ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF LIFE

Stoicism, Epicureanism, Buddhism, and Skepticism at King Menander's Court

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Instructor's Manual



Philosophical debate, silver plate, eastern Mediterranean, 500–600 CE. J. Paul Getty Museum, 83.AM.342. Digital image courtesy of Getty's Open Content Program.

A Classroom Simulation

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GAME OVERVIEW

Ancient Philosophy as a Way of Life is a two-session classroom simulation set at the court of the Indo-Greek king Menander at Sāgala around 150 BCE. Menander has won wars, wealth, and fame, and he still does not know how he should live. Four delegations (Stoic, Epicurean, Buddhist, and Skeptic) have come to his court to answer him. Each explains its philosophy, leads the court through a brief philosophical exercise, and advises members of the royal household on dilemmas involving ambition, grief, family obligation, wrongdoing, public duty, and uncertainty. At the end, every court member must give allegiance to one of the four schools.

The game treats ancient philosophy as its practitioners did: as a way of life to be tested in practice, and not only as a set of doctrines to be evaluated. Students do not just hear that the Stoics distinguished what is up to us from what is not, or that Buddhists observed the mind in meditation. They try these things, and then they argue about whether an exercise that helps is evidence that the philosophy behind it is true.

At a glance	Summary
Class size	7 to 30 students
Class time	Two 75-minute meetings (preparation and court), with a 10–15-minute debrief in the next class. An optional three-session format includes extended debate and debriefing in the third meeting.
Roles	Up to 21 philosophers in four factions and 3 to 9 court members. The instructor is the Game Master (GM).
Student preparation	The gamebook (about 25 pages of text), a two-page private role sheet, a faction handout, and a short set of role-specific primary sources.
Decisions	Each court member votes for one school. Menander awards one year of royal patronage. Each faction rates the quality of the court's deliberation.
Prior knowledge	None. The game has been run in a leadership ethics course with students who had not studied ancient or Buddhist philosophy.

How the game is won

There are three separate results, and they can come apart.

- **Allegiance.** A faction wins outright if it receives more votes than any other faction. An absolute majority is not required. If two or more factions tie for the highest number of allegiance votes, each tied faction earns a partial victory.
- **Royal patronage.** Menander awards one year of patronage to one faction. This is a secondary objective for every faction, and it is independent of the allegiance vote, including Menander's own.
- **Philosophical deliberation.** After the votes, each faction rates the court from 1 to 5. The court earns full victory for an average of at least 4.0, partial victory for 3.5 to below 4.0, and no victory below 3.5. Give these thresholds only to court members through their private role sheets, not to the factions. When announcing results, report the average rating without stating whether the court won.

The third result is what keeps the court honest. Court members cannot win by picking a side; they win by understanding the positions, asking hard questions, and giving reasons that even the factions they rejected can respect.

PEDAGOGICAL GOALS/UTILITY

Learning Goals of this Game

The gamebook gives students four learning goals. They are repeated here word for word and numbered so that the debriefing questions and follow-up assignments later in this manual can refer to them. By the end of the game, students should be able to:

- **LG1.** Explain and compare four ancient approaches to happiness, suffering, and the good life.
- **LG2.** Apply philosophical ideas to difficult decisions involving relationships, ambition, responsibility, and loss.
- **LG3.** Evaluate philosophical arguments using primary sources, serious objections, and evidence.
- **LG4.** Understand how philosophy can be practiced in everyday life, while distinguishing the usefulness of a practice from the truth of the philosophy behind it.

Recommended Course Usage

The game fits introductory philosophy and ethics courses, ancient philosophy, Buddhist or comparative philosophy, world religions, intellectual history, and leadership studies. It was written for a leadership ethics capstone, where it anchors a unit on meaningful lives: the court is a small picture of the problem every leader faces, which is how to act well with power, obligations to others, incomplete knowledge, and one's own fears.

The game needs no prerequisite knowledge. The gamebook introduces the setting and each school in four to five pages. In my classes, four short stations give students a quick, active introduction to the schools, but the stations are optional. Lectures,

guided discussion, or other activities can serve the same purpose. With few rules and no hidden mechanics, the game also works well as a first classroom role-playing simulation.

The game supports 7 to 30 students with one court. Seven is the minimum: three court members and one philosopher from each school. The court grows as class size increases—five members for 17–23 students, seven for 24–28, and nine for 29–30. At 29 students the four factions have five members each; at 30 the additional place goes to the Buddhists. See Role Management for an assignment table covering every class size. A larger court requires a shorter public dilemma phase and a representative system for the final judgments.

Class size	Court	Factions
7–13	3 members: Menander, Philon, Mālatī	1 to 3 members each (1 each at 7, 2 each at 11)
14–16	4 members: add Agathocleia	2 to 3 members each (3 each at 16)
17–23	5 members: add Demetrios	3 to 5 members per faction
24–28	7 members: add Dionysios and Kalyāṇī	4 to 6 members per faction
29–30	9 members: add Dāmodara and Helena	5 each at 29; 6 Buddhists at 30

Clash of Ideas/Ideologies

The four schools agree on more than students expect. All of them doubt that wealth, power, and reputation can make a life go well, and all of them prescribe training as well as argument. The game is built on the places where they part.

School	Central claim or method	The question that puts it under pressure
Stoicism	Virtue is the only genuine good and is sufficient for happiness. Health, wealth, and even survival are "preferred indifferents."	Can virtue be enough at a child's grave? Are preferred indifferents just goods under another name?
Epicureanism	Pleasure, understood chiefly as freedom from bodily pain and mental disturbance, is the highest good. Death is nothing to us.	Why repair an injustice no one will discover? Can death harm us by taking away a future?
Buddhism	Suffering arises from craving and ignorance, including ignorance about the self. It can end through ethical conduct, meditation, and wisdom.	If there is no enduring self, who is responsible? Can one love without clinging?
Skepticism	Test every claim. Where the reasons on each side balance, suspend judgment, and act on what appears credible.	Can one keep promises and resist injustice while suspending judgment about the good?

Four disagreements run through nearly every exchange in the game. It helps to have them in mind when steering discussion.

- **What is the good?** Virtue, pleasure, and liberation from craving are rival answers, and the Skeptics deny that any has been established. The court's vote forces students to weigh them against one another.
- **Does a practice prove a doctrine?** A breathing exercise may calm the court without showing that rebirth occurs; examining an impression may help without showing that the universe is providential. The gamebook, every handout, and the fourth learning goal return to this point. It is the most important idea in the game.
- **Engagement or withdrawal?** Stoics defend public duty, Epicureans generally advise a quiet life among friends, and Buddhists honor both the renouncer and the righteous king. The dilemmas of Menander and Demetrios make this concrete.
- **Love and loss.** Each school must explain to a grieving mother how its teaching differs from telling her to care less. Students find this the hardest and most memorable test.

SITUATION/HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The student gamebook gives a short history of the Greek east, Menander's kingdom, and each school. This section does not repeat it. It gives the instructor the additional background needed to answer questions, to be accurate about what is and is not known, and to run the debrief.

Timeline

Date	Event
5th century BCE	The Buddha teaches in the Ganges basin (dates are debated; many scholars place his death near 400 BCE).
399 BCE	Death of Socrates.
327–325 BCE	Alexander campaigns in Bactria and northwestern India. Pyrrho of Elis is said to have traveled with the expedition.
c. 306 BCE	Epicurus founds the Garden at Athens.
c. 300 BCE	Zeno of Citium begins teaching at the Painted Stoa.
c. 268 BCE	Arcesilaus becomes head of the Academy and turns it toward skepticism.
c. 268–232 BCE	Reign of Aśoka. His edicts at Kandahar are inscribed in Greek and Aramaic.
c. 250 BCE	Diodotus makes Bactria independent of the Seleucids.
c. 180 BCE	Greek kings cross the Hindu Kush into Gandhāra and the Punjab.
155 BCE	Carneades the Academic, Diogenes of Babylon the Stoic, and Critolaus the Peripatetic go to Rome as ambassadors of Athens.
c. 155–130 BCE	Reign of Menander I. **The game is set around 150 BCE.**
c. 145 BCE	The Greek city at Ai Khanoum in Bactria is destroyed.
1st century BCE	Aenesidemus revives Pyrrhonism. Cicero and Lucretius write in Latin.
1st–2nd century CE	Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. The *Milindapañha* is taking shape in roughly this period.
c. 200 CE	Sextus Empiricus writes the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*.

Menander and His Kingdom

Menander I Soter ruled an Indo-Greek kingdom in Gandhāra and the Punjab in the middle of the second century BCE. The usual estimate for his reign is about 155 to 130 BCE, but every date is inferred, mostly from coins. He is the best attested of the more than thirty Indo-Greek kings, and still almost nothing is known about him as a person.

The written evidence is thin. Strabo, citing Apollodorus of Artemita, says that Menander conquered more peoples than Alexander (*Geography* 11.11.1). Plutarch says he ruled so fairly that when he died in camp the cities quarreled over his remains and finally divided his ashes among themselves, each raising a monument (*Moralia* 821D–E). The later Buddhist *Milindapañha* places his court at Sāgala, usually identified with Sialkot in Pakistan.

The coins say more. His silver drachms carry his portrait and the Greek legend “of King Menander the Savior” on one side. On the other, Athena hurls a thunderbolt, surrounded by the same title in Prakrit written in the Kharoṣṭhī script. Some of his bronze coins show an eight-spoked wheel. Some scholars read it as the Buddhist wheel of Dharma and others as a symbol of universal kingship; the question is open. The coins show a king addressing Greek and Indian subjects at once, which is the situation the game puts on stage.

The household in the game is partly invented. Agathocleia was a real Indo-Greek queen known from coins, on which she appears as regent for the young king Strato I. That she was Menander’s wife is a modern conjecture, which the game adopts. Demetrios, Philon, and Mālatī are fictional, as are the family’s bereavement and all of the dilemmas.

The Questions of King Milinda

The *Milindapañha* is a Buddhist dialogue between King Milinda (Menander) and the monk Nāgasena. Its core was probably composed in a northwestern Indian

language sometime between about 100 BCE and 200 CE, and it was later expanded. It survives in a long Pāli version and a shorter Chinese translation. Its most famous passage is the chariot argument, reprinted in the gamebook: just as “chariot” is a name for parts arranged together, “Nāgasena” is a name for bodily and mental processes, with no further self behind them.

In the text, Milinda is a formidable debater who has reduced other teachers to silence. He ends as a Buddhist lay follower, and in the later portion he hands the kingdom to his son and becomes a monk. There is no independent evidence that Menander became a Buddhist. Plutarch’s story of the divided ashes resembles the Buddhist account of the division of the Buddha’s relics, and scholars disagree about whether that is meaningful. Students enjoy learning this after the game, when they can compare their own court’s verdict with the legend. Do not tell them beforehand: the game’s outcome should not appear settled.

Greek Philosophy in the East

The meeting in the game is fictional, but the contact behind it is not. At Ai Khanoum, a Greek city on the Oxus, excavators found a stone inscribed with maxims from Delphi, set up by a man named Clearchus who says he copied them at Delphi himself. He is often identified with Clearchus of Soli, a student of Aristotle, though this is uncertain. The palace treasury held the imprint of a papyrus containing a philosophical dialogue about the theory of Forms.

Contact ran in the other direction as well. Aśoka had edicts inscribed in good philosophical Greek at Kandahar, and his thirteenth Rock Edict names five Hellenistic kings to whom he sent envoys. Megasthenes, a Seleucid ambassador to the Mauryan court, wrote an account of Indian philosophers that Greek authors quoted for centuries.

Ancient sources also connect the origins of skepticism with India. Diogenes Laertius reports that Pyrrho traveled with Alexander’s army and met Indian

“naked wise men” (*Lives* 9.61). Some modern scholars argue that Pyrrho’s outlook owes something to early Buddhism, pointing to similarities between his reported teaching and the three marks of existence. Most specialists regard the evidence as too slight to decide. The gamebook takes the cautious view, and the instructor should as well: similarity does not establish borrowing.

The Four Schools Around 150 BCE

The historical characters in the game are real contemporaries of Menander, though none is known to have traveled east.

- **The Stoa.** Antipater of Tarsus succeeded Diogenes of Babylon as head of the school around the middle of the century. He defended Stoicism against Carneades in writing, and was nicknamed “the pen-shouter” because he was said to avoid debating him in person. The image of the archer, whose goal is to shoot well and not simply to hit the target (Cicero, *On Ends* 3.22), reflects his account of the goal of life.
- **The Academy.** Carneades was head of Plato’s Academy and the most formidable critic of the Stoics. On the embassy to Rome in 155 BCE he is said to have argued for justice on one day and against it on the next. He wrote nothing. His student Clitomachus, a Carthaginian originally named Hasdrubal, recorded his arguments and later led the Academy. Whether Carneades held any views of his own was disputed even by his students.
- **The Garden.** Apollodorus, nicknamed “the tyrant of the Garden,” led the Epicurean school in the later second century and is said to have written more than four hundred books (Diogenes Laertius 10.25). Philonides of Laodicea was an Epicurean and mathematician with influence at the Seleucid court, which makes him a natural spokesman on the question of whether Epicureans may advise kings.
- **Pyrrhonism.** No organized Pyrrhonian school existed in 150 BCE. Pyrrho had died more than a century earlier, and the movement was revived by

Aenesidemus in the first century BCE. The roles of Damaris and Menodora draw on Sextus Empiricus, who wrote around 200 CE. They are deliberate anachronisms, included so that students meet skepticism as a way of life and not only as a method of attack.

- **Buddhism.** By Menander's time the monastic community had divided into several schools and was established in the northwest. The oldest surviving Buddhist manuscripts come from Gandhāra, though they are later than the game. The readings use the Pāli discourses because they are the most accessible early collection in English, not because they were the texts in use at Sāgala. Mahāyāna Buddhism is later and is not represented.

Philosophy as a Way of Life

The game's title comes from Pierre Hadot, who argued that ancient philosophy was above all a way of living, sustained by "spiritual exercises": attention to the present, examination of conscience, meditation on death, the view from above. The exercises in the faction handouts are of this kind, simplified for a classroom.

Hadot's picture has critics. John Cooper argues that what made these ways of life philosophical was their grounding in reasoned argument, and that the exercises were secondary. Scholars have also debated how well Hadot's framework fits Buddhist traditions. Instructors do not need to settle these disputes, but they explain a feature of the game's design: the Skeptics are in the room so that no school can win on the pleasantness of its exercise alone, and every handout ends with the reminder that a useful exercise does not by itself establish that its underlying worldview is true.

What the Game Invents

Students sometimes ask what is real. The honest answer has three parts.

- **Real:** Menander, Agathocleia, the Indo-Greek kingdom, the presence of Greek philosophy and Buddhism in the region, the four traditions and their arguments, and the philosophers Antipater, Carneades, Clitomachus, Apollodorus, and Philonides. Nāgasena is known only from the *Milindapañha*.
- **Invented:** the gathering itself, every other character, all family relationships and dilemmas, the opening prayer, and the contest for patronage.
- **Later than the setting:** Cicero, Lucretius, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Sextus Empiricus, and the *Milindapañha* in its surviving form. Students use these as witnesses to what the schools taught. Characters may draw on their arguments but should not cite the authors by name as if they were known at court.

GAMEPLAY

Classroom Setup/Layout

Arrange five areas: one for each faction and one for the court. The court should sit together at the front, facing the factions, with Menander in the middle. Leave room to walk between groups, since students move about during the negotiation. Put the folded tent cards (Stoics, Epicureans, Buddhists, Skeptics, Court Members) on the tables before students arrive. In larger classes, leave enough space for the court to split briefly into groups according to allegiance at the end.

The game needs no technology, and it runs well in a course that bans laptops and phones, provided students bring printed role sheets and sources.

Materials

Item	Copies	Notes
Student gamebook	One per student	Distribute at least a week before the preparation session.
Private role sheets	One per student	Two pages each. Philon's and Mālatī's include the ceremony script and the paper pig.
Faction handouts	One per faction member	Four versions. Each contains the school's beliefs and its exercises.
Station handouts	One or two per station	Optional four-station preparation activity (Appendix D).
Dilemma cards	One per court member	Choose one of two cards for each active court member (up to 18 total; Appendix C). For seven or nine court members, only some dilemmas need a public hearing.
Court allegiance ballots	One per court member	Generic court slips for everyone except Menander. His ballot also contains the royal patronage decision. Print spares.

Item	Copies	Notes
Faction rating ballots	One per faction	Four slips.
Tent cards	One set	Five cards; cut and fold.
Run sheet and tally worksheet	One each, for the GM	Appendices A and B.

You will also need pens and a board for recording results. The paper pig for the opening ceremony is printed on the back of Philon's ceremony script; Mālatī's copy is a spare.

Factions/Categories

The Stoics hold that virtue is the only genuine good and is sufficient for happiness. Their exercises are *The control line* and *The Stoic word challenge*. Their hardest question is whether virtue can really be enough in the face of grief, illness, or torture.

The Epicureans hold that pleasure, understood as a secure life free of bodily pain and mental disturbance, is the highest good. Their exercises are *The contemplation of death* and *The garden of gratitude*. Their hardest question is why anyone should make a painful sacrifice for a stranger or repair an injustice that will never be discovered.

The Buddhists hold that suffering arises from craving and ignorance and can be brought to an end. Their exercises are *Mindfulness and insight* and *Extend loving-kindness beyond the court*. Their hardest questions concern responsibility without an enduring self, love without clinging, and the evidence for kamma (Sanskrit *karma*) and rebirth.

The Skeptics offer a method in place of a doctrine: test each claim, suspend judgment where the reasons balance, and act on what appears credible. They must present a developed objection to each other school's central doctrines, but may adapt the form of their Skeptical Examination. Their hardest

question is whether a person can make serious commitments while suspending judgment about the good life.

The court consists of three to nine indeterminate members: King Menander, Queen Agathocleia, the heir Demetrios, the commander Philon, the physician Mālatī, and (in larger classes) Dionysios the treasurer, Kalyāṇī the frontier envoy, Dāmodara the magistrate, and Helena the tutor. Each has private worries that make some arguments more pressing than others, but none begins committed to a school. Only active court members cast allegiance votes.

Typical Arc of the Game

The **preparation session** gives students an initial understanding of all four schools before they prepare their roles. In my classes, students rotate through four stations, each featuring a challenge, a primary-source passage, and a "big question." I then answer questions and give short lectures. Other teaching methods can work equally well. The session concludes with faction and court meetings.

The court session has three movements. First, each faction presents its philosophy and leads its exercise, and the court asks general questions. Second, the GM reveals the dilemmas, and the factions must turn doctrine into concrete advice for particular people. Third, after a short period of open negotiation, court members make their individual allegiance choices and explain them publicly (or through representatives in larger classes). Menander awards patronage, and the factions rate the court.

Likely outcomes

The outcome is not predictable, and no school is favored by design. In the two classes where the game was first run, with 12 and 19 students, the results differed and depended heavily on how well particular students argued. Some patterns are still worth knowing about.

- **A split court is common.** A faction can win outright with a plurality of the votes, even when most court members choose other schools. A tie for the most votes gives each leading faction a partial victory.
- **The Skeptics tend to do better than students predict.** They get to criticize three positive doctrines, and an unconvinced court member may drift toward them. See Potential "Wrong Turns" for how to make sure votes for skepticism are earned.
- **The Buddhists have the steepest climb.** No-self and nonattachment are unfamiliar and easily caricatured as "stop caring." When class numbers are uneven, the role-assignment table gives the extra student to the Buddhists first for this reason.
- **Patronage often goes elsewhere.** Menander may find one school personally convincing and judge another more useful to the kingdom. When this happens it makes an excellent debriefing question.
- **A full court victory (4.0) requires consistently strong reasoning.** Partial victory (3.5) recognizes mostly strong deliberation despite some weaknesses. Polite listening without probing questions or reasons should not earn either.

