

Classical Studies 3
Reason and the Human Good: Socrates to Epictetus

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Reed 310A, 6-2404

An introduction to the major ethical systems of antiquity from Socrates through the Epicureans and Stoics. Questions to be considered include the nature and methods of reflective reasoning, the role of personal excellence and other-concern in a satisfying life, the structure of the psyche, the causes of action and the management of emotion. We will also give some consideration to the social position of intellectuals in Greece and Rome and to the literary and other forms in which philosophical thought was expressed.

Primary texts:

Aristophanes' *Clouds* (423 B.C.E.): A comic play introducing Socrates as a character.

Plato's *Euthyphro* (early 4th c. B.C.E.): An imagined dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro on the nature of piety.

Plato's *Apology* (early 4th c. B.C.E.): Plato's account of what Socrates said at his trial in 399.

Selections from Plato's *Republic* (early 4th c. B.C.E.): Socrates examines into the nature of justice, with associated questions about the structure of the psyche and about education.

Selections from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (c. 330 B.C.E.): A systematic account of happiness and human excellence.

Epicurus' *Letters* (c. 300 B.C.E.): Three letters to friends summarizing Epicurus' philosophy of science and ethics.

Epicurus' *Principal Doctrines* and *Vatican Sayings* (c. 300 B.C.E.): Collections of short maxims used in teaching.

Books 3 and 4 of Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* (45 B.C.E.): The views of the philosophers, especially Stoics, on the nature and management of the emotions.

Euripides' *Medea* (431 B.C.E.): [videotaped performance] Tragedy of a woman's revenge, subjected to philosophical analysis by later writers.

Epictetus, *Discourses*. Samples of the Stoic teachings of a Greek freedman active at Rome.

Wolfe, *A Man in Full* (1998): Satirical novel exploring possible applications of Epictetus' philosophy in modern America.

Special event:

Part of the curriculum for this class is a special lecture delivered by Jacques Brunschwig, Professor Emeritus at the Sorbonne in Paris, as part of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy. The lecture, entitled "Revisiting Plato's Cave," will take place on Thursday, May 8, at 7:30 in Rockefeller 3, with discussion to follow. Boston Area Colloquium events are attended by scholars from all over the region.

Books to buy (available at Wheelock Books):

- *The Trials of Socrates*, ed./trans. C.D.C. Reeve
- *The Epicurus Reader*, ed./trans. Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson
- Lucretius, *The Way Things Are*, trans. R. Humphries
- *Cicero on the Emotions*, trans. M. Graver
- Epictetus, *The Discourses of Epictetus*, ed. Christopher Gill
- Tom Wolfe, *A Man in Full*.

Reserve reading (on reserve in Baker/Berry):

Cooper, J. *Reason and Emotion*

Clay, D. *Platonic Questions*

Sharples, R. *Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*

Nussbaum, M. *Therapy of Desire*

Long, A. A. *Hellenistic Philosophy*

J.J. Clauss and S. ed. *Medea : essays on Medea in myth, literature, philosophy, and art*

Reserve reading is assigned at a few points during the term on the same basis as the primary texts. Occasionally also the assignment sheet will make suggestions for optional further reading in these texts.

Basis for evaluation:

Preparation and participation

20%

Read carefully the assigned pages including explanatory footnotes, and make notes on the study questions. Answers to these questions are not to be turned in, but you should be prepared to answer them orally.

Essays

40%

Writing assignments will be provided weekly except in the first, fifth, and last weeks. You should submit a minimum of five essays during the term; if you choose to write more than five, I will compute your score from your five highest grades. Essays are to be short (two pages or 500 words maximum), but carefully written and well-edited.

Midterm (April 18) and final (June 1, 1:30 p.m.):

20%, 20%

Tests are mixed objective items (multiple choice or short identifications) and paragraph answers; the final also includes one longer essay. Approximately half of the questions on the midterm and final will come directly from the study questions you receive with your reading assignments.

Office hours:

MF 1:45-2:45, T 1:30-2:30, F 1:45-3:30 and by appointment.

Students with special needs:

If there is any possibility that you will need special accommodations due to physical or sensory limitations, psychiatric difficulties, or to a documented learning disability, it is your responsibility to inform me of your needs during the first week of class. All such accommodations are coordinated through the Academic Resources Center.

Calendar (stars indicate due dates for essays)

March	26	Introductory
	28	<i>Clouds</i>
	31	''
April	2	<i>Euthyphro</i>
	4*	<i>Apology</i>
	7	''
	9	<i>Republic</i>
	11*	''
	14	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
	16	''
	18	Midterm
		<i>(Students planning to attend religious services April 18 may take the midterm at an alternate time; blitz by April 16 to arrange.)</i>
	21	<i>Nicomachean Ethics; Epicurus</i>
	23	Epicurus
	25*	''
	28	Lucretius
	30	''
May	2*	''
	5	Stoic physics
	7	Stoic physics; preliminary to Brunswick event
	8	(evening) Brunswick
	9*	no class
	12	Cicero
	13 Tues	'' (x-hour)
	14	''
	16*	no class
	19	Epictetus
	21	''
	23*	''
	28	Wolfe