

Philosophy 211: First Assignment
The Presocratics

*Hand in your paper on or before **Tuesday, October 21st**.*

Please make use of my office hours for planning, drafting and/or reviewing your paper. Besides my regular hours (Tu/Th 1.30-3.30pm) I am often in on Wednesdays (effective office hours, 10am-4pm). Otherwise, arrange for a time by phone or email.

Presocratics: answer one of the following in at least 5 pages:

1. (1) Explain the difference between *myth* and (scientific) *theory*. Illustrate your claims by considering (some of) the theories of Thales, Anaximander, Xenophanes, or Democritus. (2) Say something about the circumstances under which scientific or philosophical thinking arises and flourishes.
2. Democritus responds to Parmenides and Zeno. Explain fully how this is so. Is atomism the only solution (or a solution at all) to Zeno's paradoxes?
3. "If cows had gods, their gods would be cows". Explain fully the significance of this claim by Xenophanes. Also, interpret his claim that god does not resemble us *in body or in thought*. Overall, what is Xenophanes' own view of god?
4. Does Pythagoras, or Plato, make a good case for belief in reincarnation? (Make sure that you *compare* the different theories of reincarnation.)

If there is any other idea you would rather write about connected with the Presocratics, please suggest it to me and I will consider it. Also, I have further written material that will be useful for all of these questions. Once you have decided what you will probably write on, make sure you collect some of that material from me.