Game Phase Timing: The Preparation Session

Students should arrive having read the gamebook. Assign roles before this session, or at its start, so that faction and court meetings are productive. The 75-minute schedule below describes the four-station method I use to introduce complex philosophical material quickly and actively, but it is not a required part of the game. Instructors may instead use lectures, guided discussions, or other methods to teach the four schools. Whatever the approach, reserve sufficient time for faction and court preparation. The handouts for the optional four-station activity are provided in Appendix D (pp. 48–53).

Minutes	Phase	What happens
0–10	Introduction	Explain the setting, the four schools, and the three ways to win. State the two ground rules: speak as your character, and challenge claims, not classmates.
10–40	Four stations	Groups of three to five rotate through the stations, six to seven minutes at each, including time to move. Each group reads the handout aloud and works through its three parts.
40–55	Questions and brief lectures	Take questions that came up at the stations. Then give a very brief lecture on each school, three minutes at most: its central claim, its key terms, and the misreading to avoid.
55–75	Faction and court meetings	Factions choose their exercise, divide responsibilities, and anticipate objections. The court prepares questions, and Philon and Mālatī rehearse the ceremony. Before students leave, remind them which sources to read.

The stations

If using the stations, set up four tables, one per school, with copies of the station handout on each. Divide the class into four groups without regard to faction; mixed groups work best, because every student should meet every school before defending one. For larger classes, set out more copies of each station and run eight small groups instead of four so that students can participate actively.

Each station has the same three parts. *The Challenge* is a quick group task: sorting what is and is not up to us, choosing three goods for a happy life, sixty seconds of attention to the breath, or writing one objection to each school. The second part presents a short source passage (Epictetus, Epicurus, the chariot dialogue, Socrates and Sextus) with discussion questions. *The Big Question* asks the group to take a position. Six or seven minutes is short, and groups will rarely finish; that is intended. Call time firmly, and tell students to bring their unanswered questions to the discussion that follows.

Questions and brief lectures

Bring the class back together for about fifteen minutes. Begin with the students' questions. The stations reliably produce them: whether Stoics really think a loved

one's death is not bad, whether Epicurus recommends indulgence, what is left of a person if there is no self, and how a skeptic can decide anything. Answer briefly, and where a question is one the game itself will test, say so and leave it open.

Then give a very brief lecture on each school, in the order Stoics, Epicureans, Buddhists, Skeptics. Two or three minutes each is enough. State the school's central claim, define the two or three terms students will need (for example, *preferred indifferents*, *natural and necessary desires*, *craving* and *not-self*, *suspension of judgment*), and name the most common misreading. The Clash of Ideas table and the entries on caricatured schools under Potential "Wrong Turns" supply the content. Resist the urge to say more. The purpose is to give every student an accurate outline of all four positions before the factions separate; the detail belongs to the faction handouts and the game.

Faction meetings

About twenty minutes remain. Ask each faction to settle four things before leaving: what exercise it will lead, who will present the opening case, who will guide the practice, and how it will answer the "hardest question" in its handout. The suggested exercises may be used, adapted, or replaced by one grounded in the school's philosophy and sources. The Skeptics must present three substantive objections, one to each rival school, but may invent how to do so. All students should contribute; not everyone needs to speak publicly. Discourage full scripts, which leave little room to respond when dilemmas arrive.

Ask the Skeptics to draft their three objections now, and to finish them before the court session. Theirs is the hardest preparation task, because a good objection requires understanding the doctrine it targets.

The court's meeting

The court has no doctrine to prepare, so give it specific work. Each member should write one probing question for each school, drawing on the "Questions for…" paragraphs that close each school's chapter in the gamebook. Menander should

practice chairing: calling on speakers, cutting off long answers politely, and keeping time. Philon and Mālatī should read through the ceremony script together once. For seven- or nine-member courts, identify who might introduce each dilemma during the public phase, while ensuring that all members have an opportunity to question the factions during preparation and negotiation.

Tell the court that each member will receive a dilemma card during the game and that they cannot prepare for it. Explain why: the delay separates a school's general defense from its ability to guide an unfamiliar, concrete decision.

Game Phase Timing: The Court Session

The session is tight. The schedule below fits 75 minutes if the GM enforces every transition. The same clock works for small and large courts only if larger games use selective public dilemma hearings and representative judgments. Appendix A repeats the schedule as a one-page run sheet.

Clock	Length	Phase	What happens
0:00	3 min	Settle	Factions and court take their places. Confirm who is presenting. Keep the dilemma cards out of sight.
0:03	3 min	Opening ceremony	Philon and Mālatī perform the prayer, paper sacrifice, and bow. Menander welcomes the delegations and promises freedom to criticize.
0:06	30 min	Presentations and exercises	Stoics, Epicureans, Buddhists, Skeptics, in that order. Seven minutes each; warn at six, stop at seven. Two minutes for transitions.
0:36	2 min	Dilemmas revealed	Hand one card to each court member. They read silently.
0:38	16 min	Advice on the dilemmas	Up to five dilemmas receive a public hearing in a seven- or nine-member court; all members consult factions during negotiation. Two contrasting answers and one challenge per hearing.
0:54	6 min	Negotiation	Everyone may move about. Give a one-minute warning.

Clock	Length	Phase	What happens
1:00	9 min	Final judgments	Every court member votes individually. With 3–5 court members, each explains the choice; with 7–9, voters who chose the same school deliberate briefly and appoint one representative per chosen school. Menander announces patronage.
1:09	3 min	Ratings	Each faction agrees on one rating of the court from 1 to 5.
1:12	3 min	Results	Confirm allegiance and patronage results; announce the court's average last.

Settle (3 minutes)

Seat the groups. A short framing statement helps students step into role. For example:

> *"We are in Sāgala, capital of King Menander, about a hundred and seventy-five years after Alexander. The king has conquered cities and struck coins that call him Savior. He has summoned teachers from four traditions to answer one question: how should a human being live? Philosophers, you are here to win the allegiance of this court and the patronage of its king. Members of the court, your task is to judge well, and at the end the philosophers will judge you. From this point, speak as your character."*

Opening ceremony (3 minutes)

Cue Philon and Mālatī. Their role sheets contain the full script (reprinted in Appendix F): Philon announces the sacrifice, Mālatī reads a prayer to Athena, Philon tears the paper pig, and both call for a bow to the king. Menander then welcomes the delegations and promises that no one will be punished for criticism.

The ceremony does real work. It marks the shift into role, it gives two court members an early speaking part, and it quietly raises a philosophical issue, since Epicureans deny that the gods attend to sacrifices and a Buddhist might object to

killing an animal. If a character objects, allow one sentence, let Menander answer briefly, and continue. A nod or seated bow is enough, and any student may simply observe.

Presentations and exercises (30 minutes)

The order is Stoics, Epicureans, Buddhists, Skeptics. The Skeptics go last because their exercise is a response to the other three. Each faction has seven minutes, including questions, leaving two minutes in the 30-minute phase for transitions. A good division is three minutes to explain and defend the philosophy, two minutes for the exercise, and two minutes for questions from the court and rival factions.

The handouts offer sample exercises, which factions may adapt or replace with their own philosophically grounded practices. Allow about two minutes for the exercise, including a question; Appendix E offers short versions of the samples. New exercises must be suitable for classroom use, allow silent or observational participation, and require no personal disclosure. The Skeptics still owe one reasoned objection to each rival school. Tell factions to rehearse against the clock.

Give a signal at six minutes and stop the faction at seven, in mid-sentence if necessary. Every minute of overrun comes out of the dilemmas, which are the heart of the game. During questions, favor the court. If rival factions dominate, say, “One more question, from the court.”

The Skeptical Examination needs particular attention. The Skeptics must state each rival doctrine fairly and give one reasoned objection to it; “How do you know?” does not count. Allow each targeted school one brief reply, and hold longer exchanges for the dilemma phase.

Dilemmas revealed (2 minutes)

Hand each active court member the dilemma card you selected. While they read, tell the factions what comes next: “Members of the court will ask for your advice. Tell them what to do, and why your philosophy says so.” With seven or nine court

members, identify four or five dilemmas for brief public hearings; the others become subjects of direct questioning during negotiation.

Advice on the dilemmas (16 minutes)

Menander chairs, with the GM keeping time. In a three- to five-member court, each active member reads a dilemma aloud and asks for advice. With five, there are about three minutes per dilemma; with three, about five. In a seven- or nine-member court, do not attempt nine full hearings. Select four or five dilemmas for public discussion (about three minutes each); other court members can seek advice directly during negotiation. Each selected dilemma should receive two contrasting recommendations, one challenge, and a brief reply. Rotate which factions answer first so that every school contributes.

Menander and the court members should direct questioning, while the factions develop and defend their arguments without coaching. The GM should normally remain silent, intervening only for time limits, procedure, safety, or a stalled discussion. If a philosophical misreading goes unchallenged, note it for the debrief rather than correcting students during play (see Potential “Wrong Turns”).

Good moments to watch for: two schools recommending the same action for incompatible reasons; a school whose advice contradicts what it said in its presentation; and a court member whose follow-up question exposes that the advice is generic.

Negotiation (6 minutes)

Release everyone to move about. Philosophers seek out court members they think they can win; court members press the schools they are deciding between and may confer with one another. Menander is usually surrounded by advocates for patronage. All active court members, including those whose dilemmas did not receive a public hearing, should use this time to test the arguments and reach an independent judgment. No one may trade favors for votes or commit another

character's vote. Circulate and listen: quieter students often do their best work here. Give a one-minute warning and end on time.

Final judgments (9 minutes)

Call everyone back for final judgments. With three to five court members, invite each to name the school chosen, give a brief reason, and state an intended action in the dilemma. Allow about a minute per speaker; Menander speaks last and then announces patronage. With seven or nine court members, use the representative procedure below. In either format, every court member submits an individual allegiance ballot; the king's ballot also contains his separate patronage choice.

