connected with fire and are rationalised.  Suggested reading: Wiggins 1982; KRS 1983: 197-208; Finkelberg 1986.  **7. Parmenides I: the *Way of Truth***  The *Way of Truth* offers a demonstrative argument for the unchangeable ontological status of what-is which undermines the Ionian attempts to describe the cosmos as a dynamic battlefield where all things undergo change. We deal with the logical rules and the arguments formulated by Parmenides and examine the different interpretations proposed about his monism from antiquity to modern era.  Suggested reading: Mourelatos 2008; Coxon 2009.  **8. Parmenides II: the *Way of Seeming***  In the *Way of Seeming* Parmenides’ primary intention is to expound the best possible cosmology in terms of the mixture of the two cosmic opposites that play the leading role in the proem. We discuss how this dualistic description of the cosmos supplements the *Way of Truth* and investigate to what extent provides a faithful explanation of natural phenomena.  Suggested reading: Owen 1960; Palmer 2020.  **9. Empedocles I: the cosmic cycle**  Empedocles’ cosmology can be interpreted as an attempt to accommodate Parmenides’ rejection of all kinds of change to the undeniable fact that everything appears to be in a state of constant flux, as suggested by Heraclitus. We examine the cosmic protagonists, the norms that govern their relationship and the cyclical development of the cosmos from rest to movement and *vice* *versa*.  Suggested reading: O'Brien 1969: 1-195; Wright 1995.  **10. Empedocles II: zoogony**  We examine how various life-forms emerge, develop and vanish during the cosmic cycle and are affected by the grand-scale changes. Special emphasis is laid on the sequence of the zoogonic stages and the creative roles assigned to Love and Strife. The relevant fragments are studied by taking into account Aristotle’s criticism of Empedocles' theory of evolution.  Suggested reading: O'Brien 1969: 196-236; Sedley 2007: 31-74.  **11. Democritus I: the atoms and the void**  This seminar turns to the foundation of the atomist tradition. We focus on the mechanistic conception of the cosmos, as formulated by Democritus, and discuss his contribution to the cosmological debate. More specifically, we analyse how the void hypothesis constitutes a response to the Parmenidean arguments, how the tiny particles differ from each other, and how the infinite worlds are shaped.  Suggested reading: Taylor 1999; Berryman 2023.  **12. Democritus II: the human civilization**  The seminar examines Democritus' theory of the origins of human civilization (language, religion, politics) which was incorporated in his cosmogony. We investigate whether Democritus suggests analogies between the formation of the cosmos and the human society. His narrative is contrasted to Hesiod's myth of the five races and is compared to other accounts (Archelaus, Protagoras, Prodicus) that envisage a progression in the history of humankind.  Suggested reading: Betegh 2016; Cole 1967.  **13. Essay presentations**  In the final seminar students will present their essays. |

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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 (20%)  2. Presentation (20 %)  3. Final essay (60%)  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 4,000-5,000 words in length (including notes, but not the bibliography). Each weekly session includes a series of questions which serve as the background for the seminar discussion. Students may use one of these questions as the basis of their own essay. Alternatively, students are encouraged to form their own essay topic, which must be agreed with the relevant course tutor. |

