

COURSE OUTLINE/ PHIL 551 Seminar in Ancient Philosophy
Winter 2013: Topic/ Aristotle's *Politics*

PROFESSOR M. DESLAURIERS

Office: LEA 943

Phone: 514-398-4400 x094749

Philosophy Main Office: Leacock 908

e-mail: marguerite.deslauriers@mcgill.ca

Office Hours: T 13:30-15:30

This is a course on one work, Aristotle's *Politics*. We will read it in its entirety, together with a collection of articles on the themes and questions of the *Politics*, recently produced for the *Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics*. This will give students a sense not only of Aristotle's political philosophy, but also of its connection to his ethics, and its importance for later political philosophy.

Students should not expect to embrace Aristotle's political philosophy uncritically. In many matters he was mistaken or offensive, but his views are unarguably influential, and philosophically complex. Aristotle was a critic of the democracy of his time, which he understood to be demagogic and to lead necessarily to tyranny. He believed that some people were naturally suited to rule over others, and that the inhabitants of a city could be grouped according to their natural capacities, and natural entitlements, to rule. And so he defends male dominance, slavery, and cultural and linguistic racism, as well as strict limitations on citizenship. We will aim to situate those views in the context of ancient debates, and to understand the implications of Aristotle's discussions for our own political lives. Many of the political ideas that seemed important to him continue to hold interest for us: justice and the law; the status of the citizen; participation in the affairs of the political community as an obligation and a privilege; human flourishing or happiness; and public education.

Texts: *Aristotle: The Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord, will be available at the Word Bookstore, 469 Milton Street. The Word accepts cash and personal cheques in payment.

Course Requirements: Reading summaries, to be submitted to me (at the e-mail address above) weekly by Monday at midnight, for 10 weeks (20%); one presentation, written up 2 weeks after the presentation as a short paper (30%); one term paper (50%). All work must be submitted in hard copy (except for the reading summaries) on the date and at the time indicated in order to avoid penalties. Students are advised to save electronic versions of all their work (including reading summaries). You are expected to have read the assigned material before each class. *Be advised that written work for this course may be submitted to text-matching software.*

Grading criteria: To do excellent work in this course, you need to be able to do more than reiterate what Aristotle says (or seems to say), or what was said in class. An "A" indicates that you not only understand the material, but that you have also thought critically about it, grasping at least some of its subtleties and implications. A "B" reflects an above-average understanding of the material without any major errors; "B" work does not capture the complexity of the issues. A "C" suggests a struggle with the material that results in basic comprehension but is flawed by some significant misunderstandings or errors. A "D" indicates only a rudimentary comprehension of part of the material with most of the material being misunderstood. An "F" indicates no understanding either of the assignment or of the material.

Policy on the use of technology in the classroom:

Pursuant to McGill University's policy regarding electronics in the classroom, **the use of electronic devices (computers, iPads, cell phones, etc.) is not permitted in lectures.**

All electronic devices must be turned off and stored during the class period. Exceptions will only be made with a note from the student disabilities office. The recording of lectures is not permitted

and is illegal without the consent of the instructor. Please consider these policies before enrolling for this course.

Policy on extensions:

No extensions will be granted without an appropriate medical note. Late work will be penalized at the rate of a third of a grade per calendar day past the due date. For example, a paper that is evaluated as a B, if one day late, will be assigned a grade of B-; the same paper, if two days late, would receive a C+.

Required statements:

McGill University values academic integrity. All students must, therefore, understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

COURSE SYLLABUS/ PHIL 551 Seminar in Ancient Philosophy

Winter term 2013: TH 14:00 – 16:00

Professor M. Deslauriers

| | |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| January | 10 Intro |
| | 17 Ethics and politics/ <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I, 1-3; II 1-2; III 1-5; X, 6-9. D. Frede, "The Political Character of Aristotle's Ethics" |
| | 24 Book I: political anthropology/ Miller, "The Rule of Reason" |
| | 31 Book I: slavery/ Pellegrin, "Natural Slavery" |
| February | 7 Book II: criticisms of Socrates/Deslauriers, "Unity and Inequality" |
| | 14 Book III 1-8: citizenship and the constitutions/ Rosler, "Civic Virtue: Citizenship, Ostracism, and War" |
| | 21 Book III : justice/ Zingano, "Natural, Ethical and Political Justice" |
| | 28 Book III-IV: common good/ Morrison, "The Common Good," Kraut, "Aristotle and Rawls on the Common Good" |
| March | READING WEEK |
| | 14 Book III-IV: law and authority/ Horn, "Law, Authority and Governance" |
| | 21 Books III-IV: democracy and deliberation/ Lane, "Claims to Rule: The Case of the Multitude" |
| | 28 Book V-VI: conflict/ Hatzistavrou, "Faction" |
| April | 4 Book VII-VIII: the best conditions for a polis/ Ober, "Political Animals, Actual Citizens, and the Best Possible <i>Polis</i> : Aristotle's <i>Politics</i> ," (Chapter 6 in his <i>Political Dissent in Democratic Athens: Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule</i>) |