

# Philosophy and Political Thought 1

## Common Syllabus, 2018

Last updated 10 August, 2018<sup>1</sup>

Lecture, all groups: Tue, 9:25-10:20 AM, West Core Performance Hall  
Course facilitator: Neil Mehta (neil.jag.mehta@gmail.com)

Here are some hard questions:

- How should we live, individually and together?
- What is the nature of knowledge?
- What is the nature of reality?
- What is the nature of the self?

In this course, we take up these questions and many others. We do so by engaging with the philosophical and political thought of figures in ancient China, Greece, and India. (Next semester we turn to modern and contemporary figures.) These figures have started a conversation which has run for centuries; we will step into that conversation.

Along the way, we will learn to be good thinkers: to appreciate historical context, to pose helpful questions, to develop sensitive interpretations, to evaluate arguments. We will learn to be good discussants: to listen attentively, to speak thoughtfully, to converse with the aim of understanding rather than impressing. And we will learn to be good writers: to express ourselves with clarity, precision, and brevity.

Assignments:

The *common assessment* is shared by all PPT seminars and sums to 65% of your final grade. It comprises the following:

- Lecture reflections (5% of final grade)
- First paper (15% of final grade)
- Second paper (20% of final grade)
- Third paper (25% of final grade)

The *seminar assessment* is determined by your PPT instructor and sums to 35% of your final grade.

Policies:

You are expected to attend – and to be punctual for – all lectures and seminars. Lecture attendance will be taken into account via the lecture reflections exercise,

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<sup>1</sup> This syllabus is the collaborative creation of the Philosophy and Political Thought instructors at Yale-NUS College.

which will be described in the first lecture. For seminar, you will be permitted two unexcused absences without penalty. Further absences for a good reason will be excused by your seminar instructor, in consultation with your assistant dean.

Late papers will be marked down by 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., A- to B+) per day late.

Academic honesty is required, as detailed in the Student Handbook. We recommend that you avoid all external sources, such as outside philosophy texts or Wikipedia, unless explicitly instructed otherwise. Furthermore, we are aware that you have all received detailed instruction about the nature of plagiarism and the consequences of committing it. So please submit nothing but your best attempt to think through the material on your own. In particular, you must cite not only all direct quotations from any source, but additionally *all ideas paraphrased from any source*. Also be sure to include an acknowledgments section citing all intellectual influences, including the relevant PPT instructor(s) and your classmates. *Any plagiarized work will automatically be brought to the attention of a college-wide disciplinary committee.*

All required texts are listed below. Note well: These texts come in many different translations and editions. *If you do not have the version of the text that we will be using, then you will have a difficult time in seminar discussion.* You can use the ISBNs to ensure that you get the correct version.

P. Ivanhoe and B. Van Norden, eds. (2006). *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, second edition. Hackett. ISBN 978-0872207813.

Plato (2002). *Five Dialogues*, second edition. Tr. G. M. A. Grube, rev. John Cooper. Hackett. ISBN 978-0872206342.

Aristotle (2009). *Nicomachean Ethics*, revised edition (Oxford World Classics). Tr. D. Ross, rev. L. Brown. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0199213610.

Aristotle (2013). *Politics: Second Edition*. Tr. Carnes Lord. University of Chicago Press. ISBN 978-0226921846.

Flood and Martin (2012). *The Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation*. W. W. Norton & Co. ISBN 978-0393345131.

Epictetus (1983). *The Handbook*. Tr. N. White. Hackett. ISBN 978-0915145690.

Texts on Canvas, the course website:

Plato (1997). *Republic V*, 451c-457c. In J. Cooper & D. Hutchinson (eds.), *Complete Works* (pp. 1077–1085). Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett.

M. Waithe (1987). *Ancient Women Philosophers, 600 B.C.-500 A.D.* Boston.

M. Müller (ed.) (1890). *The Sacred Books of the East, vol. 35: The Questions of King Milinda*. T. W. Rhys Davids (Tr.) Oxford: Clarendon Press. ISBN 978-1378639450.

Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara (2016). “Nyāya-sūtra on the self.” Excerpts from the *Nyāya-bhāṣya* and *Nyāya-vārttika* (class handout). Trs. Matthew Dasti, Malcolm Keating, Stephen Phillips, Mark Siderits.

Vasubandhu (2016). “Vasubandhu on the self.” Excerpts from the *Autocommentary on the Treasury of the Dharma* (class handout). Trs. Matthew Kapstein, Mark Siderits.

## Reading schedule

### Unit 1: Ancient Chinese Traditions

All readings for this unit are in *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*. Note that many of these texts are simply named for their authors.

Week 1, starting 13 August. Lecturer: Andrew Bailey.

Mòzǐ, *Mòzǐ*, chapters 8, 11, 16, 25, 31, 32, 35.

Week 2, starting 20 August. Lecturer: Elton Chan.

Mèngzǐ, *Mèngzǐ*, pp. 117-157.

Week 3, starting 27 August. Lecturer: Cathay Liu.

Xúnzǐ, *Xúnzǐ*, chapters 1, 2, 8, 9, 17, 19-23, 27.

Week 4, starting 3 September. Lecturer: Bryan van Norden

Zhuāngzǐ, *Zhuāngzǐ*, chapters 1-4, 6-7.

Saturday, 8 September: First paper due at 11:59 PM.
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### Unit 2: Ancient Greek and Roman Traditions

Week 5, starting 10 September. Lecturer: Andrew Bailey.

Plato, *Meno*.

Week 6, starting 17 September. Lecturer: Simon Duffy.

Plato, *Crito*.

Saturday, 22 September to Sunday, 7 October: Fall break and LAB (Week 7).
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Week 8, starting 8 October. Lecturer: Matthew Walker.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, books 1, 2, 8.1-8.3, 9.9, 10.7-10.9.

Week 9, starting 15 October. Lecturer: Robin Zheng.

Aristotle, *Politics*, book 1.

Plato, *Republic*, book 5, 451c-457c.

Pythagorean women, selections on Canvas.

Saturday, 20 October: Second paper due at 11:59 PM.

Week 10, starting 22 October. Lecturer: Tsin Yen Koh.  
Epictetus, *Handbook*.

### Unit 3: Ancient Indian Traditions

Week 11, starting 29 October. Lecturer: Malcolm Keating.  
*Bhagavad Gītā*.

Week 12, starting 5 November. Lecturer: none – public holiday.  
*Bhagavad Gītā*, cont.

Week 13, starting 12 November. Lecturer: Neil Mehta.  
*The Questions of King Milinda* (on Canvas), book 2, chapters 1-2.

Week 14, starting 19 November. Lecturers: Elton Chan, Robin Zheng, et al.  
Vātsyāyana, *Nyāya-Bhāṣya ad NS* (on Canvas), 1.1.10.  
Uddyotakara, *Nyāyā-Vārttika ad NS* (on Canvas), 1.1.10.

Tue, 27 November: Third paper due at 11:59 PM.

## PPT 1 Common Writing Goals

Paper 1	<i>Careful reading, interpretation: what is the author saying, and how?</i>	600–900 words; 15%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading charitably</li> <li>• Identifying assumptions; unpacking metaphors</li> <li>• Understanding voicing (who is saying what)</li> <li>• Using quotations and paraphrasing</li> </ul>	
Paper 2	<i>Analysing a passage or argument; beginning evaluation</i>	900–1200 words; 20%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying evidence and argument structures</li> <li>• Appreciating what makes an argument a weak or a strong one, a good or bad one</li> <li>• Considering whether we've been given good reason to believe a claim, and what the best reason is</li> </ul>	
Paper 3	<i>Rendering judgment: arguing that an author's position or argument is a good/plausible or bad/improbable one</i>	1200–1500 words; 25%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stating an argument, raising an objection to claims or to transitions between claims</li> <li>• Considering and evaluating possible replies</li> <li>• Elaborating sympathetically on the views of a thinker (for instance, in the face of possible objections)</li> <li>• Considering different interpretations of a passage and defending one of them</li> </ul>	