

# Phil 103, Applied Hellenistic Philosophy

Albert (Tyke) Nunez:  
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University of South Carolina, Fall 2025  
M, W: 3:55-5:10, Coliseum 3003

Office hours:  
CLOSE-HIPP 514  
Tues: 12:30-2:30  
& by appointment

This course will introduce students to some of the major schools of philosophy of the ancient western world. Our main question will be “What is the best way to live?” but we will ask many others as well, including “What is the highest good of a human life?” and “what is the origin of morality?” We will discuss texts from Plato, the Epicureans, the Stoics, and Aristotle. While the focus of the course will be on reading, thinking, and reasoning about the questions and theories of these philosophers clearly and cogently, a secondary aim will be to see how these theories might be put into practice, especially when we examine the contrasting schools of the Epicureans and Stoics.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS:

**Reading Comprehension:** Students will learn to identify claims and arguments in a text, i.e. to identify the conclusions that an author is arguing for and the considerations offered in support of those conclusions. This is not as easy as it sounds.

**Assessment:** Students are expected to carefully complete all the required reading before class. Readings should also be brought (**in hard copy**) to class so that they may be consulted during discussion or for in-class exercises. We will devote class time to practicing close reading skills.

There will be **reading questions**. These will be designed to help students think more carefully about the reading, and to begin to form considered opinions on it. Responding to these is therefore good preparation for discussion. For each meeting there will be at least one group of questions. (In cases where there is more than one group and the instructions do not say otherwise, students will choose one group to respond to.) The total responses for each meeting should be **about two paragraphs**. You must hand these in during class. Because a main point of having you respond to these reading questions is to prepare you for discussion, responses to questions will not be accepted after the corresponding class. They will be graded on a **pass/fail** basis. Responses to reading questions are worth 10% of the final grade. Grading works as follows. You begin the semester with a score of 100 for the reading questions portion of your overall grade. If you fail to turn in one set of reading questions, your score is penalized one point. For each additional set of reading questions you miss, the penalty doubles. For example:

100	All reading questions turned in, A+.
$100 - 1 - 2 - 4 = 93$	All reading questions in but 3, A-.
$100 - 1 - 2 - 4 - 8 - 16 = 69$	All reading questions in but 5, D+!

**Conversational Competence:** Students will learn to discuss arguments with each other. This involves (1) asking questions, (2) answering questions, (3) making suggestions, and (4) listening to others. Emphasis is placed on treating one another respectfully while engaging in these activities.

**Assessment:** With respect to these four activities, students will be assessed for (A) attendance, (B) respect for others, and (C) participation. Achieving a decent participation score (85+)

requires you to be continually present, attentive, and respectful in class, while participating in a serious and engaged way. (This is usually around two quality contributions per class.) Achieving a good score (93+) requires in addition that you *often* make helpful contributions to class discussion in most of the class meetings. (Usually this is around three to six quality contributions per class.) **Respectful participation** is worth **10%** of the final grade. **When you hand in your reading questions at the end of class, I ask that you write down the number of times you participated that day at the top.** (Please don't lie! I was there; trust me, it's obvious.) I will count discussions we have in office hours towards this component of your grade.

Attendance in class is required. I will be taking attendance and keeping tabs on participation through the reading question submissions. **If you cannot make it to class**, but feel the absence should be **excused**, and thus feel you should receive credit for the week's reading questions, you will need to email me.

**Practical Handbook Exercises:** For two weeks during the semester students will do Epicurean or Stoic exercises that will help them to live and think about their lives as an epicurean or stoic would. This will involve (1) a morning meditation exercise (~15min), (2) an evening meditation exercise (~15min), and (3) keeping a daily journal during each of the week-long periods.

**Assessment:** With respect to these activities, students will be assessed through their journal at the end of Epicurean and Stoic Weeks. For this reason, **the journals will need to be typed** so that they may be submitted to Blackboard. In the journal, each day you will answer three questions. Each question will take a paragraph to respond to. (Bear in mind that during these two weeks this class will take up more of your time than usual. Plan your schedule for the semester accordingly.) The Epicurean and Stoic journals are **each 5%** of the final grade.

**Knowledge Acquisition:** Students will become familiar with the claims and arguments discussed each week. This involves understanding (1) the concepts used by the authors, (2) the claims associated with various authors or views, (3) the arguments associated with various authors or views, and (4) how claims and arguments relate between authors or views.