Larger-court representative procedure (seven or nine members): First, every court member privately marks and submits an allegiance ballot before any group discussion. Then members who chose the same school gather, confer for about two minutes, and select one representative for that school. Each representative speaks for 60–90 seconds about the strongest reasons for the choice, drawing on the dilemmas and debates. There may be one to four representatives; every school receiving a vote has a voice. Representatives should not claim unanimity about reasons where it does not exist. Menander announces royal patronage separately, whether or not he is a representative. Allow approximately nine minutes for the entire phase, and enforce the limit strictly.

Two rules apply here. First, every court member must choose one of the four schools; there is no abstention and no option to adopt practices without a school. A member who is not fully convinced chooses the school whose reasons seem strongest. Second, a vote for skepticism must reflect reasoned suspension of judgment, not mere indecision. In larger courts, the representatives should be prepared to describe the competing considerations for skeptical votes; the instructor may ask a voter to clarify a choice if necessary.

Do not allow debate to reopen. The factions will have their say in the ratings.

Ratings (3 minutes)

Each faction confers and submits one collective rating of the court as a whole, from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), using the five whole-number choices printed on the ballot. The rating assesses how well the court understood the competing philosophies and justified its decisions throughout the game. Say this aloud before the factions confer: “You are rating the quality of the court’s thinking, not whether it agreed with you.” Ask each faction for a brief explanation if time allows.

Results (3 minutes)

By this point, court members have announced their allegiances and Menander has awarded patronage. Use the tally worksheet (Appendix B) to confirm the allegiance totals and identify an outright faction victory or shared partial victory in the event of a tie. Announce the court’s average rating last, without stating whether it earned a full victory, partial victory, or no victory.

If time runs short

Cut in this order: shorten the negotiation to three minutes; limit each public dilemma to one recommendation and one challenge; limit final statements to sixty seconds. For courts of seven or nine, reduce the number of public dilemmas rather than trying to hear from every member. Keep the final allegiance votes, representative explanations, patronage announcement, ratings, and results.

Optional Three-Session Format

Instructors with a third class meeting can spread the court session over two days. This may be advisable for a larger class. The preparation session is unchanged. The second session is given to the opening ceremony, the presentations, and the first dilemmas; the third to the remaining dilemmas, negotiation, the court’s judgments, the ratings, the results, and the debriefing. Nothing about the rules or the victory conditions changes. The extra time goes where the two-session game is most

compressed: questions to the factions, advice on the dilemmas, and the reasons court members give for their votes.

This format has not yet been classroom-tested; the two-session game is the version that has been run with students. Treat the timings below as a starting point. The format is most useful when the court has five or more members. A court of three or four may hear all of its dilemmas in the second session, which leaves the third with little to decide.

Session 2: Presentations and first dilemmas

Length	Phase	What happens
6 min	Settle and opening ceremony	As in the two-session game.
42 min	Presentations and exercises	Stoics, Epicureans, Buddhists, Skeptics, in that order. About ten minutes each, including questions from the court and from rival factions, with two minutes in all for transitions.
3 min	Dilemmas revealed	Give every court member a dilemma card to read. Invite only those whose dilemmas will be heard today to introduce them briefly; the others introduce theirs at the start of Session 3.
20 min	First dilemma hearings	About four minutes per hearing: two contrasting answers and one challenge, with a follow-up question from the court member.
4 min	Close	Name the dilemmas held over for Session 3 and state the rules for the time between sessions.

Session 3: Deliberation and judgment

Length	Phase	What happens
3 min	Settle and recap	Menander reconvenes the court. Court members whose dilemmas were not introduced in Session 2 briefly present them.
22 min	Remaining dilemma hearings	As in Session 2. Factions should arrive with prepared advice.
8 min	Negotiation	Everyone may move about. Give a one-minute warning.
15 min	Final judgments	Every court member votes individually and the reasons are heard (see below). Menander announces patronage.
6 min	Ratings	Each faction agrees on one whole-number rating from 1 to 5 and writes a sentence or two explaining it. A spokesperson reads the explanation aloud.
3 min	Results	Confirm allegiance and patronage results; announce the court's average last.
18 min	Debriefing	Release students from their roles and debrief as described under Debriefing. No time need be reserved in a later class.

What changes

Presentation length. Ten minutes per faction, including questions, is a guideline, and instructors may lengthen or shorten it. Whatever the limit, announce it in advance and give all four factions the same time.

Choosing the dilemmas for Session 3. Decide beforehand which dilemmas to hold over, and do not simply defer whichever are left. Reserve several of the weightiest (Menander's among them) so that the court is still facing serious questions when it reconvenes. Across the two sessions there is time for about ten hearings, so even a nine-member court can hear every dilemma in public.

Between sessions. Because every card is revealed in Session 2, factions can use the interval to prepare advice on the remaining dilemmas. Factions and court members may consult one another between sessions. Tell students two things before they leave: no private agreement binds anyone, and allegiance votes are cast only in Session 3.

Final judgments. How the court explains its votes is left to the instructor. Courts of up to five can hear every member for two or three minutes. In a court of seven or nine, either hear each member individually for about a minute, or keep the representative procedure of the two-session game and give each representative two or three minutes. In every case, each member votes individually first. With the extra time, ask each speaker to say not only why the chosen school prevailed but why its strongest rival did not.

Faction members. The third session should not become a conversation among court members while the philosophers watch. Keep the challenge step in every hearing, and invite factions to respond to one another's advice.

Debriefing

The two-session court session leaves no time to debrief, so reserve 10 to 15 minutes at the start of the next class. (In the three-session format, the debriefing closes the third session.) Begin by releasing students from their roles: ask a few to say what they personally think of the school they defended. Many will have defended a view they reject, and some will have been persuaded by it.

Then reveal the legend. In *The Questions of King Milinda*, Menander is won over by Nāgasena and becomes a Buddhist. Plutarch, who shows no knowledge of that story, reports that the cities of his kingdom divided his ashes among themselves. The Indo-Greek kingdoms did not endure. After Menander's death, Greek rule fragmented among competing rulers, and their territories were gradually absorbed by other powers, particularly the Indo-Scythians. The last Indo-Greek kingdoms disappeared around the beginning of the first century CE, although Greek cultural influences persisted. Ask how the class's own court compares with the Buddhist legend, and why a Buddhist text would tell the story as it does.

From here, instructors can pursue a historical or philosophical debriefing, or combine the two. A historical debriefing might explore the subsequent

development of the four schools: the influence of Stoicism and Epicureanism on Roman and later European thought, the development of ancient skepticism and its influence on modern philosophy, and the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia and eventually around the world. All four traditions continue to have adherents today.

Alternatively, a philosophical debriefing can invite students to step out of their roles and evaluate the doctrines in light of their experiences during the game. Which school offered the most convincing account of the good life? Which arguments survived criticism, and which seemed least defensible? Did the philosophical exercises offer genuine insight, and does their practical usefulness provide evidence for the doctrines behind them? Students might also consider whether any of these philosophies or practices are worth incorporating into their own lives.

Appendix G lists further debriefing questions, grouped by learning goal.

Student Reflection and Assessment

The game can be assessed through participation alone. For written work, the following assignments each build on one learning goal. Lengths of 500 to 800 words are suitable.

1) **Comparison (LG1).** Choose one court member's dilemma. Explain what two of the four schools would advise and why. Where the advice is the same, explain how the reasons differ.
2) **Advice letter (LG2).** Write to one court member, in your character's voice or your own, recommending a course of action. Use at least one primary source and answer the strongest objection to your advice.
3) **Objection and reply (LG3).** State the strongest objection raised against your school during the game. Give the best reply available from the sources. Say whether the reply succeeds.

4) **Practice report (LG4).** Try one exercise from any faction handout once a day for five days and keep brief notes. Then answer two questions: Did it help? If it did, is that a reason to believe the philosophy behind it?
5) **The verdict (LG1–LG4).** Which school gave the best account of how to live? Defend your answer against the school you found second best. Court members may explain and reconsider their vote.

Significant Character Actions

- **Menander chairs the court.** He calls on speakers, may end overlong remarks, and gives the final personal verdict. He alone awards royal patronage, to any of the four factions, and the award need not match his allegiance vote. He cannot compel anyone's allegiance or punish disagreement.
- **Philon and Mālatī perform the opening ceremony.** It grants no points and has no effect on the outcome.
- **Each active court member receives one dilemma card during the game and makes an independent allegiance decision. In a small court, each explains the decision and intended action; in a larger court, representatives summarize the reasons of voters who chose the same philosophy. Each court member may discuss the dilemma privately even if it does not receive a public hearing.**
- **Court members other than Menander may advise him about patronage during deliberation, but the generic court ballot records allegiance only. Menander alone records and announces the royal patronage decision on his special ballot.**
- **The Stoics, Epicureans, and Buddhists** each lead a short exercise rooted in their school's philosophy: they may use, adapt, or replace the handout examples. **The Skeptics** offer three substantive objections to rival schools, but may vary the format of their examination.

- **Each faction submits one collective rating** of the court's deliberation. Factions do not vote on allegiance.

There are no secret powers, hidden objectives, or individual victory conditions. The private material on each role sheet (Nikanor's bereavement, Apollodorus's wish to be remembered, Sumanā's stiff hands, Damaris's care for her father) exists to give students something personal to argue from. Characters may reveal it or keep it private as they choose.

Endgame Conditions

The game ends when the court has voted, Menander has awarded patronage, and the four ratings have been collected. Three results are then determined.

Allegiance

Each court member casts one vote; Menander's counts the same as any other. A faction wins outright if it receives more allegiance votes than every rival, even without an absolute majority. If two or more factions tie for the highest vote total, each tied faction earns a partial victory. All examples in the table omit factions receiving zero votes.

