

Syllabus
PHIL 341: Philosophy of Science 1
Aristotle's Biology

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WF 9:35–10:55
LEA 110

Course overview

Aristotle is commonly referred to as the “father of biology.” This course will serve in part to assess the extent to which this title is appropriate and the extent to which it is not. We will examine Aristotle’s biological works as well as other texts in the history of biology, including Darwin’s *Origins of Species*, in order to highlight the methodological and theoretical discontinuities between ancient and modern biology. Topics will include scientific methodologies and explanations, natural teleology, reproduction and embryology, human anatomy, animal cognition, the concept of species, and zoological taxonomy. By the end of this course, the student should have a comprehensive understanding of Aristotle’s conception of the biological world and the ways in which his conception influenced biological research and speculation beyond Antiquity.

Prerequisites: The course does not presuppose familiarity with Aristotle, philosophy of science, or evolutionary biology, though background in these areas will be useful.

Readings

Readings will be provided electronically on myCourses or via the McGill library website. If you prefer to read on paper, I suggest you buy *A New Aristotle Reader*, edited by J.L. Ackrill, which is available at The Word Bookstore (469 Milton Street), and a copy of Darwin’s *Origins of Species*. Note that The Word only accepts cash and personal cheques.

Means of evaluation

Five small writing assignments based on the readings: 25%

Midterm exam: 30%

Final paper outline: 5%

Final paper: 40%

Grading criteria

To do excellent work in this course, you need to be able to do more than reiterate 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.

Inclusivity

If you experience barriers to learning, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, <https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>

Extensions

No extension will be granted without the appropriate documentation. 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+.

Emails

I endeavour to answer your emails within two business days. Questions that cannot be answered in a short email should be raised during office hours.

Language policy

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.

Academic integrity

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

Plagiarism: “Plagiarism” means the representation of another’s work, published or unpublished, as one’s own or assisting another in representing another’s work, published or unpublished, as his or her own.

(a) No student shall represent another person’s work, published or unpublished, as his or her own in any academic writing, such as an essay, thesis, research report, project or assignment submitted in a course or a program of study, or represent as his or her own the work of another, whether the material so represented constitutes a part or the entirety of the work submitted.

(b) No student shall contribute any work to another student with the knowledge that the latter may submit the work in part or whole as his or her own. Receipt of payment or other forms of compensation for work contributed shall be cause for presumption that the student had such knowledge. Intellectual property: Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., video recordings, notes, summaries, exam questions) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements

of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

Be advised that written work for this course may be submitted to text-matching software.

Copyright and intellectual property

Instructor generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure.