

Greek 3200A/4904A: Early Greek Philosophy

Instructor: Tyler Jordan (tjordan7@uwo.ca)

In the sixth century, the so-called Presocratic philosophers began to examine the world in a radically new way by approaching nature as its own physical realm. Their writings also contain insights into the development of ontology, logic, and epistemology, and even physiology. While much of their writing is in prose, three of the Presocratic philosophers—Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles—wrote in poetry, and we'll spend the term reading their poetry closely.

We'll focus on the Greek itself for the majority of the course, with the goal of reading all of it, but we'll also spend some time most weeks discussing things such as the philosophical ideas in the poetry, why they chose to write in poetry, the very "discipline" of philosophy in antiquity, and some professional skills such as textual criticism and using the TLG.

Required Books

All the Greek texts we're going to be reading will be available on the course site or online through the library databases, and you won't need to buy any specific books (you are welcome to buy editions or commentaries of the pre-Socratics, but they can cost quite a bit). You should have access to a good Greek grammar book and dictionary.¹

Evaluation

25% Attendance, Preparation, and Participation

20% 5 Quizzes

25% Written Work (3 short writing *or* 1 essay)

10% Passage Analysis

20% Final Exam

Course Goals

The course is designed with a few goals in mind:

1. As a Greek language class, the primary goal will be to continue to develop our Greek skills.
2. While reading, we'll pay some attention to the important resources that you should be familiar with, such as understanding the *apparatus criticus* (and textual criticism) and using the TLG.
3. Since being able to write *about* the texts you read is an important skill for scholars, you'll also practice and develop your ability to write about literature.
4. And of course, to learn about (some of) the Presocratic philosophers and their ideas in context.

¹ There is a bibliography on the course site with recommendations for grammars, commentaries, editions, and further reading for anyone interested. Both the LSJ and Smyth's grammar are freely available on Perseus.

Detailed Grade Breakdown

25% attendance, preparation, and participation

Since this is a small class, I expect you to come to each class well-prepared. This includes both having read the Greek and tried to understand it as best as you're able and participating in translating and commenting on the text during classes. We'll go around so everyone should get the opportunity to participate in each class. For translating, please **do not** bring in a written-out translation that you prepared before but try to read the text with as little notes as possible. This is much tougher, and more nerve-wracking, than reading a prepared translation but ultimately much better for your ability and confidence to read Greek. On days without Greek readings, you should prepare a short 3 minute "presentation" about something you found interesting that week in either the primary or secondary readings. This will help up better understand the primary and secondary readings as well as bring in diverse perspectives. These are good places to develop your written assignments. These will be the basis for our discussions.

20% Quizzes

We'll have five quizzes during the term that will include translation, grammar, or textual questions. You'll have about 15 minutes to do the quiz at the start of the designated class (we'll adjust this is needed). They will have about 5 lines of text with 1 or 2 short questions attached. Since the goal of the class is to improve your Greek, if you receive a grade you're not happy with, you can re-take each quiz once (although the second time will have a different passage) and use whichever mark is highest for the final grade calculation.

10% Passage Analysis

The passage analysis is an exercise that helps with developing your ability to read poetic texts critically by familiarising yourself with the formal and interpretive aspects of the text. You'll pick a 5-line section of poetry and perform a very close analysis of it, including scanning the meter, noting important vocabulary, interesting grammar, allusive and/or formulaic language, commentary notes, etc. This process can be good for developing an argument or entry point for an essay. It'll be due a couple weeks after our TLG seminar, during which we'll talk about the assignment as well. I'll also post a (more intense) example of the exercise.

25% written assignment(s)

You will submit three short writing assignments during the term. These are meant to make you think critically about the Greek texts, poetics, pre-Socratic philosophy, and the secondary readings. They should be pretty short (around 600–800 words) and can be about anything related to the class. You can sketch out an argument about how to interpret a passage, talk about textual critical issues, or whatever else you think would be interesting to do. Alternatively, you can choose to do a single essay-style paper (about 1800–2400 words) with a more focused topic if you prefer. If you want to write a full essay, I recommend talking to me about it as soon as possible. There's no due date for these, except that I'd like them before the final exam (so I can submit grades on time).

20% Final Exam

A longer version of the quizzes. You'll have some choice of passages but will have to do at least one passage from each author. To be scheduled during the December exam period. Because this is an officially-scheduled exam, you will need to go through official channels to schedule a make-up if you should need to do so.

Course Policies etc.

Electronic Devices: No electronic devices will be allowed during quizzes or exams.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI): The use of generative AI for any parts of this class is prohibited. All work must be your own original work, whether that be translations or written work. If the use of AI is suspected, you will be expected to provide notes or drafts (digital or hand-written) to prove the authenticity of your work. It is your responsibility to retain these.

General information about missed coursework: Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar:

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. However, the following assessments are excluded from this, and therefore always require formal supporting documentation:

Examinations scheduled during official examination periods

Evaluation Scheme for Missed Assessments: Because I'll accept assignments with flexible dates, there shouldn't really be an issue with missed assessments unless you choose not to submit them by the end of the course. In that case, you will simply receive a score of 0 on anything not handed in by the end of classes.

Academic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, here:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/scholasticdisciplineundergrad.pdf>.

Statement on the use of plagiarism-checking software: All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays: Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education: **Academic Accommodation** is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfil the essential requirements of a course or program.” <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation%20disabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students” <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html>

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

Support Services

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where

to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:
<https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentssupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.