Court size	Example: outright victory	Example: partial victory	Another partial-victory example
3	2–1	1–1–1	—
4	2–1–1	2–2	1–1–1–1
5	2–1–1–1	2–2–1	—
7	3–2–1–1	3–3–1	2–2–2–1
9	4–3–1–1	4–4–1	3–3–2–1

Royal patronage

Menander names one faction. That faction achieves the secondary objective. Patronage does not count as an allegiance vote and does not affect the court's rating.

Philosophical deliberation

Add the four whole-number faction ratings and divide by four. A court average of 4.0 or more earns full victory; an average of 3.5–3.99 earns partial victory; below 3.5 earns no victory. For example, ratings of 4, 4, 3, and 3 total 14 and average 3.5, a partial victory. Explain that 3 indicates mixed performance with real gaps; 4, thoughtful questions and well-reasoned judgments; and 5, exceptional deliberation.

Potential "Wrong Turns"

Problem	Minimal response / debrief note
Presentations overrun.	Enforce the seven-minute limit from the first faction. If the Stoics are allowed eight minutes, every later faction will expect the same.
Skepticism becomes the vote of the undecided.	Court members must choose a school, but do not steer them away from Skepticism. Let them decide whether objections justify suspension; if votes appear unreasoned, raise that distinction in the debrief.
The Skeptics only ask "How do you know?"	The Skeptic handout requires a reasoned objection to each rival school. Let the court and rivals press for reasons or examples. If no one does, examine the quality of the objections in the debrief.
A faction presents a relaxation technique.	Let the court and other factions test what the exercise establishes. If its practical benefits are treated as proof of a doctrine, revisit that inference in the debrief.
Buddhism is reduced to "stop caring."	Allow the Buddhists and their critics to work through the distinction. Loving-kindness and the two arrows (SN 36.6) are useful sources to mention in the debrief if the caricature persists.

Problem	Minimal response / debrief note
Stoicism is reduced to suppressing emotion.	Allow the Stoics and other students to challenge this caricature. If needed in the debrief, revisit a parent's duty to protect a child, "preferred indifferents," and Seneca's Letter 63.
Epicureanism is reduced to indulgence.	Leave the question to the Epicureans and their critics. If the caricature survives, revisit Epicurus on simple food and desires without natural limits during the debrief.
Students cite Seneca, Epictetus, or Sextus as people known at court.	A brief factual correction is appropriate if the chronology matters: these writers lived after Menander. Characters may use their arguments without naming the later authors.
Students drop into modern self-help language.	Let the court and rival factions ask for textual support. Note unsupported or anachronistic claims for the debrief instead of cross-examining the speakers yourself.
Factions try to trade votes or patronage.	Allegiance is each member's own judgment and cannot be bound or bought. Menander may be lobbied but not bribed.
The court listens passively.	Menander is responsible for calling on court members and asking questions. Let the king manage this; if discussion stalls, briefly remind Menander of the chair's role rather than supplying questions.
Factions rate the court by who voted for them.	The ballot already asks factions to rate reasoning rather than agreement. Give a brief procedural reminder only if needed; otherwise collect their ratings without coaching.
A student objects to the bow or the sacrifice.	This is welcome if done in character, in one sentence. Out of character, any student may observe without taking part.
A discussion turns personal.	See Content and Participation, below. Redirect to the character: "What should Agathocleia do?"
In a large class, a few speakers dominate.	Give faction members meaningful preparation responsibilities. Do not require everyone to speak publicly. Intervene during play only if domination prevents others from participating or the game from progressing.
The court groups by allegiance before voting.	Collect independent ballots first. Only then allow those who voted for the same school to select a spokesperson and confer. Representatives explain completed decisions, not negotiate a bloc vote.
Nine dilemmas consume the whole period.	Use public hearings for four or five dilemmas. Every other court member still has a card and can seek advice from the factions during negotiation.

Content Acknowledgement and Participation

The game deals with the death of a child, guilt over the killing of civilians, chronic pain and disability, and the fear of death. These are the subjects ancient philosophy was written to address, and the game would be empty without them. They are also subjects on which some students will have recent personal experience. Four practices help.

- **Announce the themes in advance.** Tell the class at the preparation session what the dilemmas concern, in general terms, and invite anyone with a concern about a particular role to speak with you before roles are fixed.
- **Keep the fiction in place.** Students speak about Agathocleia's daughter, not about their own losses. Every handout says that no personal disclosure is required. If a student begins to share something painful, thank them and return the discussion to the character.
- **Make every exercise invitational, including exercises students devise. Permit silent or observational participation and allow eyes to stay open. No one must disclose personal experiences. The Epicurean contemplation of death asks students to consider nonexistence before and after life; if that seems inappropriate, suggest gratitude or another suitable alternative.**
- **Treat the traditions with respect.** Buddhism is a living religion, and Stoicism, Epicureanism, and skepticism have present-day adherents. Some students will be practicing Buddhists, and others may be uneasy about meditation or about a mock sacrifice to Athena. The ceremony is theater, and the mindfulness exercise is presented as a philosophical observation, not a devotional act. Say so if asked, and let anyone sit out.

ROLE MANAGEMENT

Role Assignments

The table below gives the number of students to assign to the court and each faction for every class size from 7 to 30. The court has three members through 13 students, four for 14–16, five for 17–23, seven for 24–28, and nine for 29–30. Assign all remaining students to the factions as evenly as possible, giving the next extra place to Buddhism, then Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism. At 30 students the cast is nine court members and 21 philosophers (5 Stoics, 5 Epicureans, 6 Buddhists, and 5 Skeptics). Use the role order directly below the table to determine which named characters are in play.

Students	Court	Stoics	Epicureans	Buddhists	Skeptics
7	3	1	1	1	1
8	3	1	1	2	1
9	3	2	1	2	1
10	3	2	2	2	1
11	3	2	2	2	2
12	3	2	2	3	2
13	3	3	2	3	2
14	4	3	2	3	2
15	4	3	3	3	2
16	4	3	3	3	3
17	5	3	3	3	3
18	5	3	3	4	3
19	5	4	3	4	3
20	5	4	4	4	3
21	5	4	4	4	4
22	5	4	4	5	4
23	5	5	4	5	4
24	7	4	4	5	4
25	7	5	4	5	4
26	7	5	5	5	4
27	7	5	5	5	5
28	7	5	5	6	5

Students	Court	Stoics	Epicureans	Buddhists	Skeptics
29	9	5	5	5	5
30	9	5	5	6	5

Role-selection order: for each group, assign the first number of names specified in the table above. The king, ceremony leaders, and primary faction teachers remain in play at every size.

Group	Characters, in the order added
Court	Menander; Philon; Mālatī; Agathocleia; Demetrios; Dionysios; Kalyāṇī; Dāmodara; Helena
Stoics	Antipater of Tarsus; Diodora; Nikanor; Leon; Thaleia
Epicureans	Apollodorus; Kleia; Myrto; Philonides of Laodicea; Eirene
Buddhists	Nāgasena; Sumanā; Nandā; Vijaya; Rakkhita; Kusumā
Skeptics	Carneades; Damaris; Clitomachus; Menodora; Philista

Two adjustments apply when the court is smaller than five. First, tally allegiance votes only from the court members who are actually playing. Second, absent roles remain part of the setting: a non-player queen, heir, treasurer, envoy, magistrate, or tutor may be mentioned, but does not cast a vote or receive a dilemma.

In a game of seven to ten students, some factions have a single member, who presents, leads the exercise, and advises alone. This works, but give those students their roles early and consider pairing them with a classmate from another faction during the preparation session so that they have someone to rehearse with. In a larger class, every faction member should help prepare, answer challenges, and negotiate, even when only some speak publicly.

Larger classes. In the 24–30-student configuration, the seven- or nine-member court cannot debate every dilemma publicly. Choose four or five for formal advice, reserve the negotiation phase for all the other questions, and use one representative for each philosophy that receives an allegiance vote. Collect votes before grouping, and follow the representative procedure for final judgments rather than hearing seven or nine consecutive speeches. The court still receives

one collective deliberation rating from each faction; faction sizes do not change the number of ratings. The proposed 75-minute format for larger courts has not yet been classroom-tested; rigorous timing is essential.

The Roles

Role	Basis	Sketch
The Court		
Menander	Historical	The king. Chairs the court, votes, and awards patronage. Fears that his achievements will vanish with him.
Philon	Fictional	Army commander. Ordered a village burned and cannot stop remembering it. Distrusts easy absolution. Co-leads the ceremony.
Mālatī	Fictional	Court physician with a painful condition that is ending her career. Values evidence and distrusts large promises. Co-leads the ceremony.
Agathocleia	Historical name	The queen. Lost a daughter last year and now holds her son too close. Suspicious of advice that treats love as an error.
Demetrios	Fictional	The heir. Would prefer a life of study and friendship to the throne, and has said so.
Dionysios	Fictional	Royal treasurer. Tries to reconcile fiscal prudence, responsibility for public welfare, and the desire to honor the king.
Kalyāṇī	Fictional	Frontier envoy and interpreter. Tests promises, uncertainty, and duties across cultures and political borders.
Dāmodara	Fictional	City magistrate. Must weigh disputed evidence, equal treatment, punishment, and mercy.
Helena	Fictional	Royal tutor and keeper of records. Values inquiry and truthfulness while depending on royal favor.
Stoics		
Antipater of Tarsus	Historical	Head of the Stoic school. Defends the sufficiency of virtue. Proud, and inclined to win arguments at the cost of his composure.
Diodora	Fictional	A merchant who lost a fortune. Makes Stoic training practical; impatient with slow learners.
Nikanor	Fictional	A widower and former official. Speaks to grief and to wrongdoing; tends to soften hard claims.

