



O G L E T H O R P E
UNIVERSITY

GO ROME: PHI 210
FOUNDATIONS OF ROMAN THOUGHT: *PURSUING THE BEAUTIFUL,*
THE DIVINE, FREEDOM, AND EMPIRE

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW

The aim of this course is to introduce students to the ideas, questions, and problems that occupied the Roman philosophical tradition. Many of the ideas and questions that developed within this tradition are still present for us today and our thinking about them is largely due to the influence of the Roman philosophical tradition. So, in addition to introducing students to the Roman philosophical tradition, which is important and interesting in its own right, this course aims to illuminate the questions developed within the tradition as fundamental and perennial questions and concerns.

Students will be introduced to the Roman philosophical tradition via an examination of primary texts that were influential in the development of Roman philosophical thought and represent the various ways in which Roman philosophers were articulating and addressing the questions and concerns with which they were occupied. These texts include works by Plato, Plotinus, Virgil, Epictetus, Seneca, and Machiavelli.

The course is divided into two units. The first unit extends throughout the first two weeks of the course and in it we will focus our examination on the complicated relationship between beauty and the pursuit of wisdom, human fulfillment, and the divine. In the second unit of the course we will focus our examination on questions that broadly pertain to the structure and aims of political life. (*Note: a further description of each of these units is given in the course schedule). As was the case for Roman philosophical thought itself, our examination will go outside the texts and beyond the classroom. We will take five trips into Rome and we will examine the way in which various pieces of art and architecture exemplify, express and legitimize various philosophical commitments.

Learning Outcomes

From our studies you will understand and be able to articulate particular ideas, questions, and problems that were at the center of the Roman philosophical tradition. In addition, you will develop the skills requisite for successful philosophical analysis. By the end of the semester each of you will

- ✓ Be familiar with the central themes and arguments of the Roman philosophical tradition;
- ✓ Be able to read primary texts in their historical and philosophical context, so that you can grasp more accurately the arguments that these texts contain;

- ✓ Have improved your philosophical writing and speaking and you will be able to present and discuss philosophical arguments clearly and accurately;
- ✓ Have learned to engage the philosophical arguments critically, considering their strengths and weaknesses, presenting objections, and considering replies.

Methods of Instruction

Our classes (within the context of the traditional classroom setting AND when we are viewing art in Rome) will be a mixture of lecture and discussion with the majority of each class devoted to the latter. There will be regular reading and writing assignments. What you get from this course and how well you do in it depends on the time you devote to preparing for class and the thoughtfulness with which you approach the material. To succeed in this course you not only need to read the assigned reading and do the assigned written work, you must also actively engage yourself with the material and come to class prepared to participate fully in class discussions, in-class activities, and tours.

Every Monday, we will be in the traditional classroom discussing primary philosophical texts and ideas.

Every Wednesday we will be visiting local art museums, historical landmarks, and churches.

Required Texts

The following texts are required for this course. Electronic forms of each text can be found online, **free** of charge.

Plato, *Republic* (Free of charge at Project Gutenberg www.gutenberg.org)

Plato's *Symposium* (Free of charge at Project Gutenberg www.gutenberg.org)

Virgil, *Aeneid* (Free of charge at Project Gutenberg)

Epictetus, *The Enchiridion* (Free of charge at www.classics.mit.edu)

Methods of Assessment

A. Participation and Attendance: 15%

B. Four Two-Page (minimum) "Post-Tour" Response Papers (40%)

C. Five Two-Page (minimum) In-Class Writing Reflections (20%)

D. Final 5-page paper: 25%

A. Participation and Attendance

A portion of your final grade depends on your attendance and participation in this course. In short, to succeed and get the most from this class, you must come to class and you must come prepared, ready to participate in discussions, and ready to engage with the text in a serious and meaningful way.

Participation: You are expected to be a regular and active participant in discussions and you are expected to contribute to those discussions in meaningful and positive ways. Not all participation is equal: to say something just to say something is not a meaningful contribution to the discussion. Participation in discussion is the best way for you to dig into the text and to decipher your own questions and thoughts concerning it.

