Human life.
Then what can guide us?
Only philosophy.

—Marcus Aurelius

There is, I assure you, a medical art for the soul. It is philosophy, whose aid need not be sought, as in bodily diseases, from outside ourselves. We must endeavor with all our resources and all our strength to become capable of doctoring ourselves.

—Marcus Tullius Cicero

**Professor:** Dr. Alexander V. Stehn, alex.stehn@utrgv.edu

**Office hours in ARHU 359:** MW 3:05-4:15pm (and by appointment)

**Course Description:** This course will examine how Ancient Western philosophers understood philosophy as the task of cultivating themselves, their relationships, and their understanding of the world in order to live better, healthier, and happier lives. Since these thinkers approached philosophy as a transformative practice, we will practice philosophy in the same spirit as we study their works, experimenting with different ways of living to see if they contribute to our flourishing as human beings.

Beginning with Plato’s Socrates, we will consider what it means to take care of oneself. Next, we will turn to the philosophy of Aristotle to consider how practicing virtue and friendship are keys to a flourishing life. The remainder of the course will involve the study and practice the ways of life prescribed by the four other Hellenistic Schools (Epicureanism, Skepticism, Cynicism, & Stoicism).

All the philosophers we will study assume that their own societies are sick, so that most people’s desires and beliefs are disordered and dangerous. Each offers their philosophy as a cure—a course of physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual therapy—that can restore our health. The overarching aim of this course is to understand and evaluate the living relevance and truth of these ancient claims, in part by experimentally practicing their philosophies.

**Required Texts:**

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<tr>
<td>Aristotle</td>
<td>Sachs</td>
<td>Nicomachean Ethics</td>
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<td>Sextus Empiricus</td>
<td>Etheridge</td>
<td>Sextus Empiricus: Selections from the Major Writings</td>
<td>Hackett</td>
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<td>Epictetus</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Discourses, Fragments, Handbook</td>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>978-0199595181</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marcus Aurelius</td>
<td>Hays</td>
<td>Meditations</td>
<td>Modern Library</td>
<td>978-0812968255</td>
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**Recommended Texts:**

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<tr>
<td>Martha Nussbaum</td>
<td>The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics</td>
<td>Princeton UP</td>
<td>978-0691141312</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michel Foucault</td>
<td>The Hermeneutics of the Subject</td>
<td>Picador</td>
<td>978-0312425708</td>
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Grading Breakdown:
10%—Attendance
10%—Class Participation
10%—Experimental “Lab” Report
30%—Three Reflective Essays (10% each)
20%—Philosophical Notebook
20%—Final Project/Presentation

Attendance: I expect you to regularly attend and participate fully in this class. You should commit to missing a maximum of 4 classes, except in the most serious and exceptional cases (e.g., prolonged illness that requires extensive hospitalization). By keeping this commitment, you will earn 10 points (out of a possible 10) for the attendance portion of your final grade; students who miss more than 4 classes will lose 1 grade point for each absence. Students who wish to drop the course must initiate the drop themselves, since I do not drop students for nonattendance.

Class Participation: Upper division PHIL classes demand thoughtful discussion based on careful reading. Before each class, you are expected to carefully read the assigned text while reflecting upon what it means and why it matters, so that you will be ready to actively participate in class. Writing regularly in your Philosophical Notebook will help make this possible (see below). At the very least, students are welcome to attend class when they bring a copy of the assigned reading.

There are also ways of participating outside of class, including speaking with me during office hours or sending me your thoughts via email. Blackboard can also be used for commenting on the readings, asking general questions, and having discussions that extend beyond class. I will determine your participation grade after consulting the self-evaluation you will complete at the end of the course.

Experimental “Lab” Report: The concern of ancient philosophy is the art of living, and the ancient philosophers sought to intervene in the lives of their pupils by prescribing various exercises or practices. Since I am not an official representative of a particular philosophical school, and you have not enrolled in a particular course of therapy, we will approach these exercises and practices experimentally. Each of us will perform at least three experiments in which we attempt to live out or practice philosophy as understood by: 1) Aristotelianism, 2) Epicureanism, Skepticism, OR Cynicism; and 3) Stoicism.

