

PHIL 1040/CLASS 1314: ARISTOTLE

Spring 2017

Instructor

Robert Howton

(robert.howton@pitt.edu)

Office Hours

MoWe 9–11 A.M. and by appt.

1028-A CL

Course Website

CourseWeb

(courseweb.pitt.edu)

Lectures

MoWe 11 A.M.–12:15 P.M.

130 CL

Prerequisites

Any other PHIL course

+ Minimum 3.25 GPA



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Aristotle of Stagira (384–322 B.C.E.) is a thinker of unparalleled influence. His work has had a formative impact on almost every intellectual discipline we recognize today, from philosophical disciplines such as logic, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, ethics, and political theory; to scientific disciplines such as physics and (above all) biology; to humanistic disciplines such as rhetoric, aesthetics, and critical theory. He is reported to have written over two-hundred works, of which approximately thirty-one survive. For most of their history, these surviving works made Aristotle’s name synonymous with knowledge itself—a status aptly illustrated in Dante’s *Inferno*, where Aristotle is given the title “master of those who know”. Even today, at a time when our knowledge in many of these disciplines has progressed far beyond what Aristotle could have possibly conceived, his works remain valuable not only for their historical significance, but for the contributions they continue to make to our understanding of the world and our place in it.

This course will give a general introduction to Aristotle’s thought, taking as its point of departure Aristotle’s conception of wisdom (*sophia*) as the knowledge of the primary causes of things. For Aristotle, the desire for and pursuit of wisdom is a necessary consequence of our nature as human beings. To aid in this pursuit, Aristotle developed an ingenious—and seemingly comprehensive—system for investigating and discovering the causes of what we seek to explain. We’ll begin by looking at Aristotle’s explanatory framework and his conception of scientific inquiry. From there, we’ll look at how Aristotle applies this framework to

understand different aspects of reality, including matter, change, life, biodiversity, human nature, the divine, and the arrangement of the cosmos.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course aims to establish a broad understanding of core issues in Aristotle's philosophy and to develop the skills necessary for appreciating these and other topics in ancient and contemporary philosophy. The successful student will demonstrate the ability:

- to state and articulate verbally and in writing major ideas and controversies related to Aristotle's thought,
- to read and critically assess both primary and secondary literature on Aristotle,
- to identify the elements of an argument and assess it for soundness and validity, and
- to apply these skills to novel cases.

The key to success in this course is to keep up with the assigned readings and to attend and participate regularly in class activities. *If you keep up with the course you will not be assigned anything for which you are unprepared.*

EVALUATION

Students' success in meeting these course goals will be evaluated on the following bases:

1. Students will be expected to write **two term tests** and a **final paper**. The term tests are designed to evaluate comprehension of the major ideas presented in class, as well as to prepare the student for the final paper, which will require the student to critically analyze and interpret primary texts from Aristotle's corpus.
2. Attendance and class participation will be evaluated on the basis of the student's answer to **reading response question**, which will be distributed in advance and must be turned in *in hard copy* at the start of the meeting in which the relevant reading is to be discussed. (Students may opt out of reading responses with no penalty a maximum of *three* times; students who do not opt out of three reading responses may use these to replace lower-scoring responses; with the exception of University excused absences, which must be supported by official documentation, students must complete all other reading responses and attend all other class meetings.)
3. Students will additionally alternate as **scribes** during class meetings, working in pairs to (1) take detailed minutes of the class meeting, (2) collaborating on producing a polished **fair copy** of that meeting, and, within five days, (3) submitting the fair copy to me for correction and approval. Fair copies will then be distributed to the class for use as study guides for the Term Tests.
4. Finally, students will give at least one 10–15 minute in-class presentation. Presentation topics and secondary literature will be chosen in consultation with me.

Final grades will be determined according to the following rubric:

Term Test 1	20%
Term Test 2	25%
Final Paper	25%
Reading Responses	10%
Class Presentation	10%
Fair Copy	10%
Total	100%

Students must complete all assignments in order to pass the course.

NB: All work submitted to me outside of class, i.e. fair copies and term papers, *must* be submitted in a format readable by Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat. Work not submitted in these format will *not* be graded.

IMPORTANT DATES

Term Test 1 will be administered in class; Term Test 2 will be administered during exam week; fair copies are due no later than 5 days after the minuted class; the final paper will be due by midnight (i.e. no later than 11:59 P.M.) the Friday following the end of classes.

3/1	Term Test 1
3/6, 3/8	No Class (Spring Break)
TBD	Term Test 2
4/28	Final Paper Due

COURSE MATERIALS

The required text for the course is:

Irwin and Fine (eds.). *Aristotle: Selections*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1995.

This text contains excellent translations of most (though not all) of the Aristotelian texts we'll be studying. Additional texts (which will be posted to CourseWeb) are drawn from the standard Revised Oxford Translations (ROT) of Aristotle, published here:

Barnes, Jonathan (ed.). *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (2 vols.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Both Irwin/Fine and Barnes are available in the bookstore. The state of Aristotelian scholarship since the late 20th century is for the most part excellent. Students seeking additional resources are encouraged especially to consult:

Shields, Christopher. *Aristotle*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2014.

This book is freely available through the Pitt Library. I've posted a link on CourseWeb. Additionally, there are a number of handbooks on Aristotle, including:

Anagnostopoulos, Georgios (ed.). *A Companion to Aristotle*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2009.

Barnes, Jonathan (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Shields, Christopher (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook on Aristotle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

I'll have these on reserve at Hillman throughout the semester.