Here is a general description of how I will evaluate participation:

A: Participates voluntarily and frequently. Shows a good grasp of the material and good preparation.

B: Participates voluntarily with less frequency but still makes an important contribution to the class discussion.

C: Participates voluntarily but shows a lesser grasp of the material or little preparation.

D: Participates only when asked to do so.

F: Does not participate or is frequently absent.

Attendance: You are expected to come on time to every class and there is a ZERO absence policy for this class. This means that you are not allowed to miss a class and for every class you do miss, 10 points will be deducted from your final grade.

B. Five 2-page Response papers

You will have five two-page response papers to write for this course, due every Sunday. For each paper, you will give a critical response to the art work we viewed that week. Your critical response should include an articulation of the way in which the art piece exemplifies the philosophical ideas we have discussed in class and should make use of the art itself—its details and images—as means to explain your response and to evidence the conclusions you draw. You should consider these papers as learning opportunities in which you will not only deepen your thinking on a particular question or issue but also continue to sharpen your abilities to read critically, think critically, and communicate your thoughts in a clear, well-reasoned manner. Your grade for the papers will be based on the quality of your insights about the topic, your use of the text in supporting these insights, and the coherence of your argument and presentation. **You will submit ALL of your response papers to me via email by Sunday at 5pm. My email address is listed at the top of this syllabus but is also included here:**

aprintz@oglethorpe.edu

C. Five Two-Page (minimum) In-Class Writing Reflections (15%)

There will be a “theme” for each week of this course:

Week One: Boldly Break Through Boundaries

Week Two: Inspire Trusting Relationships through Our Words and Actions

Week Three: Enthusiastic About Our Purpose, People, and Path

Week Four: Serve Communities and Each Other

Week Five: Create Environments that Maximize Potential

Every Monday we will begin class by discussing the “theme of the week”. We will then begin our examination of the philosophical texts and ideas scheduled for that week. At the end of Monday’s class, you will be given time to reflect on the relationship between the theme of the week and (1) the way in which it is exemplified in the philosophical ideas and activities with which we engage and (2) the way in which it is exemplified in your study abroad “life” so far. You will hand in your two-page reflection at the end of class.

D. Final 5-page Paper

You will write one final, five-page paper for this course. In this paper you will expand on one of your earlier response papers, tying the art work and your critical reflections to the text that we discussed. **You will submit your final paper to me via email on August 10, 2019.**

Course Policies and Classroom Ethics

Classroom Ethics:

- Respect yourself and one another in the classroom. The obvious aim of this course is to provide you with an opportunity to examine the Roman philosophical thought and to seriously engage the doctrines, arguments, and questions that are raised in the texts. A classroom environment that is conducive to such learning must be one in which each person feels comfortable to freely express their thoughts, to ask questions, to make mistakes, to disagree in a non-combative way, and to learn from and with one another. In short, use neither disrespectful speech nor any other form of disrespectful behavior towards one another.
- Cell phones and all other electronic devices (laptops, tablets, music devices, etc.) may NOT be used in the classroom. They are unnecessary and distracting.
- Do not leave the room during class unless it is absolutely necessary. Leaving the room while class is in session is disruptive to your learning and to the learning of others.
- Enjoy yourself!

Course Policies:

- **Honor Code.** You are expected to adhere to standards of personal and academic integrity and to uphold the Oglethorpe University Honor Code. For a complete account of the Honor Code, review Section 10 in the 2012-2014 *Bulletin*. All work you hand in should carry the Honor Code pledge (I pledge that I have acted honorably _____-signature) You are required to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include but are not limited to plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing. Each of these violations can be thought of as a form of cheating. Oglethorpe University defines cheating as “any willful activity impacting or connected to the academic enterprise and involving the use of deceit or fraud in order to attempt to secure an unfair advantage for oneself or others or to attempt to cause an unfair advantage to others.” **Any violation of academic integrity is grounds for failing this course.**

Students with Disabilities. I will work with Oglethorpe University to provide reasonable accommodations for every student with a learning disability or special learning needs.