Students will sign up for a day to present one of their experiments in living. In general, presentations should: give an account of the practice you developed, explain why you developed it, describe its effects on your physical/emotional/psychological/spiritual life, and present any philosophical insights gained. If you would prefer, you may conduct your experiment in groups of 2-4 students and present together (each student should contribute equally).

Philosophical Notebook: For ancient philosophers, the task of taking care of oneself (or cultivating one’s soul) was intimately related to the philosophical commandment to “know thyself”. To pursue these tasks, philosophers took personal notes on a daily basis to help them remember philosophical truths and practice them in their daily lives. These notebooks (hypomnemata, literally “memory supports”) are an example of what Michel Foucault called “technologies of the self” because they permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.” You are expected to follow in the footsteps of these ancient philosophers by keeping a philosophical notebook, much like the famous example that we will be reading for the first 12 weeks of class: Marcus Aurelius’ Meditations.
According to Foucault, "The hypomnemata constituted a material memory of things read, heard, or thought, thus offering these as an accumulated treasure for rereading and later meditation. They also formed a raw material for the writing of more systematic treatises in which were given arguments and means by which to struggle against some defect…or to overcome some difficult circumstance" (Ethics 273). In other words, think of your notebook as a technological device that you may use to: 1) record the most important things you’ve read/heard/thought 2) further meditate or develop your reflections upon these things; 3) explore who you were, who you are, and what you’d like to become in more depth than is usually possible in your hectic daily life; 4) cultivate your actions and character in light of these reflections; 5) think philosophically about your actions and experiences; and 6) keep track of your own philosophical development and thoughts as the course progresses. Sometimes, I will give you specific topics or assignments to address in your notebook, but your aim should be to develop the habit of regularly writing in your notebook to practice self-care, self-knowledge, and philosophy.

Three Reflective Essays: As described above, you will conduct three existential experiments, write about them in your notebook, and present a report on one of them to our class. You will also write three more formal or systematic essays that explain the most relevant doctrines of the philosophical school you are practicing, and then reflect upon what you learned about the philosophical school, yourself, and human flourishing by conducting your experiment.

Final Project/Presentation: In November, you are expected to propose a final project and accompanying class presentation based on your own interests in the course. You may also work in groups of 2-4 students. Projects should develop your understanding of Ancient Philosophy in a way that goes above and beyond our class discussion of the readings and other required assignments. There are several ways you might accomplish this, including (but not limited to!):

1. Conduct your own research on an issue related to Ancient Philosophy that wasn’t covered during our course, write a paper about it, and present your research to the class.
2. Write a paper that deepens your understanding of one of the thinkers or schools we have studied by reading more of their works as well as some relevant secondary scholarly literature, and present what you’ve learned to the class.
3. Write a paper that compares or integrates multiple philosophical positions from the course in order to develop your own personal philosophy, and present a summary version to the class.
4. Pick the philosophical school most attractive to you, connect with other classmates who are also interested, then develop a presentation explaining why your school is the best and why others should adopt this philosophy and/or its practices.
5. Pick the philosophical school most attractive to you, connect with other classmates who are also interested, then do something on campus or in the larger community to explain/demonstrate/promote your school. Present what you did and why you did it to the class.

I encourage you to design your final project/presentation in consultation with me during office hours. **The last day for submitting formal proposals is November 13th**, so that I have adequate time to review and modify proposals. **Presentations will take place after Thanksgiving.**

Policy on Extensions & Late Work: All assignments, including papers, are to be completed by the date indicated on the syllabus or announced in class. I do not mind granting extensions, provided that you let me know well in advance about your scheduling conflict. **To ask for an extension, email me (alex.stehn@utrgv.edu) a minimum of 24 hours before the due date, briefly let me know why you need an extension, and be sure to propose a specific new due date. Otherwise, your request will likely be denied.**
Scholastic Integrity: As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Learning Objectives for Philosophy Degree: This course may be taken to fulfill a requirement for a B.A. in Philosophy. Students who graduate with a degree in philosophy from UTRGV are expected to have attained a certain level of intellectual development which is characteristic of the intense study of philosophy. The goals for all philosophy classes that count towards the major in philosophy include, in combination with the particular goals for the course, the following objectives:

CRITICAL THINKING AND READING: Students will demonstrate well-developed critical thinking and reading skills orally and in writing.

