I recall taking a “History of Ethics” course in my undergraduate years, and I was curious as to why it was called “history” but I did not receive credit for it as a “History” course. I learned that the term “history” used in the context of Philosophy courses primarily means that a historical approach will be used to structure the course and guide examination, as opposed to, for example, a course structured around topical examinations. This book is primarily ordered in chronological or “historical” order first and is then topically organized within that historical context.

Of course, what constitutes “Ancient Philosophy” is sufficiently vague, and in this course, since we are in a Western country, the “History of Ancient Philosophy” refers almost exclusively to a rather brief time period in the areas very geographically close to, and including, modern Greece. It all begins in the 6th century BCE with the grandfather of all philosophy, Thales of Miletus, and ends some time before the 6th century CE with the last remnants of non-Christian Roman Philosophers. There are some religious Philosophers thrown in there, but these Roman “Philosophers” were primarily historians and commentators on the Greek thinkers that came centuries before them. This isn’t to dismiss their work, as their views on the Philosophers were insightful and helped to preserve their work when the actual texts for many of the Ancient Greeks had been lost to time.
1: The Start of Western Philosophy and the Pre-Socratics

• 2: Socrates and Plato

• 3: Aristotle

• 4: Post-Socratics and Hellenistic Thought
5: Other Parts of the Ancient World and Parallels to the West

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Thumbnail: The Death of Socrates. (Public Domain; Jacques-Louis David via Wikipedia)