

*“Just as there is no use in a medical art that does not cast out the sicknesses of bodies, so too there is no use in philosophy, unless it casts out the suffering of the soul.” -Epicurus*

### **Phil 3301.01: Ancient Philosophy**

UTRGV, Fall 2018

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:40-2:55pm, ELABN 106

Professor: Dr. Mariana Alessandri

Office: ELABS 302 (across from elevator)

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 8:30-9:15am & 4-4:30pm; Thursdays, 3-4pm (and by appointment)

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#### **Required Texts**

Plato, *Symposium*. Robin Waterfield, trans. Oxford World’s Classics. ISBN 978-0199540198

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Joe Sachs, trans. Focus Publishing. ISBN 978-1585100354

Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*. Robin Hard, trans. Oxford World Classics. ISBN 978-0199595181

William Irvine, *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy*. Oxford UP. ISBN 978-0195374612

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*. Gregory Hays, trans. Modern Library. ISBN 978-0812968255

#### **Web Resources**

<http://modernstoicism.com/>

<https://historyofphilosophy.net/home>

<https://dailystoic.com/>

*“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 endeavour with all our resources and strength to become capable of doctoring ourselves.” Cicero*

This semester we will play with the metaphor of a philosopher as a doctor of the soul. Each philosopher we study diagnosed his society with a sickness and prescribed the exact same medicine: practice philosophy. The trick about medicine, though, is that only you can administer it to yourself, if you choose to. *Askesis* is the ancient term for *practice and discipline*. For Socrates, *askesis* involved talking to and learning from other people. For Aristotle, it meant living a virtuous life surrounded by decent people. For the Stoics, contemplating death, journaling, physical exercise, friendship, and meditation were all part of *askesis*. We will try all of these practices this semester in an attempt to become healthier, happier, more balanced, and less prone to anxiety.

#### **Course Objectives**

- 1) What I want you to know:** After taking this class, I want you to have an understanding of ancient philosophy as a way of life. I want you to know each philosopher’s diagnosis of the world as well as their philosophical cure. I want you to be able to distinguish between the different Stoic philosophers.
- 2) What I want you to do:** Read philosophy every night and journal about it. Read Marcus every week. Come to class ready to get into the weeds of life: sorrow, worry, pain, happiness, joy, love. Practice the art of living by doing the exercises the Ancients recommend. Push yourself to a new philosophical level: merge the intellectual with the physical. Make this class become real and not just a requirement.
- 3) Who I want you to be:** I want you to be a precise thinker who moves intentionally through your world, informed by ancient philosophy. I want you read, write, think, and live well.

#### **Grade Breakdown (A: 90-100; B: 80-89.9; C: 70-79.9; D: 60-69.9; F: below 60)**

Attendance*	10%
Participation	10%
Mi Cueva Project	15%
Ancient Self-Care Project and Presentation	15%

Speech on Love/ <i>Discurso Sobre el Amor</i>	10%
Philosophical Journal	15%
Final Project (TBD)	15%
<u>Final Project Class Presentation</u>	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%

**\*Attendance (10%):** You have 4 days for which you will not be penalized for missing class. These are your “sick days” to do what you please with. You may use your sick days for athletics, religious holidays, university activities, military service, illness, or any other reason. Please do not bring me a doctor’s note. If you stay within the 4 sick-day allowance you will earn a full 10 percent for attendance. If you miss 5 or more classes, you will lose one point for each class missed. If you miss more than 10 classes, you will fail the course, so be sure to drop if you don’t want the F.

**Participation (10%):** You don’t have to be an extrovert to get full credit for participation. Quiet students are usually thoughtful, so get creative! You can speak in class about the readings (but be conscientious about the other class members). You can have conversations about the readings outside of class and tell me about them. You can talk to me during office hours or form an Ancient philosophy book club or other kind of Ancient philosophy club. You will report to me in writing at the end of the semester assessing your class participation.

**Mi Cueva (15%):** We will be introduced to Plato by reading his allegory of the cave, which you may already be familiar with (its ok if you are not). You will create a presentation on what this cueva, or cave, looks like in your life here in the RGV. You will collect items from home, take photos, make a video, use poster-board, or any other creative thing you can think of and bring it in to class to show everyone. It should have a visual component and an oral component. It may also have a written component, but it doesn’t need to.