HISTORY: Students will describe the history of Philosophy, by identifying and distinguishing between the major historical and conceptual divisions of philosophy, the positions within those divisions, and major thinkers who contributed to those periods and specializations.

COMMUNICATION: Students will exhibit well-developed oral and written communication skills; will respond effectively to questions and criticisms of presented material.

ALTERNATIVE POINTS OF VIEW: Students will demonstrate the capacity to accurately present, analyze and evaluate historically underrepresented philosophical concerns, positions and traditions.

PERSONAL, CIVIC, AND/OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Students will articulate and evaluate their various activities, identities, values, and goals in order to develop a flexible strategy for ongoing personal growth, community engagement, and/or professional achievement.

Students with Disabilities: Students with a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects academic performance) who would like to receive academic accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to initiate services. Accommodations can be arranged through SAS at any time, but are not retroactive. Students who suffer a broken bone, severe injury or undergo surgery during the semester are eligible for temporary services. Brownsville Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at ability@utrgv.edu. Edinburg Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Violence: In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “Responsible Employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect that is free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

Mandatory Course Evaluation Period: Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (http://my.utrgv.edu); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available Nov. 15-Dec. 6.

Final Note: This syllabus was composed in good faith, with a schedule that will guide us throughout the term. Still, the professor reserves the right to make reasonable adjustments. Any changes will be explained and communicated as far in advance as possible during class time or on Blackboard, and students are responsible for knowing about and adapting to any changes.
Tentative Schedule: (*Indicates text available on Blackboard*)

**DAILY:** Write in your Philosophical Notebook

**WEEKLY:** Read one book of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* per week for the first 12 weeks
(We will begin each Monday with a brief discussion of that week’s book of the *Meditations*)

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**Week 1:** Introduction
Mon, 8/28 Course Introduction: Living Ancient Philosophy
Wed, 8/30 *Nussbaum, The Therapy of Desire* (Intro & Ch 1)*
*Recommended: *Hadot, *The Inner Citadel* (23 pp)*

**Week 2:** Socrates and the Care of the Soul
Mon, 9/04 NO CLASS-LABOR DAY
Wed, 9/06 *Plato, The Defense of Socrates* [aka Apology]*
*Recommended:* *Foucault, 1/6/1982 First Hour (14 pp)*

**Week 3:** Socrates and the Care of the Soul (ctd.)
Mon, 9/11 *Plato, Alcibiades* (103a-124c)*
*Recommended:* *Foucault, 1/13/1982 First Hour (10 pp)*
Wed, 9/13 *Plato, Alcibiades* (124c-135e)*
*Recommended:* *Foucault, 1/13/1982 Second Hour (15 pp)*

**Week 4:** Aristotle's Guide to Eudaimonia
Mon, 9/18 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Bk. I—Happiness and Being-at-Work)
*Recommended:* *Nussbaum, "Medical Dialectic: Aristotle on Theory and Practice"* (30 pp)*
Wed, 9/20 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Bk. II—Virtue and the Mean)
*Recommended:* *Nussbaum, "Medical Dialectic: Aristotle on Theory and Practice" (ctd.)*

**ASSIGNED:** Begin Aristotelean Therapy/Exercise/Practice

**Week 5:** Friendship as Necessary for the Good Life
Mon, 9/25 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Bk. VIII—Friendship and Community)
*Meet with a friend to discuss your practice of virtue* (Dr. Stehn @ AFyL conference)

**Week 6:** Epicureanism: Pleasure as the Key to Eudaimonia
Mon, 10/02 *Epicurus, Hutchinson's Intro & "Letter to Menoceus" & "Letter to Idomeneus"*
*Recommended:* *Nussbaum, "Epicurean Surgery: Argument and Empty Desire"* (38 pp)*