Role	Basis	Sketch
Leon	Fictional	An envoy. Argues for public duty and knows how concern for influence becomes cowardice.
Thaleia	Fictional	Teacher and interpreter in Sāgala. Defends Stoic justice across political and cultural boundaries.
Epicureans		
Apollodorus	Historical	Head of the Garden. Defends pleasure and the argument that death is nothing to us, while privately wishing to be remembered.
Kleia	Fictional	An artisan who escaped the pursuit of prestige. Speaks to desire and to knowing when one has enough.
Myrto	Fictional	Nursed a dying friend. Speaks to friendship, grief, and the limits of consolation.
Philonides of Laodicea	Historical	A scholar with experience at royal courts. Speaks to justice, public life, and patronage.
Eirene	Fictional	Former shrine attendant. Uses Epicurean natural philosophy to examine fear of gods, omens, and death.
Buddhists		
Nāgasena	Literary	The monk of the *Milindapañha*. Defends not-self and the analysis of craving with careful argument.
Sumanā	Fictional	A nun. Leads practice and speaks to illness and the acceptance of help.
Nandā	Fictional	A widowed laywoman. Speaks to love, protectiveness, and what a wrongdoer owes.
Vijaya	Fictional	A householder and former revenue official. Speaks to government, renunciation, and lay practice.
Rakkhita	Fictional	Former soldier and Buddhist lay follower. Struggles to reconcile non-harming with protecting others.
Kusumā	Fictional	Lay donor and steward of community gifts. Tests generosity, status, and the risks of patronage.
Skeptics		
Carneades	Historical	Head of the Academy. Tests every argument and shows how to act on what is persuasive. Enjoys objecting a little too much.
Damaris	Fictional	A traveler and interpreter. Presents suspension of judgment as a source of calm, drawing on later Pyrrhonism.

Role	Basis	Sketch
Clitomachus	Historical	Carneades' Carthaginian student. Distinguishes understanding an argument from accepting it.
Menodora	Fictional	A physician. Shows how skill and experience guide action without settled theory.
Philista	Fictional	Market mediator. Tests Skeptical reasoning where evidence is uncertain but a decision cannot wait.

Casting Suggestions

- **Menander** is the most demanding role. Choose a student who is organized, comfortable interrupting peers, and willing to listen more than speak. A domineering Menander flattens the game; a timid one loses control of the clock.
- **The other court members** suit thoughtful students who ask good questions but may not enjoy giving speeches. Their roles reward listening. In a nine-member court, make sure several members are able to sustain the questioning even though not all will make a final public speech.
- **The four teachers** (Antipater, Apollodorus, Nāgasena, Carneades) usually open for their factions. Cast confident speakers who have done the reading.
- **The Buddhists** need at least one student who is patient with difficult ideas. If any students have studied Buddhism, consider placing one of them here, though not necessarily all.
- **The Skeptics** need students who can construct an objection and also concede a good reply. A student who simply likes to argue will make the faction tiresome and unpersuasive.
- **Students with a strong personal commitment** to one tradition often learn most when cast against it or on the court.

Absences

If a philosopher is absent, the faction covers that role's work; nothing else changes. If a court member is absent, tally the votes of the court members who actually participate. If Menander is absent, give his role sheet to another court member, preferably one who has seen him prepare, and remove that student's original role. If Philon or Mālatī is absent, the GM or another court member reads the missing part of the ceremony. Do not run the game with fewer than three court members; if necessary, move a philosopher onto the court.

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The development of this game and its accompanying materials involved assistance from two generative artificial intelligence systems: ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Claude (Anthropic). These tools contributed to brainstorming, drafting and revising portions of the gamebook and instructor's manual, preparing role sheets and other instructional materials, assisting with translations and classroom renderings of selected ancient texts, and reviewing the documents for clarity and consistency. The game's overall conception, pedagogical objectives, central design decisions, and classroom testing were directed by the author, who takes responsibility for the final content, including any errors or omissions.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

The appendices that follow collect what the GM needs in the room and reference copies of the printed materials. The gamebook, role sheets, faction handouts, ballots, and tent cards are separate files.

- **Appendix A.** One-page run sheet for the court session
- **Appendix B.** Tally worksheet
- **Appendix C.** The dilemma cards and how to choose among them
- **Appendix D.** The four station handouts
- **Appendix E.** Two-minute versions of the exercises
- **Appendix F.** The opening ceremony
- **Appendix G.** Debriefing questions
- **Appendix H.** Supplementary readings for the instructor

Appendix A. Run Sheet for the Court Session

Clock	Length	Phase	GM action
0:00	3 min	Settle	Factions and court take their places. Confirm who is presenting. Keep the dilemma cards out of sight.
0:03	3 min	Opening ceremony	Philon and Mālatī perform the prayer, paper sacrifice, and bow. Menander welcomes the delegations and promises freedom to criticize.
0:06	30 min	Presentations and exercises	Stoics, Epicureans, Buddhists, Skeptics, in that order. Seven minutes each; warn at six, stop at seven. Two minutes for transitions.
0:36	2 min	Dilemmas revealed	Hand one card to each court member. They read silently.
0:38	16 min	Advice on the dilemmas	In larger courts hear four or five dilemmas publicly; others seek advice during negotiation.
0:54	6 min	Negotiation	Everyone may move about. Give a one-minute warning.
1:00	9 min	Final judgments	Vote individually first; then one representative per selected school speaks in large courts. Menander awards patronage.
1:09	3 min	Ratings	Each faction agrees on one rating of the court from 1 to 5.
1:12	3 min	Results	Confirm allegiance and patronage results; announce the court's average last.

Each presentation (7 minutes)

3 minutes teaching, 2 minutes exercise, 2 minutes questions. Signal at 6; stop at 7. Reserve 2 minutes total for transitions.

Three rules to state aloud

- Every court member chooses one school. A vote for Skepticism requires unresolved competing reasons, which its representative should explain.
- Rate the court's reasoning, not whether it agreed with your faction.
- Menander's patronage award is separate from his allegiance vote.

Appendix B. Tally Worksheet

Section: ____ Date: _____ Court members voting: ___ Highest vote total: ___

1. Allegiance

School	Votes	Court members who chose it
Stoicism		
Epicureanism		
Buddhism		
Skepticism		

Result: Outright victory / Shared partial victory (tie) Faction(s): _____

2. Royal patronage

Menander awards patronage to: _____ His own vote: _____

3. Philosophical deliberation

Rating faction	Rating	Reason given
Stoics		
Epicureans		
Buddhists		
Skeptics		
Average		Court result: FULL (≥4.0) / PARTIAL (3.5–3.99) / NONE (<3.5)

4. Notes for next time

Time used: presentations ____ dilemmas ____ negotiation ____ judgments ____

What worked: _____

What to change: _____

Appendix C. The Dilemma Cards

Each court character has two dilemma cards. Before the session, choose one for each active court member. Nine court characters produce 18 possible cards, though only one per active character is dealt. The cards were written so that either works in isolation, with one exception: do not use Agathocleia's "Letting your son leave" together with Demetrios's "A life of your own." Their descriptions of Demetrios's plans differ. In seven- or nine-member games, consider which four or five dilemmas will receive public hearings. The remainder can be pursued during negotiation.

Two sample combinations that work well together are shown below. For larger courts, add the choices listed in the last four rows; other combinations are also possible.

Court member	Set A: power and its limits	Set B: loss and what remains
Menander	An opportunity for conquest	How to spend the time remaining
Philon	Stay and restrain or refuse	The survivor's request
Mālatī	A life beyond your work	Relief or a clear mind
Agathocleia	Letting your son leave	Joy after loss
Demetrios	An insult before the court	A life of your own
Dionysios	A monument or the waterworks	An error in the accounts
Kalyāṇī	A promise at the crossing	Words that may preserve the peace
Dāmodara	The same law for two people	Two witnesses, one judgment
Helena	The lesson the king wants	An inconvenient account of victory

In Set A, Menander's proposed campaign and Philon's summons to lead a campaign reinforce each other, so call on Menander first. In Set B, Menander's illness gives Mālatī a part in his dilemma as well as her own. Sets may be mixed. In a nine-member court, select a range of public dilemmas and allow the remaining characters to consult factions during negotiation; do not try to hold a full hearing for every card.

Every card carries the same instruction: *Read your card, ask the philosophers for advice, and decide what you will do and why.* The texts follow.

Menander (king)

Dilemma 1: An opportunity for conquest. A neighboring ruler has died, leaving his kingdom divided. Your generals urge you to seize a strategic pass. Controlling it could make your frontier safer and bring you lasting glory, but an invasion would cost many lives. No attack on your kingdom is imminent. You suspect that your desire to be remembered is influencing your judgment.

Dilemma 2: How to spend the time remaining. Your physician warns that an illness may shorten your life, although no one knows by how much. You could delegate much of your work and spend more time with family, friends, and philosophical teachers. Your advisers fear that withdrawing would weaken the kingdom. You fear that continuing as before will leave you no time to learn how to live.

Agathocleia (queen)

Dilemma 1: Letting your son leave. Demetrios (your son and the royal heir) wants to spend a year traveling with teachers and friends. The journey offers learning and independence, but travel carries real dangers. Since your daughter's death, the thought of losing him terrifies you. He asks for your blessing and says that demanding he stay would make your fear the ruler of his life.

Dilemma 2: Joy after loss. A family celebration falls on the anniversary of your daughter's death. Demetrios (your son and the royal heir) asks you to join him. You would enjoy seeing the family together, but you feel that laughing and celebrating would betray your daughter's memory. You are considering spending the day alone among her possessions instead.

Demetrios (royal heir)

Dilemma 1: A life of your own. Friends invite you to leave court and join a small community devoted to study and companionship. You would welcome this life. Your parents insist that, as heir, you owe the kingdom your service. No replacement has been agreed upon. Leaving could cause instability, but staying would mean accepting a future you never chose.

Dilemma 2: An insult before the court. A prominent noble publicly calls you weak and unfit to rule because you prefer books and friendship to military glory. Several officers laugh. Menander (your father and the king) invites you to respond. You feel humiliated. Demanding an apology might defend your standing, but it could turn the insult into a lasting feud.

Philon (army commander)

Dilemma 1: The survivor's request. A survivor of the village you ordered burned asks you to pay for rebuilding its homes. Meeting the request would consume most of the savings intended to support your household in retirement. No court will compel you to pay, and the survivor cannot damage your reputation. You would still remember what you did even if you refused.

