

Scientific Thought I

Philosophy 317/History 363

Basic Information

Fall 2009

Professor: Patrick Maher, e-mail patrick@maher1.net, phone 333-0253, office 219A Gregory Hall, office hours Monday and Wednesday 2-3 or by appointment.

Description: This course is a survey of science and philosophy of science from the 6th century BCE to the 17th century CE, based on primary sources. We will begin with philosopher/scientists of ancient Greece whose writings have survived only in fragments (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Philolaus, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Democritus), then proceed to more extended discussions of selections from Euclid, Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Copernicus, Bacon, Galileo, Descartes, and Newton. One focus of the course is to compare philosophers' theories of scientific reasoning with the arguments used by scientists. There is no prerequisite.

Web site: patrick.maher1.net/317. Has everything you need, including this document. If you forget the URL, just Google "Patrick Maher".

Textbook: None. Everything you need is on the web site.

Quizzes: There will be nine true-false quizzes done on Compass. Each quiz will cover the previous four lectures. See the web site for dates and details.

Exams: There will be three 50-minute exams done in class. Each exam will consist of a selection of questions from the lecture notes for the previous twelve lectures. See the web site for dates and details.

Grading: The quizzes together count for 25% of the grade and each exam counts for 25% of the grade. Grades will be posted on Compass. The grading scale is:

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
95-100	90-94	85-89	80-84	75-79	70-74	65-69	60-64	55-59	50-54	45-49	40-44	0-39

Class attendance: Isn't required or graded. Since the lecture notes are on the web you may then think there is no reason to attend the lectures but in fact there is a strong correlation between attendance and grades. The reasons are (1) in class you can ask about things you don't understand, (2) I sometimes say more than I have put in the lecture notes, (3) I explain what is wrong or missing from students' answers to the questions, and (4) students who attend class aren't leaving preparation for quizzes and exams until the last minute.

Information from the class schedule: Classes are 1:00-1:50 MWF in 331 Gregory Hall.