



PH297 INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN PHILOSOPHY
IES Abroad Shanghai

DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this course is to introduce Chinese students to the Western philosophical tradition through a selection of key figures, schools, and major issues. Taking a philosophical perspective, this course will offer an overview of the content and major problems Western thinkers have addressed since antiquity, as well as the means by which they have attempted to tackle them, but it will also stress the relevance of these problems and of the proposed answers in today's world. Since the development of philosophical thought is inextricably linked with the history of religion and science, this course will also be looking at basic beliefs and ideas developed in the religious and scientific realms, as well as at the often-fierce disputes and attempts at reconciling religious faith with scientific methodology and findings. Students will be encouraged to combine a comparative with a contrastive approach and trace the continuity between different philosophical proposals, while also recognizing the creative breaks with tradition in the history of Western thought, for the exploration of new solutions to perennial philosophical questions. Students will be expected to attempt to "think philosophically," challenging their own presuppositions and exploring different ways of understanding the world and themselves in it. This course will also offer students the chance to expose themselves to Western thought through Western art, considering that works of art (literature, painting, cinematography, theatre) can offer direct and vivid experiences of the Western world of thought and its intricacies.

CREDITS: 4 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 60 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

INSTRUCTOR: Dimitra Amarantidou 易冬兰

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

Lectures, class discussion, and student presentations. Literature abstracts, painting, music, and movies will be used as supplementary materials, giving students the chance to appreciate verbal as well as non-verbal expressions of Western thought.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- In-class participation - 10%
- Assignments - 10%
- Midterm presentation - 25%
- Final Presentation- 25%
- Final Exam- 30%

Course Elements

Students will be required to do reading assignments and give feedback/answer related questions in the classroom. The midterm presentation project will ask students to choose a topic (notion/question/figure/school) from the Western philosophical tradition and make a PowerPoint presentation. Individual and group counseling and instruction on topic selection and relevant literature will be given by the instructor. Attendance is mandatory.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Discuss the complex relation between philosophy, religion, and science in Western thought
- Know some major differences between Western and Chinese thinking modes
- Name the key notions/terms and concerns in the ancient, Medieval, and modern traditions
- Discuss the interaction between major philosophical currents
- Recognize the influence of major philosophical ideas in social behaviors and relationships, education, politics, and art
- Engage in intercultural learning as a process of “knowing others” through “knowing oneself.”

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Because IES courses are designed to take advantage of the unique contribution of the instructor and the lecture/discussion format, regular class attendance is mandatory. Any missed classes, without a legitimate reason will be reflected in the final grade. A legitimate reason would include: documented illness or family bereavement. Travel (including travel days) is not a legitimate reason.

CONTENT:

| Week | Content | Assignments |
|----------------------|--|--|
| <p>Week 1</p> | <p>What is Western Philosophy? What does it have to do with me?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are our mis- and pre-conceptions and presuppositions when we approach the so-called “West”? An overview of the historical development of Western thought through a general introduction of the main questions and the methods implemented to address them, set against a Chinese background. What is the status and relevance of Western philosophy today? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No reading assignment |
| <p>Week 2</p> | <p>How it All Started: The Presocratics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who were the Presocratics? • What were their major concerns? • What is their relation to Socrates? • How did they influence later developments in Western thought? • How are they irrelevant and how do they remain relevant today? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected Fragments from Parmenides, Anaximander, and Heraclitus • Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Presocratic Philosophy https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/presocratics/ |

| Week | Content | Assignments |
|---------------|---|--|
| Week 3 | <p>The Sophists and Socrates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the wisdom (<i>sophia</i>) of the Sophists? • What were their ideas on nature, religion, and the Good? • Who was Socrates? Why is he still a riddle? • How was Socrates' philosophical attitude different from the Sophists? • What is the "Socratic problem"? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excerpts from Plato's <i>Republic</i> • Excerpts from Aristotle's <i>Metaphysics</i> and <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>. |
| Week 4 | <p>Plato: Socrates' Student Aristotle: Plato's Student and Alexander's Teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plato's Theory of Ideas • What is Platonic love (<i>eros</i>)? • Plato's <i>Republic</i>: What did an ideal city look like for Plato? Should we take him seriously? • The Allegory of the Cave • In what ways did Aristotle follow his teacher's path and how did he deviate from it? • What are the most important features of Aristotle's System? Do we think in Aristotelian terms today? • What were Aristotle's ideas about the universe, nature, thinking, emotions, being a citizen and a friend, and watching performances? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excerpts from Plato's <i>Republic</i> • Excerpts from Aristotle's <i>Metaphysics</i> and <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>. |

