

College of Arts – Online Course Outline

Course Code:	Section:	Semester:
PHIL*4400	01	W15
Course Title: Major Texts in Philosophy		
Instructor: K. Dorter		
Brief Course Synopsis: <p>A seminar course on Plotinus, the first systematic philosopher in Western philosophy (c. 203-270 CE). Plotinus considered himself to be systematizing Plato's philosophy but was in fact an original thinker who founded the tradition of Neoplatonism, an important influence on later philosophers who were quite different in other respects, such as Aquinas, Spinoza, Hegel, and Whitehead. His system is a kind of counterpart to that of Hegel. Where Hegel's system is a bottom-up evolution, a teleology of the Absolute, Plotinus's system is a top-down devolution, a self-differentiation of the One. In that respect Plotinus is to Hegel as Plato is to Aristotle. Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in his work, partly as a result of increased interest in holistic thinking and in exploring alternatives to reductionism. Even apart from the intrinsic interest of his philosophy as a whole, Plotinus' discussions of free will, the problem of evil, and aesthetics, among others, have been deservedly influential and are of continuing interest.</p> <p>Requirements are two exegetical seminars or essays, depending on enrolment.</p> <p>Text: Plotinus, <i>The Enneads</i> (Courselink) [Plotinus' essays were collected into six "groups of nine" or <i>enneads</i> by his student Porphyry.]</p>		