# COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY

**TOPIC FOR MAY 2015 – AUGUST 2015**

**(Re-sit January 2016)**

**Ancient Greek and Roman Theories of Knowledge**

Central issues include: What is knowledge? How is it possible? If it is not possible,

why is this the case? If it is possible, by what methods is it attainable? The philosophers called “dogmatists” by the ancient Skeptics claimed to be justified in believing certain propositions. How did the Skeptics attack the claims of these philosophers to be justified in holding these beliefs? How did the philosophers respond to these Skeptical attacks?

# Primary Sources

**Presocratics**

**Recommended Text:** *Philosophy Before Socrates*, by Richard D. McKirahan.

Fragments, testimony, and commentary for Thales, Anaximenes, Anaximander, Pythagoras, Parmenides, Zeno, Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Democritus.

# Plato

**Recommended Text**: *Plato, Complete Works*, by John Cooper.

Discussions bearing on the topic are widely scattered throughout Plato’s dialogues. It would be useful to consult the recommended texts’ index entries for such terms as knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, understanding, belief, opinion, thought, appearance, imagination, dialectic and division. It is clear, however, that any adequate preparation for the examination requires at least the study of the following texts: *Apology*, *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, especially books 4-7, *Phaedrus*  265c-279c, *Theatetus, Sophist, Philebus* 14b-20a,and *Statesman*.

# Aristotle

**Recommended Text:** *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volumes I-II*, by Jonathan Barnes.

As with Plato, discussions bearing on the topic can be found throughout Aristotle’s works. But again, any adequate preparation for discussing Aristotle on the topic would require the study of all or some of the following texts: *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations*, *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*, *Parva Naturalia* (esp. *On Memory* and *Sense and Sensibilia*) and *Nicomachean Ethics* books6 and 10, chapters 7-9.

# Hellenistic Philosophers

**Recommended Text:** *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, *Volume I (and volume 2 if you wish to consult the Greek and Latin texts, notes on these, and the bibliography)*, by A.A. Long and D. Sedley. Read the parts of volume 1 entitled Introduction, Early Pyrrhonism, Epicureanism (sections 7, 14, and 15 under Physics, all of Epistemology, and section 25 under Ethics), Stoicism (section 26 on the philosophical curriculum, Logic and Semantics, and Epistemology: Stoics and Academics), The Academics, and The Pyrrhonist Revival.

# Secondary Sources

I recommend consulting Terry Irwin’s book, *Classical Philosophy* as a start to your preparation. It will give you a simple but synoptic view of the landscape. Read, in particular, chapters III-VII. After this, turn to the primary sources. Once you have worked through the primary sources, you may wish to study more detailed and sophisticated secondary source materials. For information about these sources, meet with Tim Roche or other members of the committee. I will post additional information on my public folder in UMdrive by the first week in March. Go to the folder called Ancient Comp Documents. The address is: <https://umdrive.memphis.edu/troche/public>.