**Discurso Sobre el Amor (Speech on Love) (10%):**

This semester, we will read Plato’s *Symposium*, which amounts to a group of grown sober men gathered to give speeches on love. We are bringing Plato to the Valley community by creating our own, modern-day speeches on love and present them in a public space. You will get extra points for memorizing your speech. Togas optional.

**Ancient Self-Care Practice (15%):** 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. Each of you will make two attempts to practice philosophy as understood by Aristotle and the Stoics.

You will sign up for a day to present only **one** of your experiments. Your presentation should detail 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 prefer, you may conduct your experiment in groups of 2-4 and present together (each student should contribute equally and you will be graded as a group).

**Philosophical Journal (15%):** For ancient philosophers, the task of taking care of yourself (or cultivating your soul) was intimately related to the philosophical commandment to “know thyself”. Philosophers journaled daily to help them remember philosophical truths and practice them. 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 philosophers by keeping a journal much like the famous example of 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). Think of your journal 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. I will collect these from time to time.

### **Final Project (15%) and Presentation (10%)**

We will determine what the final project and presentation will be during the course. Think of ideas—I have some, but I am not fully satisfied by any of them.

**Lateness:** I accept papers late in cases of emergency when consulted ahead of time, for a grade deduction.

### **Optional Popcorn and Pláticas Reading Group**

Every Tuesday from 3-4 in my office (ELABS 302) there will be a book group dedicated to reading Victor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*. This book is on the top of a lot of famous people's lists of favorite books. The calendar of reading will be posted on my door and on Blackboard.

*Since a human being happens to be neither soul alone nor body alone, but a composite of these two things, someone in training must pay attention to both. He should, rightly pay more attention to the better part, namely the soul, but he should also take care of the other parts, or part of him will become defective. The philosopher's body also must be well prepared for work because often virtues use it as a necessary tool for the activities of life.<sup>1</sup> -Musonius Rufus*

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**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:

1. **CRITICAL THINKING AND READING:** Students will demonstrate well-developed critical thinking and reading skills orally and in writing.
2. **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.
3. **COMMUNICATION:** Students will exhibit well-developed oral and written communication skills; will respond effectively to questions and criticisms of presented material.
4. **ALTERNATIVE POINTS OF VIEW:** Students will demonstrate the capacity to accurately present, analyze and evaluate historically underrepresented philosophical concerns, positions and traditions.
5. **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.

**Academic Honesty:** 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, 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.

**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

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<sup>1</sup> *Musonius Rufus: Lectures and Sayings*, trans. Cynthia King (CreateSpace.com, 2011), 63, Lecture 6.  
<http://modernstoicism.com/show-me-your-shoulders-the-stoic-workout/>

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](http://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 in an environment free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

**Course Drops:** According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the "3-peat rule" and the "6-drop" rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop rule refers to Texas law that dictates that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform your instructor and contact Student Accessibility Services to schedule an appointment to initiate services. It is recommended that you schedule an appointment with Student Accessibility Services before classes start. However, accommodations can be provided at any time. 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 [accessibility@utrgv.edu](mailto:accessibility@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 [accessibility@utrgv.edu](mailto:accessibility@utrgv.edu).

**Student Services:** Students who demonstrate financial need have a variety of options when it comes to paying for college costs, such as scholarships, grants, loans and work-study. Students should visit the Students Services Center (U Central) for additional information. U Central is located in BMAIN 1.100 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 1.145 (Edinburg) or can be reached by email ([ucentral@utrgv.edu](mailto:ucentral@utrgv.edu)) or telephone: (888) 882-4026. In addition to financial aid, U Central can assist students with registration and admissions.