Dilemma 2: Stay and restrain or refuse. Menander (the king) asks you to lead another campaign. You believe it will probably involve actions you consider unjust. If you refuse, an officer known for brutality is likely to replace you. By accepting, you might protect civilians and restrain your soldiers, but you would also help carry out a campaign you oppose.

Mālatī (court physician)

Dilemma 1: A life beyond your work. Your pain and stiff hands increasingly limit your medical work. Your apprentice is ready to take over, and the queen offers you a comfortable place in the household without duties. You could retire or continue with fewer patients and more help. You fear that giving up your position would mean giving up what makes your life valuable.

Dilemma 2: Relief or a clear mind. A remedy substantially eases your pain but leaves you sleepy and unable to study or teach for much of the day. Without it, you remain clearheaded, but the pain makes ordinary activities difficult. Your apprentice can care for the patients, so their safety does not depend on your choice.

Dionysios (royal treasurer)

Dilemma 1: A monument or the waterworks. The treasury can fund only one major project this year. Menander's advisers propose a monument celebrating his victories, hoping it will strengthen loyalty and attract visitors. Farmers instead urge you to repair damaged irrigation channels before the next planting season; without repairs, some families may lose their crops. You must advise the king. A monument might help unify the kingdom, but the waterworks could prevent

immediate hardship. Your recommendation will affect how both the king and his subjects judge your service.

Dilemma 2: An error in the accounts. You discover that a tax official collected more than the law permitted from several market families. The excess has already been assigned to payments for injured soldiers. Returning the money would leave those soldiers without promised support; keeping it would mean knowingly benefiting from an error at the families' expense. The tax official asks you to correct the ledger quietly, without admitting the mistake. You must decide what to report to Menander and how to recommend putting matters right.

Kalyāṇī (frontier envoy)

Dilemma 1: A promise at the crossing. During talks at a frontier post, you promised safe passage to families fleeing a local conflict. Now guards warn that a few armed scouts might be traveling among them. No one has identified a scout, and the families have already begun their journey. If you urge the gates closed, people may be stranded in danger and lose trust in your word. If you recommend admitting them immediately, you may expose the town to an attack. There is little time to obtain better information.

Dilemma 2: Words that may preserve the peace. You are translating an agreement between Menander's representatives and a neighboring community. One phrase could mean either a limited truce or a lasting pledge of friendship. Both sides appear to hear the meaning they prefer. If you clarify the disagreement, the talks might collapse and fighting may resume. If you let the ambiguity stand, the agreement could succeed for now, but each side may later accuse the other of betrayal. Your words may shape what happens next.

Dāmodara (city magistrate)

Dilemma 1: Two witnesses, one judgment. A market storehouse burned during the night. Two witnesses accuse a young laborer of starting the fire, but their accounts differ about the hour and what they actually saw. The laborer denies responsibility. Merchants demand punishment and warn that releasing the accused may invite further destruction. An unjust conviction, however, could ruin an innocent life. You are expected to make a recommendation soon. You can delay for more inquiry, but the town may regard delay as a failure to protect it.

Dilemma 2: The same law for two people. A local rule imposes a substantial fine for cutting wood in a protected grove. Two people admit breaking it: a wealthy merchant who used the wood for a decorative pavilion, and a struggling parent who repaired a leaking roof. The same fine would barely affect one person and might leave the other without food. Some citizens insist that equal treatment requires the same penalty; others argue that justice must consider motives and circumstances. You must recommend how each case should be resolved.

Helena (royal tutor)

Dilemma 1: The lesson the king wants. Menander asks you to teach young officers that a worthy ruler never allows fear or uncertainty to delay action. You believe courage matters, but you also think this lesson confuses boldness with good judgment. Several students have already begun repeating it as an excuse to dismiss criticism. If you teach the lesson as requested, you may help them become loyal officers; if you challenge it openly, you risk your position and the chance to educate them at all.

Dilemma 2: An inconvenient account of victory. You are preparing an official account of an earlier royal campaign. The familiar story celebrates a swift and honorable victory. A newly received account, from a witness you find credible but cannot fully verify, describes serious suffering among civilians. Publishing that uncertainty may anger officials and weaken confidence in the army; leaving it out may turn the royal archive into an instrument of praise rather than inquiry. You must decide what the record should say and how publicly to defend your choice.

Appendix D. The Station Handouts

These are the handouts for the optional four-station activity described above. If using them, print each on a single sheet, front and back. Three small corrections have been made to the versions used in the first run: the Epicurus quotation now includes its third category, the passage from Sextus Empiricus uses the public-domain translation that appears in the gamebook, and a stray layout note has been removed from Station 1.

Station 1: Stoicism

1. The Challenge

The Stoics believed that we should distinguish between things that are genuinely up to us and things that are not. As a group, decide which of the following are up to you and which are not up to you. Discuss any disagreements.

- Getting an A on an exam.
- Choosing to study diligently.
- Winning an election.
- Choosing to run an honest campaign.
- Whether other people admire you.
- How you respond to criticism.

2. Meet Epictetus

Epictetus, an ancient Stoic philosopher, wrote:

> *Some things are in our control and others are not. Things in our control are opinion, pursuit, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever are our own actions. Things not in our control are body, property, reputation, public office, and, in one word, whatever are not our own actions. The things in our control are by nature free, unrestrained, unhindered; but those not in our control are weak, slavish, restrained, in the power of others.… Work, therefore, to be able to say to every harsh appearance,*

> *"You are but an appearance, and not absolutely the thing you appear to be." And then examine it by those rules which you have, and first and chiefly by this: whether it concerns the things which are in our own control, or those which are not; and if it concerns anything not in our control, be prepared to say that it is nothing to you.*
>
> — Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 1

Discuss: Epictetus argues that we should regard things outside our control, including our health, possessions, and reputation, as "nothing to us." Would following this advice make us happier and freer, or would it lead us to care too little about things that genuinely matter?

3. The Big Question

Imagine two people. Sarah acts wisely, courageously, and honorably but experiences repeated failures, losses, and misfortunes. David acts selfishly and dishonestly but enjoys enormous wealth, success, and good fortune.

According to the Stoics, Sarah has a better life than David. The Stoics believed that virtue (living wisely, courageously, and justly) is the only genuine good. External successes and misfortunes do not determine whether someone lives well. As a group, discuss: Do you agree? Can someone genuinely flourish despite experiencing terrible misfortune?

Station 2: Epicureanism

1. The Challenge

Imagine that you could guarantee yourself three of the following things for the rest of your life. As a group, decide which three would contribute most to a happy life. Discuss any disagreements.

- Always having enough food and water.
- Having close, trustworthy friendships.
- Having a safe and comfortable home.
- Enjoying delicious meals whenever you wish.

- Taking luxurious vacations.
- Having plenty of time for entertainment and relaxation.
- Becoming famous and widely admired.
- Holding a position of great political power.
- Becoming extraordinarily wealthy.

2. The Epicurean Perspective

The Greek philosopher Epicurus argued that pleasure is the highest good. But he distinguished three kinds of desires:

- **Natural and necessary:** desires essential for living well, such as food, shelter, and friendship.
- **Natural but unnecessary:** desires for additional pleasures, such as luxurious meals and other comforts.
- **Empty desires:** desires for things such as unlimited wealth, fame, and power, which often produce anxiety rather than happiness.

> *Of our desires some are natural and necessary; others are natural, but not necessary; others, again, are neither natural nor necessary, but are due to illusory opinion.*
>
> — Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines* 29 (trans. R. D. Hicks)

Epicurus believed that the happiest life is one of pleasure, friendship, freedom from bodily suffering, and tranquility of mind. Satisfying unnecessary desires can be enjoyable, but becoming dependent on them can undermine happiness. Discuss: Would Epicurus approve of your original three choices? Would you change any of them?

3. The Big Question

Epicurus believed that the pursuit of wealth, fame, and power often makes people less happy rather than more happy. Imagine two people. Sophia enjoys a simple life with close friendships, modest comforts, plenty of leisure, and little anxiety.

Marcus achieves extraordinary wealth, fame, and professional success but experiences considerable stress, competition, and anxiety.

Epicurus would argue that Sophia lives the happier life. Do you agree? Is Epicurus right that we should limit our ambitions to achieve greater happiness, or does his philosophy encourage us to settle for too little?

Station 3: Buddhism

1. The Challenge

Set a timer for 60 seconds. Sit comfortably and close your eyes, if you wish. Focus your attention on the sensations of breathing. Whenever your mind wanders, simply notice what distracted you and gently return your attention to the breath. Don't worry about how often your mind wanders. The goal is not to eliminate thoughts, but to become aware of what your mind is doing. When the timer finishes, discuss:

- How difficult was it to keep your attention focused on your breath?
- What kinds of thoughts or distractions appeared? Did you choose to have these thoughts?
- Why do you think Buddhists might consider this kind of exercise important?

2. The Buddhist Perspective

In *The Questions of King Milinda*, the Buddhist monk Nāgasena discusses the nature of the self with King Milinda (Menander), the same king whose court you will encounter in our game.

> **Nāgasena:** Is the chariot its wheels, its axle, or its framework?
> **Milinda:** No.
> **Nāgasena:** Is the chariot something separate from all these parts?
> **Milinda:** No. "Chariot" is simply the name we give to these parts arranged together.
> **Nāgasena:** Just so, great king. In the same way, "Nāgasena" is the

> name given to a collection of bodily and mental processes. There is no separate, permanent self behind them.
>
> — *The Questions of King Milinda*, Book II, Chapter 1 (condensed adaptation)

As a group, discuss: If you took apart a chariot, where would you find the chariot itself? Is it anything more than its parts arranged in a particular way? If your body, memories, personality, and thoughts are constantly changing, what, if anything, makes you the same person throughout your life?