Course Schedule

UNIT ONE: Beauty and the pursuit of philosophical truth and the divine

In ancient philosophy, particularly in the philosophy of Plato, beauty played a significant role in the philosophical pursuit of wisdom, in the pursuit of human fulfillment, and the pursuit of Truth itself. But beauty’s role in the pursuit of truth and its relationship with philosophy was complicated by numerous questions: what is the role of sensible forms of beauty (beautiful images) in arriving at knowledge of Truth itself?; Can one move from the contemplation of beautiful images to knowledge of beauty in the intelligible sense? Do images and sensible forms of beauty contain in them forms of truth itself that simply must be unlocked and illuminated by an attentive mind? Plato’s articulation of these questions and his understanding of the relationship between beauty and human fulfillment, the pursuit of wisdom, and the pursuit of the divine formed the foundations of the neo-platonic movement of Plotinus, whose own philosophical work was the catalyst for what has come to be known as the Neo-Platonist school of the Italian Renaissance. This school began with the

founding of the Florentine Academy and significantly contributed to the intellectual and artistic movements in Italy.

WEEK ONE:

Monday

- Introduction to Philosophy and the Course
- Theme of the Week: Boldy Break Through Boundaries
- Introduction to Plato: Selections (Books Six and Seven) from Plato's *Republic*
- Examination of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel and Raphael's "School of Athens"
- Work on In-Class Reflective Papers

Wednesday

Trip Visit: The Vatican Museum—Rafael's "School of Athens" and Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel; Michelangelo's "Pieta" at St. Peter's Basilica

Week One two-page response paper due on Sunday by 5pm.

WEEK TWO:

Monday

- Theme of the Week: Inspire Trusting Relationships Through Our Words and Actions
- Introduction to the Philosophical Idea of Eros and its relation to Wisdom, Human Fulfillment, and the Divine
- Selections from Plato's *Symposium*: The Speech of Phaedrus, The Speech of Pausanias, The Speech of Aristophanes, The Speech of Socrates.
- Work on In-Class Reflective Papers

Wednesday

Trip Visit: The Galleria Borghese—Titian's "Sacred and Profane Love"; Comparison of Three "Deposition of Christ" Paintings: Rafael, Badalocchio, Peter Paul Rubens; Bernini's "Aeneas and Acestes" and "David"

Week Two two-page response paper due on Sunday by 5pm.

UNIT TWO: The structure and aims of political life

Rome's development as an empire prompted new questions about the structure and aims of political life as well as new ideas about the nature of human freedom and the virtuous life. Through an examination of Rome's development and identity we will examine questions that pertain to the nature of empires, the virtues and vices of empire, and whether and to what extent republics are necessary for the freedom human beings desire, the nature of freedom, and the relationship between freedom and virtue.

WEEK THREE:

Monday

- Theme of the Week: Enthusiastic About Our Purpose, People, and Path
- Introduction of Myth and Mythology and Roman Appropriation of Greek Myth
- Virgil, *Aeneid* Books 1-6
- Work on In-Class Reflective Papers

Wednesday

Trip Visit: Republican Art at the Capitoline Museum

Week Three two-page response paper due on Sunday by 5pm

WEEK FOUR:

Monday

--Theme of the Week: Serve Communities and Each Other

--Virgil, Aeneid, Books 7-12

--Work on In-Class Reflective Papers

Wednesday

Trip Visit: Roman Forum and Coliseum

Week Four two-page response paper due on Sunday by 5pm

WEEK FIVE: Freedom, Fulfillment, and Virtue: Stoicism

Monday

--Theme of the Week: Create Environments that Maximize Potential

--Introduction to Stoicism: Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, and Epictetus

--Work on In-Class Reflective Papers

Wednesday

--Trip Visit: Walking Tour to Gianicolo Park

Final Five-Page Paper due in my email inbox by 5pm Eastern time on August 10, 2019.