Students seeking academic help in their studies can use university resources in addition to an instructor's office hours. University Resources include the Learning Center, Writing Center, Advising Center and Career Center. The centers provide services such as tutoring, writing help, critical thinking, study skills, degree planning, and student employment. Locations are:

- Learning center: BSTUN 2.10 (Brownsville) or ELCTR 100 (Edinburg)
- Writing center: BLIBR 3.206 (Brownsville) or ESTAC 3.119 (Edinburg)
- Advising center: BMAIN 1.400 (Brownsville) or ESWKH 101 (Edinburg)
- Career center: BCRTZ 129 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 2.101 (Edinburg)

### **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 on or about November 15 – December 5.

## Tentative Schedule

**DAILY: Write in your philosophical journal**

**WEEKLY: Read one chapter from Marcus Aurelius' Meditations for the first 12 weeks of class**

**\*Indicates Blackboard Reading\***

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Socrates and the Care of the Soul</b>
Aug 28	Introduction to Ancient Philosophy: How Shall I Live?
Aug 30	*Plato, <i>Republic</i> , "The Allegory of the Cave"* Begin working on your Cueva
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Plato's Cave and Nuestros Cuevas</b>
Sept 4	*Plato, <i>Apology</i> * Recommended: *Foucault, "Technologies of the Self" (223-251)*
Sept 6	Presentations on Nuestros Cuevas
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Socrates and the Care of the Soul</b>
Sept 11	Presentations on Nuestros Cuevas / Plato, <i>Symposium</i> (read half of the speeches)
Sept 13	Plato, <i>Symposium</i> , continued (read the other half of the speeches) Begin working on your speech on love
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Love and Discursos Sobre el Amor</b>
Sept 18	*Plato, <i>Alcibiades</i> (103a-124c)*
Sept 20	*Plato, <i>Alcibiades</i> (124c-135e)*
Sept 21	<b>PM: Discursos Sobre el Amor, location TBA</b>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Aristotle's Guide to Eudaimonia</b>
Sept 25	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (Bk. I—Happiness and Being-at-Work)
Sept 27	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (Bk. II—Virtue and the Mean) Begin <b>Aristotelean</b> Therapy/Exercise/Practice
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Friendship as Necessary for the Good Life</b>
Oct 2	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (Bk. VIII—Friendship and Community) Recommended: *Foucault, "Self-Writing"* (will help with Experiment & Notebook)
Oct 4	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (Bk. IX—Friendship and the Self)
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Stoicism</b>
Oct 9	*Musonius Rufus, "On Women & Philosophy" & "On Practicing Philosophy"*
Oct 11	Epictetus, <i>Discourses Book 1</i> , chapters 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.15, 1.18, 1.26 Recommended: Gill's Introduction Begin <b>Stoic</b> Therapy/Exercise/Practice
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Stoic Protreptic &amp; The Discipline of Desire</b>
Oct 16	Epictetus, <i>Discourses Book 2</i> , chapters 1, 9, 10, 12, 16, 18, 22
Oct 18	Epictetus, <i>Discourses Book 3</i> , chapters 2, 5, 8, 12, 15, 23
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>The Discipline of Assent and Anger</b>
Oct 23	Epictetus, <i>Discourses Book 4</i> , chapter 1 Recommended: *Hadot, "The Stoicism of Epictetus" (18 pp)*
Oct 25	*Seneca, "On Anger, Book 3"*
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Grief and Tranquility</b>
Oct 30	*Seneca, "Consolation to Marcia"*
Nov 1	*Seneca, "On Tranquility of Mind"*

<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Living Stoicism I</b>
Nov 6	*Seneca, Letters 48, 53, 78, 90, 108*
Nov 8	Irvine, "Introduction: A Plan for Living" (14 pp)
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Living Stoicism II</b>
Nov 13	Irvine, "Negative Visualization" (20 pp)
Nov 15	Irvine, "The Dichotomy of Control" (17 pp)
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>Living Stoicism III</b>
Nov 20	Irvine, "Self-Denial," "Insults," "Anger"
Nov 22	No classes: Thanksgiving
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Living Stoicism IV</b>
Nov 27	Irvine, "On Luxurious Living"
Nov 29	Irvine, "On Becoming a Stoic" & "Practicing Stoicism"
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>Course Review: Putting Everything Together</b>
Dec 4	Final Presentations
Dec 7-13 (Date TBA)	Remaining Final Presentations during Finals Week DUE: Final Project (Please bring a hard copy of your final essay/project)