**Writing Competence:** Students will learn to (1) articulate the arguments from a text in their own words, cogently reconstructing the reasoning involved, and (2) evaluate these arguments using the positions of other authors that we have studied.

**Assessment:** To assess these two course objectives there will be **four papers**. They will be of increasing length and complexity. The first will be about a page; the second, three to four; the third, four to six; the fourth, five to seven. The first paper is worth 5%, the second 12.5%, the third 22.5%, and the fourth 30% of the final grade. If you fail to hand in one of these, then you **automatically fail the course**.

**Drafting and comments:** These portions of the three longer essay assignments are to help you improve the final drafts of your essays. This is how they will help your final essay grades. They will hurt these grades if you do not make a good faith effort on them. If you do not hand in a good faith draft or do not give good faith comments on your peer's essay, then you will lose a

letter grade on the final version of your essay. We will discuss what constitutes a good faith effort for each when these assignments are given.

**Anonymous Grading:** In order to facilitate fair and responsible grading, when you hand in the final version of each of the four writing assignments, they must not include your name or other identification. **Failure** to do so will result in a **penalty of one letter grade**. (The peer-review process is not anonymous.)

**Format:** All page guidelines for papers are based on a **12-point** Times New Roman font and a **double-spaced** page layout. I expect papers to be in this format.

## RESOURCES:

There are a number of useful guides on how to go about writing a philosophy paper. See:

Pryor guide: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Monash guide: <http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/lionline/writing/arts/philosophy/index.xml>

Please read Pryor's essay and/or spend a few hours working through the Monash guide.

**GRADING:** Reading response questions: 10%

Epicurean Week Journal: 5%

First Paper: 5%

Third Paper: 22.5%

In class participation: 10%

Stoic Week Journal: 5%

Second Paper: 12.5%

Fourth Paper: 30%

I use '+' and '-' grades on individual assignments. Because USC has clipped off '-' for final grades, I assign final grades according to the following table:

A = 92–100%,

B+ = 87–91%,

B = 82–86%,

C+ = 77–81%,

C = 72–76%,

D+ = 67–71%,

D = 62–66%,

F = 0–61%

**I do not use Blackboard Gradebook to compute grades.** Grades for individual assignments can be found in Blackboard, but it will not accurately estimate your current final grade. You will need to do this yourself using the above tables.

**LATE POLICY:** If for reasons beyond your control you are unable to submit your written work by the assigned deadline, you should request an extension *before* the deadline. Late papers without an extension may be penalized by a fraction of a grade point per day (e.g., a B+ paper one day overdue may receive a B; two days overdue, a B–; etc.). **If reading responses are late for any reason, they will not be accepted.**

**ELECTRONIC DEVICES:** I do not want students in this class to be distracted by their smartphones or laptops. Please do not use cell phones in this class. I would really prefer if you did not use any electronic devices at all. If you do use a laptop during class, please only use it to take notes. If you are using a laptop, please sit in the back of the class.

Students texting, using phones, or with earbuds in, will receive a grade of zero for the reading questions and participation for the day. To avoid being wrongly penalized for lap texting, I advise you not to fiddle with things in your lap. Students will be notified of the penalty by e-mail.

**READINGS:** The course requires you to buy a hard copy of the texts and to bring them to class for discussion. For the few texts that I post on **Blackboard**, please **print** them, read and annotate the print versions, and bring the print versions to class. Although I always read everything on an electronic device because I have a print disability, I will endeavor to do the same. (I strongly prefer you to print out readings from Blackboard. If you failed to do this, I prefer that you reference them on electronic devices, rather than not at all. For other readings, you **must have a hardcopy**.)

**TEXTS:** These should be in the bookstore. Please **DO NOT use other translations or editions**. It is important that we all have the same translations and can find the passages easily.

**Required:**

Plato. *Protagoras*. Translated by Lombardo, Stanley & Bell, Karen. Introduction by Michael Frede. Hackett Classics. 9780872200944 (Required, unless you get the complete works.)  
Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *On Moral Ends* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy). Julia Edited by Julia Annas and Translated by Raphael Woolf. 9780521669016  
Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by C. D. C. Reeve. Second Edition. Hackett, 2023. 9781647921453

**Recommended:**

Plato. *Complete Works*. Edited by John Cooper and D. Hutchinson. Hackett. 9780872203495  
Plato. *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, Translated by G. M. A. Grube. Edited by John M. Cooper. 2nd Edition. Hackett Classics. 9780872206335  
Epicurus. *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia*, Edited by Brad Inwood and Lloyd P. Gerson. 9780872202412  
*The Stoic Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia*, Edited by Brad Inwood and Lloyd P. Gerson. 9780872209527

**OUTSIDE SOURCES:** Please do not use non-assigned sources for this class. Much of what you find on the internet will be distracting, misleading, or a waste of your time and energy. If you have questions about the material, that's great! Please ask in class, ask your peers, or ask me. The only exception, if you must, is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. It is mostly trustworthy. The most effective way to participate and engage with the material in this class is to *carefully* do the assigned reading, reflect on it, meditate on it, and re-read it. Looking at other material is strongly discouraged.

**PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of work that is not one's own as though it were, in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, etc.), intentional or unintentional. Plagiarized material may be derived from a variety of sources, such as books, journals, internet postings, student or faculty papers, AI text generators etc. This includes the purchase or "outsourcing" of written assignments for a course. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the fourth edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, pages 26-29. The penalty for plagiarism is failure

for the course. Potential plagiarism cases will be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity as alleged cheating, defined as “unauthorized assistance in connection with any academic work” and/or falsification, which includes “misrepresenting or misleading others with respect to academic work.” Students are also required to familiarize themselves with the University’s Honor Code: <http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf625.pdf>

**USE OF GENERATIVE AI:** All assignments in this course should be fully prepared by the student. This entails that students should not submit text that is generated by artificial intelligence (AI) systems such as ChatGPT, Bing Chat, Claude, Google Bard, or any other automated assistance for any classwork or assessments. This class is intended to help you cultivate critical reading, thinking, and writing skills. By using AI, you are robbing yourself of the opportunity to learn what this course aims to teach.

Students should also be aware of the potential limitations of using AI as a tool for learning and research. AI systems are not always reliable or accurate. In my experience, even the newest and best AI text generators (e.g. ChatGPT-5) are misleading when offering advice about the content and assignments for this course and cannot be trusted. If you have a question that you have not been able to answer through carefully examining the assigned texts and reflecting on your own, please ask me.

Now, while you should not use AI for any portion of the course, it is a *much more serious violation* of university policy to misrepresent work that you submit or exchange with your instructor as your own. If you do use AI tools on assignments, in order to avoid this more serious infraction, you must: add an appendix showing (a) the entire exchange with the AI, highlighting the most relevant sections; (b) a description of precisely which AI tools were used (e.g. ChatGPT private subscription version or DALL-E free version), (c) an explanation of how the AI tools were used (e.g. to generate ideas, turns of phrase, elements of text, long stretches of text, lines of argument, pieces of evidence, maps of the conceptual territory, illustrations of key concepts, etc.); (d) an account of why AI tools were used (e.g. to save time, to surmount writer’s block, to stimulate thinking, to handle mounting stress, to clarify prose, to translate text, etc.). **Violations of this policy will be treated as plagiarism** and referred to the Office of Academic Integrity. If you have any questions about this policy, please ask me for clarification.

**DISABILITY NOTICE:** The University of South Carolina is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students who are seeking support for a disability or a suspected disability should contact Disability Resource Center at 803-777-6142. The Disability Resource Center is responsible for approving all disability-related accommodations for U of SC students, and students are responsible for providing faculty members with formal documentation of their approved accommodations at least two weeks prior to using those accommodations. I will accept Disability Resources forms by email and personal delivery. If you have already been approved for accommodations, I request that you provide me with a copy of your forms within the first two weeks of the semester.

**STUDENT WELL BEING:** Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the [Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support](#). If you are comfortable doing so, please notify me as the professor so that we can find resources that may be helpful. Students may experience situations or challenges that can interfere with learning and interpersonal functioning including stress, anxiety, depression, substance

use, concern for a family/friend, or feelings of hopelessness. Pay attention to what is happening in the classroom and in the lives of your fellow students. There are numerous campus resources available to students including the University Counseling & Psychiatry Service and University Student Health Services. Help is available 24/7. Students who need immediate help should call 803-777-5223. An outside resource is the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255).

## SCHEDULE:

This is a rough schedule of topics and readings. It can change during the semester.

### Due Dates for Readings

### Assignments Due

8/20 Introduction

8/25 **PLATO:** *The Euthyphro*.

**1<sup>st</sup> Essay Assigned**

(I will post this text on Blackboard (**BB**). If you use it, please **PRINT** it and bring it to class.)