**DUE:** Reflective Essay #1

**ASSIGNED Option #1:** Begin Epicurean Therapy/Exercise/Practice
Wed, 10/04 *Epicurus, Ancient Collections of Maxims* ("Principal Doctrines" & "Vatican Sayings")*
*Recommended:* *Nussbaum, "Epicurean Surgery: Argument and Empty Desire" (ctd.)*

**Week 7:** Skepticism: The Rejection of Dogmatism as the Key to Ataraxia (Tranquility)
Mon, 10/09 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Skepticism Book I* (31-72)
*Recommended:* *Nussbaum, "Skeptic Purgatives: Disturbance and the Life without Belief"* (36 pp)*

**ASSIGNED Option #2:** Begin Skeptic Therapy/Exercise/Practice
Wed, 10/11 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Skepticism Book III* on Ethics (188-205; 216)*
*Recommended:* *Sextus Empiricus, Outlines of Skepticism Book III on Ethics (188-205; 216)*
*Recommended:* *Nussbaum, "Skeptic Purgatives: Disturbance the Life without Belief" (ctd.)*
Week 8:  Cynicism: Reject Custom and Live like a King According to Nature
Mon, 10/16  *Miller, *Examined Lives* (Diogenes) & Desmond, *Cynicism* (77-92; 98-103; 132-141)*
ASSIGNED Option #3: Begin Cynic Therapy/Exercise/Practice
Wed, 10/18  *Desmond, *Cynicism* (150-161; 172-178)*
* Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse #6 on Diogenes*

Week 9:  From Cynicism to Stoicism
Mon, 10/23  *Diogenes, Sayings and Anecdotes* (selections)*
Wed, 10/25  *Musonius Rufus, "On Women & Philosophy" and "On Practicing Philosophy"*
Recommended: *Foucault, 2/24/1982 Second Hour (15 pp) & 3/17/1982 First Hour (16 pp)*
DUE: Reflective Essay #2

Week 10:  Stoic Protreptic & The Discipline of Desire
Mon, 10/30  Epictetus, *Discourses Book 1* (esp. 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.15, 1.18, 1.26)
Recommended: Gill's Introduction
ASSIGNED: Begin Stoic Therapy/Exercise/Practice
Wed, 11/01  Epictetus, *Discourses Book 2* (esp. 2.1, 2.9, 2.10, 2.12, 2.16, 2.18, 2.22)
Recommended: *Nussbaum, "Stoic Tonics: Philosophy & the Self-Government of the Soul" (43 pp)*

Week 11:  Stoic Therapy & The Discipline of Assent
Mon, 11/06  Epictetus, *Discourses Book 3* (esp. 3.2, 3.5, 3.8, 3.12, 3.15, 3.23)
Recommended: *Nussbaum, "Stoic Tonics: Philosophy & the Self-Government of the Soul" (ctd.)*
Wed, 11/08  Epictetus, *Discourses Book 4* (esp. 4.1)
Recommended: *Hadot, "The Stoicism of Epictetus" (18 pp)*

Week 12:  Stoic Advice & The Discipline of Action
Mon, 11/13  Final Discussion of Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*
Recommended: Foucault, 2/24/1982 First Hour (25 pp)
Wed, 11/15  Irvine, "Introduction: A Plan for Living" (14 pp)

Week 13:  Living Stoicism I
Mon, 11/20  Irvine, "Negative Visualization" (20 pp)
Recommended: Foucault, 3/24/1982 First & Second Hours (19 pp)
Wed, 11/22  Irvine, "The Dichotomy of Control" (17 pp)
DUE: Reflective Essay #3

Week 14:  Living Stoicism II (& Final Presentations)
Mon, 11/27  Irvine, "Self-Denial" and "Insults"
Wed, 11/29  Irvine, "On Luxurious Living"

Week 15:  Course Wrap-Up (& Final Presentations)
Mon, 12/04  Irvine, "On Becoming a Stoic" & "Practicing Stoicism"
Wed, 12/06  Course Review: Putting Everything Together

Week 16:  Remaining Final Presentations
Mon, 12/11  1:15-3:00 p.m.