

Aristotle
PHIL 4010
Syllabus
Fall, 2009

Professor Edward Halper
Office: Peabody Hall #128
Hours: 3:15-3:45T 12:15-12:45 R
Other times by appointment
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Objective and Theme: This course will be devoted entirely to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. This work is an inquiry into the first principles and highest causes of all things, and that will be our theme. It is not obvious that there are such principles nor, consequently, that there is such a science. *Metaphysics* is the only science that wrestles with its own existence. Along the way, it considers what it means to be a principle and a cause. It also addresses the question of what it means to be a thing. Aristotle's arguments on the latter topic take much of the central books. The final portion of the work examines candidates for the highest causes along with the character of all things.

No philosophical work has been more important than the *Metaphysics*, but our concern here is not historical nor are we primarily interested only in his doctrines. The focus of the course will be on understanding how he argues for those doctrines. This will require that we grasp the issues he confronts and his approach to these issues. In other words, you are invited to learn to do philosophy like Aristotle. We will be dealing with Aristotle's text, and you are expected to read it carefully and to engage it critically. Aristotelianism is a way of thinking, and you should emerge from this course with some understanding and appreciation of it. Though undergraduates are not responsible for secondary literature, you may wish to consult it.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Texts: *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Green Lion Press, 1999). Other translations are acceptable. You are encouraged to consult several translations and the original.

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| Grading: | Critiques | Sept. 10, 24 | 20% |
| | Mid-Term | October 15 | 15% |
| | Major Paper (8-10 pages) | November 19 | 35% |
| | Final Exam | December 15 (8-11AM) | 30% |

Assignments: As you will soon discover, Aristotle's arguments are often complex and difficult. You will find it helpful to try to formulate them in your own terms as you read. As a teaching device, I shall ask you to turn in a one to three page explication and critique of an argument twice during the semester. They will be due on: September 10 and 24. Each critique should express in your words an argument that appears in the text, and it should contain at least one criticism of the argument and, perhaps, a defense of the original argument against the criticism. To criticize the arguments you should look for unstated assumptions that are false or for a conclusion that does not follow from what is assumed. Though it is not necessary, you may find it useful to consult the secondary literature for arguments and criticisms. (All citations *must* be noted.) The assignment should show that you understand how Aristotle supports his views. Do not merely

summarize his position or his remarks; that would show me only that you have read the text. Instead, present the argument as an argument. (Keep it brief.)

You can use a critique as the starting point for your major paper; but the latter ought to address an issue rather than a passage. This course paper should be a substantial piece of work. Whereas the course paper will allow you to pursue a single problem deeply, the final examination will give you the opportunity to display your comprehensive knowledge of the issues covered in the course.

Study: Most of the work for this course will lie in the preparation of the reading assignments. You are expected to come to class prepared to ask and answer questions about the readings. As you know, reading philosophy is not like reading other material. You will undoubtedly need to read the assignment more than once. As a minimum, I suggest three readings. Begin by reading a large portion of text quickly; then carefully prepare the section that will be discussed in class; third, read the material again after class. Read the text critically. Ask yourself questions as you read. Construct your own counter-arguments. Try to anticipate questions that I might ask.

Academic Honesty: All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

Selected Bibliography

I. General Treatments of Greek Philosophy

Brumbaugh, Robert S. *The Philosophers of Greece*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981.

Collingwood, R.G. *The Idea of Nature*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Gilson, Etienne. *Being and Some Philosophers*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies Press, 1952.

Guthrie, W.K.C. *The Greek Philosophers: From Thales to Aristotle*. New York: Harper & Row, 1960.

Snell, Bruno. *The Discovery of Mind*. T.G. Rosenmeyer (trans.). Boston, 1953.

II. Aristotle: Greek Texts

Bekker, I. (ed.). *Aristotelis Opera*. 2 vols. Berlin, 1831.

More commonly used editions are those in the Oxford Classical Text series and the Budé editions.

III. Translations and Commentaries

Complete:

Barnes, J. (ed.). *The Works of Aristotle*. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. [Oxford translations revised by Barnes. Some Clarendon translations substituted.]

Ross, W.D. (ed.). *The Works of Aristotle*. Oxford, 1928. [Standard “Oxford” Translations.]

Partial:

The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon. [A useful compilation of some of the “Oxford” translations.]

Hippocrates Apostle has translated the *Metaphysics* and a number of Aristotle’s other works. His editions include extensive notes.

Portions of Aristotle’s work have appeared in the Clarendon Aristotle series. These are very literal translations of two or three books of a work accompanied by commentaries that assess their philosophical value from the perspective of contemporary (= Analytic) philosophy. Those volumes that include course readings are:

Madigan, Arthur. *Metaphysics. Book B and Book K 1-2.*

Kirwan, Christopher. *Metaphysics. Books Γ, Δ, and E*

Bostock, David. *Metaphysics. Books Z and H*

Makin, Stephen. *Metaphysics. Theta*

Annas, Julia. *Metaphysics. Books M and N*

IV. General Works on Aristotle

Ackrill, J. L. *Aristotle the Philosopher*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981. [Aristotle and Analytic Philosophy]

Allan, D. J. *The Philosophy of Aristotle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Barnes, J. *Aristotle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Barnes, J., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Barnes, J. Schofield, M. Sorabji, R. *Articles on Aristotle*. 4 vols. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1975-79. [A selection of some influential articles, some of which are translated by the editors. These volumes contain good bibliographies.]

Edel, Abraham. *Aristotle and His Philosophy*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

Evans, J. D. G. *Aristotle*.

Grene, M. *A Portrait of Aristotle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963. [Emphasizes Aristotle’s interest in biology.]

Irwin, Terrence. *Aristotle’s First Principles*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

Jaeger, W. *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development*. trans. R. Robinson. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948. [Jaeger is the father of developmental interpretations of Aristotle.]

Lear, Jonathan. *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Moravcsik, J. M. E. *Aristotle: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.

Mure, G. R. G. *Aristotle*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Randall, J.H. *Aristotle*. New York, 1960. [Aristotle as a Deweyan Naturalist]

Robin, L. *Aristote*. Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1944.

Robinson, Timothy. *Aristotle in Outline*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995.

Ross, W.D. *Aristotle*. London: Methuen, 1964.

Taylor, A.E. *Aristotle*. New York: Dodge Publishing, 1919.

V. Ancient Commentators

Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca. Berlin: Reimer, 1882-1909. [Prussian Academy Edition of Aristotle's so-called "Neo-Platonic" commentators.]

VI. Metaphysics

Burnyeat, Myles. *Notes on Books Eta and Theta of Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Oxford: Sub-faculty of Philosophy, 1984.

Burnyeat, Myles. *Notes on Book Zeta of Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Study Aids Series. Oxford: Sub-faculty of Philosophy, 1979.

Gill, Mary Louise. *Aristotle on Substance*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Halper, Edward C. *One and Many in Aristotle's Metaphysics: Books Alpha-Delta*. Las Vegas: Parmenides Pub., 2009.

Halper, Edward C. *One and Many in Aristotle's Metaphysics: The Central Books*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989.

Loux, Michael J. *Primary Ousia an Essay on Aristotle's Metaphysics Z and H*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991. Scaltsas, T. *Substances and Universals in Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Owens, Joseph, and Lloyd P. Gerson. *Aristotle's Gradations of Being in Metaphysics E-Z*. Edited by Lloyd P. Gerson. South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2007.

Owens, Joseph. *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics a Study in the Greek Background of Mediaeval Thought*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978.

Reeve, C. D. C. *Substantial Knowledge Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 2000.

Scaltsas, T. *Substances and Universals in Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Yu, Jiyuan. *The Structure of Being in Aristotle's Metaphysics*. The New Synthese Historical Library. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2003.

Witt, Charlotte. *Ways of Being Potentiality and Actuality in Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.