Assignments **in order**: 1<sup>st</sup> watch: “V1 The Socratic Method”

2<sup>nd</sup> Read: Plato “*The Euthyphro*,”

3<sup>rd</sup> watch “V2 Euthyphro pt. 1” “V3 Euthyphro pt. 2”

4<sup>th</sup> Do the writing assignment. Bring to class. I will collect it as attendance.

8/26 **4:00pm, to Blackboard**

**1<sup>ST</sup> Final**

8/27 *The Protagoras* (beginning to 328d) (remember the reading questions!)

9/1 LABOR DAY

9/3 *The Protagoras* (328d to 334c)

**2<sup>ND</sup> Assigned**

9/8 *The Protagoras* (334c to end)

9/10 *The Protagoras* (334c to end, esp. 351b-358a)

(Before writing the essay, watch V44 & V45 “On Writing”, and see H0)

9/12 **4:00pm, to Blackboard**

**2<sup>ND</sup> Draft**

9/15 **ARISTOTLE:** *Metaphysics* I.1 (**BB**, please **PRINT**!)

9/17 *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. I, ch. 1-5 (make sure to have the book)

9/19 **4:00pm, to Blackboard**

**2<sup>ND</sup> Comments**

9/22 **CYRENAICS:** Diogenes Laertius: “The life of Aristippus,” really read: §VIII, p. 89-91

(but I’ve included the whole thing to give you a sense of Diogenes; only skim the rest);

**EPICURIANISM:** Epicurus: “Letter to Menoceanus” & “Principal Doctrines”

These texts will be on Blackboard (**BB**), please **PRINT** them out before reading them.

9/23 **Begin Epicurean week! (Remember to journal each day)**

9/24 Epicurus: “Letter to Menoceanus” & “Principal Doctrines” cont. (please re-read)

9/26 **4:00pm, to Blackboard**

**2<sup>ND</sup> Final**

9/29 Cicero, Pro Epicureanism: *On Moral Ends*, Book I (esp. ¶42 to ¶54);

Thomas Jefferson to William Short, October 31, 1819 (**BB – Print!**)

9/30 **4:00pm, to Blackboard**

**Epicurean journal**

10/1	Cicero, Contra Epicureanism: <i>On Moral Ends</i> , Book II (esp. ¶6-10, ¶16-18, ¶28-30, ¶45-54, ¶71-74, ¶86-95)	<b>3<sup>RD</sup> Assigned</b>
10/6	Wrap-up Epicureanism	
10/8	<b>STOICISM:</b> Epictetus: “The Handbook” (our focus) Stockdale: “Master of My Fate” ( <b>BB – Print!</b> )	
10/9	<b>Begin Stoic week! (Remember to journal)</b>	
10/10	<b>4:00pm, to Blackboard</b>	<b>3<sup>RD</sup> Draft</b>
10/13	Epictetus cont., Cicero, Pro Stoicism: “On Moral Ends.” Book III (esp. ¶10-14, ¶16, ¶20-26, ¶32-34, ¶41-48, ¶50-53, ¶58-59)	
10/15	Cicero, Pro Stoicism: “On Moral Ends.” Book III cont.	
10/16	<b>4:00pm, to Blackboard</b>	<b>Stoic journal</b>
10/17	<b>4:00pm, to Blackboard</b>	<b>3<sup>RD</sup> Comments</b>
10/20	Cicero, Contra Stoicism: “On Moral Ends.” Book IV (esp. ¶23, ¶32-34, ¶37-40, ¶46, ¶48, ¶58-59, ¶64-69, ¶72, ¶75-77)	
10/22	Wrap up Epicureanism and Stoicism	
10/24	<b>4:00pm, to Blackboard</b>	<b>3<sup>RD</sup> Final</b>
10/27	<b>ARISTOTLE:</b> <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. I (esp. Ch. 1-5, 7)	
10/29	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. I (esp. Ch. 7)	
11/3	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. I (esp. Ch. 7-12)	
11/5	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. I (esp. 8-13)	
11/10	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. X (esp. X.6-9; cont. I.13)	<b>4<sup>TH</sup> Assigned</b>
11/12	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. X (esp. X.6-9)	
11/17	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. II	
11/19	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk. II	
11/24	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
11/26	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
12/1	Wrap-up Aristotle readings	
12/3	Discuss the 4 <sup>th</sup> paper	
11/22	<b>4:00pm, to Blackboard</b>	<b>4<sup>TH</sup> Final</b>