DISABILITIES AND DIFFERENT STYLES TO LEARNING

Education is a pluralistic enterprise: there are several and often incompatible styles of learning. If you believe there is an alternative approach to this material that would better suit your style of learning, do not hesitate to bring it up with me. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both me and Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890 or (412) 383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

The goal of this course is to promote and assess *your* satisfaction of the above-stated course objectives. Plagiarism and all other forms of academic dishonesty will be treated with the greatest severity. Students should familiarize themselves with the University of Pittsburgh’s policy on academic integrity, which may be found here: <http://www.provost.pitt.edu/info/ai1.html>

EMAIL POLICY

Allow me two business days to respond to emails. Please do not email me with questions of philosophical substance—that is what class and office hours are for—and please consult this syllabus before asking questions about course policy.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Schedule, topics, and assignment due dates are subject to change. (‘IF’ indicates that we’ll be using the Irwin/Fine translation of the relevant passages; ‘ROT’ indicates that we’ll be using the Revised Oxford Translation, and that the relevant passages have been posted to CourseWeb.)

1/4	<i>Introduction: Syllabus, Course Basics, Introduction to the Study of Aristotle</i>
-----	--

UNIT 1	<i>Aristotle and the Pursuit of Wisdom</i>
--------	--

1/9	Aristotle’s Life and Intellectual Milieu: Barnes 1995
1/11	<i>Sophia and Philosophia: Met. I 1–2, II 1 (IF); selections from Protrepticus (ROT)</i>

UNIT 2	<i>The Rudiments of Aristotle’s System I: Causation</i>
--------	---

1/16	<i>No Class (MLK Day)</i>
1/18	The Four Causes: <i>Phys. II 3 (IF), Met. I 3–9 (ROT)</i>
1/23	What has a Cause? Luck and Chance: <i>Phys. II 4–6 (IF)</i>
1/25	Form and Matter: <i>Phys. II 1–2, 7 (IF)</i>
1/30	Art, Nature, and Final Cause: <i>Phys. II 8–9 (IF)</i>

UNIT 3 <i>The Rudiments of Aristotle's System II: Substance and Predication</i>	
2/1	Categories and the Fourfold Division of Beings: <i>Cat.</i> 1–5 (IF)
2/6	Understanding Coming-to-Be: <i>Phys.</i> I, selections (IF); <i>GC</i> I, selections (IF)
UNIT 4 <i>The Rudiments of Aristotle's System III: Knowledge and Scientific Inquiry</i>	
2/8	Demonstration and Scientific Knowledge: <i>APo.</i> I 2–6 (IF), II 1–2 (ROT)
2/13	Definition and Essence: <i>APo.</i> I 13 (ROT), II 8–10 (IF)
2/15	Perception and Scientific Knowledge: <i>Phys.</i> I 1 (IF), <i>APr.</i> I 30 (IF), <i>APo</i> I 18, 31 (ROT), II 19 (IF)
UNIT 5 <i>Explaining Nature</i>	
2/20	Motion and Change: <i>Phys.</i> III 1–3 (IF), <i>GC</i> I 9 (ROT)
2/22	Time and the Paradoxes of Motion: <i>Phys.</i> VI selections (IF)
2/27	The Origin of Motion and the Unmoved Mover: <i>Phys.</i> VIII, selections (IF)
3/1	<i>No Reading</i> Term Test 1
3/6	SPRING BREAK
3/8	SPRING BREAK
UNIT 6 <i>Explaining Life</i>	
3/13	Hylomorphism and Soul as the Cause of Living: <i>An.</i> I selections, II 1 (IF)
3/15	“Living is Said in Many Ways”: <i>An.</i> II 2–4 (IF)
3/20	Perceiving, Thinking, and the Immortality of the Soul: II 5–6, 12; III 4–5 (IF)
3/22	Aristotle's Biology: <i>PA</i> I 1,5 (Other Passages TBA)
UNIT 7 <i>Explaining Being</i>	
3/27	“First Philosophy” and the Science of Being <i>qua</i> Being: <i>Met.</i> IV 2, VI (ROT)
3/29	“Being is Said in Many Ways”: <i>Met.</i> VII 1–3 (IF)

- 4/3 Sensible Substance: *Met.* VIII (ROT)
 4/5 Supersensible Substance: *Met.* XII 6–9, selections (IF)

UNIT 8 *Human Nature and Human Happiness*

- 4/10 Eudaimonism and the Function Argument: *EN* I (ROT)
 4/12 Virtue, Choice, and the Doctrine of the Mean: *EN* II, III, selections (IF)
 4/17 A Puzzle Concerning Human *Eudaimonia*: *EN* VI 1–2, X 6–8 (IF)
 4/19 Women, “Natural Slaves”, and Aristotle’s Essentialism: *GA* II 1 (ROT), *Pol.* I 5–6 (IF)

4/29 *No Class*

Term Papers Due

ABBREVIATIONS OF ARISTOTLE’S WORKS

<i>An.</i>	<i>De Anima</i>	(<i>On the Soul</i>)
<i>APo.</i>	<i>Analytica Posteriora</i>	(<i>Posterior Analytics</i>)
<i>APr.</i>	<i>Analytica Priora</i>	(<i>Prior Analytics</i>)
<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Categoriae</i>	(<i>Categories</i>)
<i>EN</i>	<i>Ethica Nicomachea</i>	(<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>)
<i>GA</i>	<i>De Generatione Animalium</i>	(<i>On the Generation of Animals</i>)
<i>GC</i>	<i>De Generatione et Corruptione</i>	(<i>On Generation and Corruption</i>)
<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metaphysica</i>	(<i>Metaphysics</i>)
<i>PA</i>	<i>De Partibus Animalium</i>	(<i>On the Parts of Animals</i>)
<i>Phys.</i>	<i>Physica</i>	(<i>Physics</i>)
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politica</i>	(<i>Politics</i>)