

PHIL 70A section 01, “Ancient Philosophy”
MW 10:30-11:45, SH 241 / in-person
Spring 2023

Instructor: Prof. James Lindahl
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Philosophy 70A covers the origins of ancient philosophical traditions and their development through the end of the Middle Ages. We will begin by examining wisdom traditions around the world from the West to India and China. We will also explore wisdom traditions within the world’s ancient religions before moving on to the development of natural philosophy in and around the Mediterranean. From there we will focus in great detail on the works of Plato and Aristotle before moving on to a few key figures from Roman and Medieval philosophers. In all cases, we will explore not only the ideas elaborated by the various characters we study but also the social contexts in which their ideas arise.

Big questions in ancient philosophy: What is the world made of? How do we know anything? Is it better to be politically active or avoid the whole quagmire? How do we know what is “good?” Does God know the day of your death? How did the dog come to be “man’s best friend?” And more....

Philosophy 70A satisfies GE area C2: Humanities and Arts, Letters