**(5) RECOMMENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

|  |
| --- |
| **Α. Primary Sources:**  1. Diels, H. 1879. *Doxographi Graeci*. Berlin.  2. Diels, H. and W. Kranz 1951-2. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und deutsch*, vols. I-III, sixth edition. Berlin.  3. Graham, D. W. 2010. *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy. The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*. Cambridge.  4. Kirk, G. S., J. E. Raven and M. Schofield 1983. *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, 2nd edition. Cambridge.  5. Laks, A. and G. W. Most 2016. *Early Greek Philosophy*, vol. I: *Introductory and Reference Materials*; vol. II: *Beginnings and Early Ionian Thinkers*, part 1; vol. III: *Early Ionian Thinkers*, part 2; vol. IV: *Western Greek Thinkers*, part1; vol. V: *Western Greek Thinkers*, part2; vol. VI: *Later Ionian and Athenian Thinkers*, part 1; vol. VII: *Later Ionian and Athenian Thinkers*, part 2. Cambridge MA.  **Β. Secondary Bibliography:**  1. Barnes, J. 1982. *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd edition. London, New York.  2. Betegh, G. 2016. ‘Archelaus on Cosmogony and the Origins of Social Institutions’, *OSAP* 51: 1-40.  3. Buxton, R. (ed.) 1999. *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*. Oxford.  4. Cole, T. 1967. *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology*. Cleveland.  5. Coxon, A. 2009. *The Fragments of Parmenides: A Critical Text with Introduction, Translation, the Ancient Testimonia and a Commentary*, 2nd edition. Las Vegas, Zurich, Athens.  6. Curd, P. and D. W. Graham (eds.) 2008. *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*. Oxford, New York.  7. Finkelberg, A. 1998. ‘On Cosmogony and Ecpyrosis in Heraclitus’, *AJPh* 119: 195-222.  8. Guthrie, W. K. C. 1962-5. *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. I: *The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans* (1962); vol.II: *The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus* (1965). Cambridge.  9. Kahn, C. H. 1960. *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*. New York, London.  10. Kahn, C. H. 1979. *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary*. Cambridge.  11. Kahn, C. H. 2003. ‘Writing Philosophy: Prose and Poetry from Thales to Plato’, in H. Yunis (ed.), *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece*: 139-61. Cambridge.  12. Kirk, G. S. 1954. *Heraclitus:* *The* *Cosmic* *Fragments*. *Edited with an Introduction and Commentary*. Cambridge.  13. Laks, A. 2018. *The Concept of Presocratic Philosophy: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*. Princeton NJ.  14. Lloyd, G. E. R. 1966. *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought*. Cambridge.  15. Long, Α. Α. (ed.) 1999. *The Cambridge Companion to* *Early* *Greek* *Philosophy*. Cambridge.  16. Mansfeld, J. and D. T. Runia 1997-2020. *Aëtiana*, vols. I-V. Leiden.  17. Marcovich, M. 2001. *Heraclitus:* *Greek* *Text* *with* *a Short* *Commentary*, 2nd edition. Sankt Augustin.  18. Mourelatos, A. P. D. (ed.) 1993. *The Pre-Socratics: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 2nd edition.Princeton NJ.  19. Mourelatos, A. P. D. 2008. *The Route of Parmenides: A Study of Word, Image and Argument in the Fragments*, 2nd edition. Las Vegas, Zurich, Athens.  20. O’Brien, D. 1969. *Empedocles’ Cosmic Cycle: A Reconstruction from the Fragments and Secondary Sources*. Cambridge.  21. Owen, G. E. L. 1960. ‘Eleatic Questions’, *CQ* 10: 84-102.  22. Sedley, D. N. 2007. *Creationism and Its Critics in Antiquity*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London.  23. Steel, C. (ed.) 2012. *Aristotle Metaphysics Alpha: Symposium Aristotelicum. With a New Critical Edition of the Greek Text by Oliver Primavesi*. Οxford.  24. Taylor, C. C. W. 1999. *The Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus. Fragments: A Text and Translation with Commentary*. Toronto, Bufallo, London.  25. Vernant, J.-P. 1962. *Les origines de la pensée grecque*. Paris.  26. West, M. L. (ed.) 1966. *Hesiod: Theogony. Edited with Prolegomena and Commentary*. Oxford.  27. Wiggins, D. 1982. ‘Heraclitus’ Conceptions of Flux, Fire and Material Persistence’, in M. Schofield and M. Nussbaum (eds.), *Language and Logos: Studies in Ancient Greek Philosophy Presented to G. E. L. Owen*: 1-32.Cambridge.  28. Wright, M. R. 1995a. *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments. Edited with Introduction, Commentary, Concordance and New Bibliography*, 2nd edition. Bristol.  29. Wright. M. R. 1999b. *Cosmology in Antiquity.* London, New York.  .  **C. Resources on the Web:**  1. JSTOR (https://www.jstor.org)  2. Perseus (http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/)  3. Stanford Enclyclopedia of Philosophy: P. Curd 2020 on Presocratic Philosophy; D. W. Graham 2019 on Heraclitus; J. Palmer 2020 on Parmenides; S. Berryman 2023 on Democritus (https://plato.stanford.edu) |