3. The Big Question

> *From craving comes sorrow; from craving comes fear. For one who is free from craving, there is no sorrow—how could there be fear?*
>
> — *Dhammapada* 216 (adapted translation)

Buddhism teaches that we should cultivate non-attachment: learning to care about people, experiences, and goals without clinging to them or demanding that they remain as we wish. Discuss: Is it possible to love people, pursue ambitious goals, and care deeply about the world without becoming attached to them? Would a life of non-attachment be genuinely desirable?

Station 4: Skepticism

1. The Challenge

The ancient Skeptics questioned whether philosophers could establish the truth of their doctrines. As a group, develop one objection to each of the following claims. Then discuss which of your three objections is the strongest.

- **Stoicism:** Virtue is the only genuine good. A person who acts wisely and justly can live a good life even when circumstances turn out terribly.
- **Epicureanism:** Pleasure is the highest good. Everything else is valuable because of its contribution to a pleasurable life.
- **Buddhism:** Craving is a central cause of suffering. Overcoming craving and ignorance is essential to liberation from suffering.

2. The Skeptical Perspective

When the Oracle of Delphi declared that nobody was wiser than Socrates, Socrates concluded that the god was teaching a lesson about the limits of human knowledge:

> *It seems that the god alone is truly wise, and that by this oracle he means that human wisdom is worth little or nothing. The wisest among you, human beings, is the one who, like Socrates, recognizes that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing.*
>
> — Plato, *Apology* 23a (adapted translation)

Centuries later, the ancient Skeptic Sextus Empiricus wrote:

> *The capacity of the Sceptical School is to place the phenomenal in opposition to the intellectual "in any way whatever," and thus through the equilibrium of the reasons and things opposed to each other, to reach, first the state of suspension of judgment, and afterwards that of imperturbability.*
>
> — Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.8 (trans. Mary Mills Patrick)

The Skeptics sought to examine opposing arguments without committing themselves to philosophical doctrines. When opposing arguments appeared equally convincing, they suspended judgment rather than declaring either position true. As a group, discuss: Why might recognizing our own ignorance be a form of wisdom? Does finding a serious objection to a philosophical claim establish that the claim is false? Why might suspending judgment lead to tranquility?

3. The Big Question

Skeptics believed that we could live without holding definite philosophical beliefs about what is ultimately true or good. They could still make practical decisions by following appearances, customs, and ordinary experience. Would suspending judgment on difficult philosophical questions make us wiser and happier? Or would it leave us unable to make important decisions and stand up for our convictions?

Appendix E. Two-Minute Versions of the Exercises

These are two-minute adaptations of the sample handout exercises, not mandatory scripts. Factions may use them, adapt them, or create their own short exercise rooted in their philosophy and sources. Ensure that every activity fits the two-minute slot and remains voluntary; the Skeptics must still offer three reasoned objections.

Exercise	Two-minute version	One question to ask
Stoics		
The control line	Explain "up to us" in one sentence. Read four statements: *I choose to speak truthfully. The king believes me. I choose to care for the sick. My patient survives.* The court points left for "up to us" and right for "not up to us." Then: "Imagine the king rejects your advice. Replace *He must agree* with *I will explain my reasons honestly.*"	How can a patient's survival be "nothing to us" and still deserve our deepest care?
The Stoic word challenge	Define two kinds of value: good or bad (qualities of our choices) and preferred or dispreferred (outcomes). Read: "The patient died, so the physician is worthless." The court silently completes: "What happened was ___. I wanted ___. This does not settle whether I acted well. My next just choice is ___." Take one answer.	Does refusing to call defeat "bad" help us live well, or understate a real loss?
Epicureans		
The contemplation of death	"Think of the world a century before you were born. Were you lonely, or waiting in darkness?" Pause. "Now a century after your death. If the mind ends with the body, who is there to suffer?" Pause. Name the three worries: dying may hurt; being dead will feel terrible; death takes away future pleasures. The argument answers only the second.	Can death harm us by taking away a future we never miss?

Exercise	Two-minute version	One question to ask
The garden of gratitude	"Recall a simple pleasure: a meal, a conversation, laughter with a friend." Thirty seconds of silence. "Stay with one detail. Is remembering it pleasant now?" Pause. "Did it require wealth, rank, or luxury?"	Can memory and friendship make a hard life happy, or are there limits?
Buddhists		
Mindfulness and insight	"Sit comfortably. Notice the breath where you feel it most easily." Forty-five seconds of silence. "When a thought appears, note it and return to the breath." Thirty seconds. "Did you choose your thoughts? Could you make one stay?"	What does this suggest about the self, and what does it not establish?
Extend loving-kindness beyond the court	"Bring to mind someone you wish well. *May you be safe and free from suffering.*" Pause. "Now a stranger in the city." Repeat the phrase. "Now a family across a hostile frontier." Repeat. "Notice any resistance."	What would this goodwill change in how the king treats an enemy?
Skeptics		
The Skeptical Examination	For each rival school in turn: state its central claim in one sentence and give one reasoned objection (about forty seconds each). Then say what you do not claim: an objection is not a proof of the opposite. Close with the physician who chooses a treatment on the best evidence without certainty about the theory.	What answer would make you withdraw the objection?

Appendix F. The Opening Ceremony

This script appears on Philon's and Mālatī's role sheets. It is reprinted here so that the GM can cue it or read an absent student's part. The whole ceremony should take about two minutes.

Call the court to order

Philon holds the pig picture toward the court and says: "Let the court attend. Before we begin our deliberations, we offer this sacrifice to Athena. Mālatī will speak the prayer."

Prayer to Athena

Mālatī reads slowly and solemnly:

> *"Athena, guardian of cities and giver of wise counsel, hear this court. We bring this offering before we speak. Look with favor on Menander, on his household, and on the people of his kingdom. Give us courage to hear unwelcome truths, restraint in the use of power, and judgment in times of uncertainty. May those who advise speak honestly, and those who rule listen carefully. Keep anger and deceit from this assembly. Help us seek a life worthy of human beings. Receive this offering, and grant that our deliberations serve the common good."*

The sacrifice

Mālatī helps hold the picture while Philon tears it into several pieces in view of the court and places the pieces on the table. Philon says: "The offering is made. Let the court now honor its king."

Royal homage

Mālatī says: "Turn toward King Menander." Philon says: "Members of the court and visiting philosophers, bow before King Menander!" Both demonstrate a brief bow, pause, and return to their seats. Menander then welcomes the teachers and promises freedom to criticize.

The ceremony is a theatrical adaptation, and the prayer is original classroom writing. Athena is chosen because she appears on Menander's coins. The rite grants no points and adds no victory objective.

Appendix G. Debriefing Questions

Stepping out of role

- What do you personally think of the school you defended? Did defending it change your view?
- Court members: was your vote your character's or your own? Would you vote differently now?
- In the *Questions of King Milinda*, Menander becomes a Buddhist. Why did, or didn't, our court reach the same verdict?

Comparing the schools (LG1)

- On which dilemma did the schools disagree most sharply? On which did they give the same advice for different reasons?
- Stoic "preferred indifferents," Epicurean "natural and necessary desires," and Buddhist "nonattachment" all try to say how to care about things without being ruled by them. Are these three versions of one idea, or three different ideas?

Applying the ideas (LG2)

- Which piece of advice given to a court member would you actually follow? Which would you refuse?
- Demetrios did not choose to be heir. Many of you have expectations placed on you that you did not choose. Which school spoke best to that?
- Menander could award patronage to a school he did not personally follow. Should a leader support a philosophy for the public that he does not live by himself?

Evaluating arguments (LG3)

- What was the strongest objection raised in the game? Was it answered?
- Did the Skeptics offer a way of life, or only criticism? Can a leader act responsibly without a settled view of the good?

- Did every vote for skepticism rest on reasons? Did the rule that everyone must choose a school help or hurt honest judgment?

Practice and truth (LG4)

- Which exercise affected you most? Is that any evidence that the school is right?
- Many people today use Stoic exercises or mindfulness without accepting Stoic theology or rebirth. Is anything lost when a practice is detached from its philosophy?
- Which of these practices, if any, would you keep?

The court's deliberation

- The court received an average rating of X. Too high or too low? What would a 5 have looked like?
- Did confident speakers carry more weight than good arguments? How could a court guard against that?

Appendix H. Supplementary Readings for the Instructor

Philosophy as a way of life

- Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Blackwell, 1995).
- Pierre Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. Michael Chase (Harvard University Press, 2002).
- John M. Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus* (Princeton University Press, 2012). A critical alternative to Hadot.
- Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 1994).
- David V. Fiordalis, ed., *Buddhist Spiritual Practices: Thinking with Pierre Hadot on Buddhism, Philosophy, and the Path* (Mangalam Press, 2018).

The Hellenistic schools

- A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1987). The standard sourcebook, with commentary.
- Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate* (Oxford University Press, 2005).
- Tim O'Keefe, *Epicureanism* (University of California Press, 2010).
- Harald Thorsrud, *Ancient Scepticism* (University of California Press, 2009).
- Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, ed. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- Massimo Pigliucci and Gregory Lopez, *A Handbook for New Stoics* (The Experiment, 2019). The source of the adapted Stoic exercises.

Buddhist philosophy

- Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 1998).
- Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Hackett, 2021).

- Bhikkhu Bodhi, ed., *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāli Canon* (Wisdom Publications, 2005).
- T. W. Rhys Davids, trans., *The Questions of King Milinda*, 2 vols., Sacred Books of the East 35–36 (Clarendon Press, 1890–94).

Menander and the Greek east

- Rachel Mairs, *The Hellenistic Far East: Archaeology, Language, and Identity in Greek Central Asia* (University of California Press, 2014).
- Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies* (Allworth Press, 2002).
- Christopher I. Beckwith, *Greek Buddha: Pyrrho's Encounter with Early Buddhism in Central Asia* (Princeton University Press, 2015). Argues for Buddhist influence on Pyrrho; widely discussed and widely disputed.
- The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* has reliable, free entries on Stoicism, Epicurus, Carneades, Ancient Skepticism, Pyrrho, and the Buddha.