| Week | Content | Assignments |
|---------------|--|---|
| Week 5 | <p>What happened after Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle?</p> <p>Following and refuting the three great masters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Stoics: Philosophy as the art of living • The Epicureans: How they shook up Greece, Italy, and what was considered as “the barbaric world” • The Sceptics and their reaction to dogmatism: Can we know anything after all? • Rome and Jesus of Nazareth • Christianity and Gnosticism • Neo-Platonism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard H. Popkin, <i>The Columbia History of Western Philosophy</i> (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), selected pages. (To be announced) |
| Week 6 | <p>Early Christian and Medieval Philosophy: What were the major issues philosophers had to tackle?</p> <p>With the collapse of the ancient world (and glory), reason weakened as thought gave in to sentimentalism and imagination. Now morality was all about purity of the soul and sageliness, fear of sin, and salvation which is sought after in the teachings of the Church and a life in the Christian community. The central preoccupation in philosophical reflections of this period is with God. The highest science is, naturally, theology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Augustine • The City of God and the Mystery of Grace • Boethius and Philoponus • John the Scot • St. Anselm • Abelard • Averroes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (To be announced) |

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|---------------|---|---|
| Week 7 | <p>Summary of Western Philosophy from the Presocratics to Medieval thinkers</p> <p>Mid-term presentation</p> <p>Class discussion</p> | <p>Film: <i>The Name of the Rose</i>. 1986. Dir. Jean-Jacques Annaud</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preview and follow-up questions. |
| Week 8 | <p>Philosophy in the 13th century and the Renaissance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Aquinas: His Life, Works and Moral Philosophy • Machiavelli and how to be a successful ruler • The Reformation • Giordano Bruno and Galileo Galilei • Francis Bacon’s empiricist natural philosophy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (To be announced) |
| Week 9 | <p>The Beginning of Modern Philosophy with Descartes and Philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descartes: His life and works • Descartes’ doubt and <i>Cogito ergo Sum</i> • Descartes’ ideas on God, the mind, and the body • Thomas Hobbes and his political philosophy • John Locke, the empiricist • Baruch Spinoza: On God, nature, and the human being • Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: the last “universal genius” • George Berkeley, the idealist • Hume’s Philosophy of Mind • Jean Jacques Rousseau’s quest for freedom | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (To be announced.) |

| Week | Content | Assignments |
|---------|--|--|
| Week 10 | <p>The Enlightenment and Kant, Hegel, and Marx</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the Enlightenment? What were the major ideas it propounded? Are we still enlightened today? • Kant's Copernican revolution and moral philosophy • Friedrich Hegel: German idealism • Karl Marx and the Problems of Capitalism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (To be announced.) |
| Week 11 | <p>Philosophy in the 19th century and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arthur Schopenhauer: A pessimist? • Soeren Kierkegaard: Faith and Irony <p>Friedrich Nietzsche and the Power of Dance and Laughter</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (To be announced.) |
| Week 12 | <p>Philosophy in the 20th century and beyond...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influence of Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud on Western thought • Phenomenology: Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre • Bertrand Russell's Paradoxes and Logic • Ludwig Wittgenstein and his critique of traditional philosophy • Continental Philosophy: Major figures and concerns <p>What is the role of philosophy, religion, and science today?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (To be announced.) |
| Week 13 | <p>Final Presentation and Final Exam</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (To be announced.) |

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Selected Fragments from Parmenides, Anaximander, and Heraclitus
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Presocratic Philosophy <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/presocratics/>
- Excerpts from the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, and the *Phaedo*
- William Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy Vol. 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), selected pages.
- Excerpts from Plato's *Republic*
- Excerpts from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Nichomachean Ethics*.



- Richard H. Popkin, *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), selected pages. (To be announced)

More required readings to be announced.

FILM: *The Name of the Rose*. 1986. Dir. Jean-Jacques Annaud.

INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY: