Ancient Athens produced the two philosophical thinkers that tower over all who came before and all who came after: Plato (c.427-c.347 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC). These thinkers, from the period of the flourishing of ancient Greek culture, effectively invented the practice of philosophy that has shaped and transformed Western culture and, indeed, world-culture. The Greek philosophers were especially concerned with describing accurately the nature of reality, and then trying to understand the place of the human being within reality. We will read major texts by Plato and Aristotle on the nature of reality, the nature of knowledge, ethics and politics, contextualized by other writings by Greek and Roman authors.

We will begin with a short introduction to the philosophy of Pythagoras (c.570-c.490 BC), a somewhat mysterious figure who was nonetheless of profound importance for the entire subsequent tradition of Greek (and, indeed, Western) philosophy. We will consider Pythagorean insights in mathematical and musical form. We will then turn to the figure of Socrates (c.469-399 BC), another profoundly significant figure who left no writings of his own, but whose distinctive philosophical practice was the subject of substantial writings by his near-contemporaries, most importantly Xenophon (430-354 BC) and Plato. Though Plato’s Socratic dialogues (i.e., dramatic portrayals of conversations Socrates had with others) will be our primary focus here, we will begin with a short selection from Xenophon’s Memoirs of Socrates, and contrast the portrayals of Socrates in Xenophon and Plato. From Plato, we will read substantial portions of two large dialogues, the Phaedo and the Phaedrus, in which Socrates investigates the distinctive characteristics of human beings; specifically, we will focus on the nature of the mind (nous) and of sexuality (erōs). We will then turn to Aristotle for the more technical study of the human soul, focusing especially on the basic concept of nature (phusis) and on the distinctive characteristics of human nature, especially learning and politics. Socrates, Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle are all Athenian writers, writing around the time of the Peloponnesian War—the civil war in Greece that brought about the end of the system of Greek “city-states” (poleis). After our study of these figures, we will conclude the course by reading Cicero (106-43 BC), a Roman writer highly influenced by Plato and Aristotle whose writings about ethics and politics are framed by the rise and the assassination of Julius Caesar, and the very different world of the emerging Roman Empire.
The class will use the following translations of the primary texts. Not all translations are equally good. I have chosen these translations because of their high quality. Many translations—especially free ones are the internet—are highly misrepresentative.

Xenophon, *Conversations of Socrates*, trans. Tredennick and Waterfield, (Penguin)
Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. Brann, Kalkavage and Salem, (Focus)
Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Scully, (Focus)

**Schedule of Readings.**
You must complete the following readings in advance of the course meeting, and come to class prepared to discuss the material. Bring your text with you to class!

**Pythagoras and Socrates**

Sept 16  Pythagoras and Pre-Socratic philosophy

Sept 23  Socrates I: Xenophon
  *Memoirs of Socrates* I.1-2, pp 68-85
  *The Dinner-Party*, 7-8, pp 256-65

**Plato**

Sept 30  Socrates II: Plato
  *Phaedo*,
  --The soul (psuchē), [death] and mathematical knowledge
  57a-69e (pp 27-42) and 73c-77a (47-52)

Oct 7    Plato, *Phaedo*,
  --The mind (nous) and the structure of reality
  78c-79e (pp 54-6) and 95e-102a (pp 75-82)

Oct 14   Plato, *Phaedrus*, 1st speeches: 227a-243e (pp 1-24)
  --Erotic love (erōs) and the soul I
  **NB: in-class test for first portion of class.**

  --Erotic love (erōs) and the soul II

**Aristotle**

  --The soul and the body.
  --Nature (phusis)
  --Cause
  **NB: Short Critical Essay due.**
Assignments:
In addition to doing the assigned readings in advance of class, and coming to class prepared to discuss them, you are required to complete the following assignments.

1. In-class test on Pythagoras, Xenophon and Plato, October 14: 25%
   The test will include essay questions, primarily focused on issues of philosophical method, mathematical knowledge and mind.

2. Short critical essay on Plato, due October 28: 25%
   This will be a paper, about 5 pages in length, on the nature of the human soul as that is studied in the Phaedo and the Phaedrus.

3. Short critical essay on Aristotle, due November 25: 25%
   This will be a paper, about 5 pages in length, reflecting critically on the discussion in Aristotle’s texts of the human soul, especially in relation to learning and politics.

4. Final Examination, December 9: 25%
   This will be a comprehensive examination, that is, it will include questions on all of the material from the course.
Course Objectives:

1. The single most important objective of this class is to get each of you individually to take your own lives seriously, and to reflect with care, subtlety and insight on how you are shaping your life and on what you can do to make for yourself a fulfilling present and future. These writers are not presenting you with dry facts about the external world, but are calling upon you to participate in reflection on your own experience and, through that reflection, to engage actively and self-critically in shaping how you exist.

2. In addition to offering profound and subtle reflections on how we make meaningful lives for ourselves, the writers we are studying this term are also some of the most rigorous and sophisticated thinkers our culture has ever produced. Engaging with their thoughts should teach you to be much more discerning and articulate in your understanding of many aspects of reality, and should make you a better thinker generally.

3. You should become familiar with the specific insights and ideas of these philosophers about what nature is, about the distinctive nature of human life, about knowledge, about virtue, about happiness, about art, about sexuality and more.

4. Finally, these are some of the most formative thinkers in the history of human culture. Studying these figures is also helping you to become cognizant of the nature of the world you live in, and how it came to develop the form that it has.
E-mail Communication
As per University regulations, all students are required to check their uoguelph.ca e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement
When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, ID#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:
http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml

Drop Date
The last date to drop one-semester Fall 2015 courses, without academic penalty, is November 6, 2015. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar:
http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml

Copies of out-of-class assignments
Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Student Rights and Responsibilities
Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities which, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:
http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c14/c14-strightsrespon.shtml

Academic Misconduct
The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:
http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml

Recording of Materials
Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources
The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph’s procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at:
http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/

If you find yourself in difficulty, contact the undergraduate advisor in your program, or the BA Counseling Office: http://www.uoguelph.ca/baco/contact.shtml