

COURSE OUTLINE/ **PHIL 355 ARISTOTLE**
Winter term 2023: TTH 13:05 – 14:25
Birks 203

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Office Hours: Thursday, 10:00 – 12:00

This course is intended to give students a sense of the diversity of Aristotle's philosophical interests, together with some idea of how those interests are related. We will be concerned with two topics in particular: substance, and the nature of human character. We will begin with Aristotle's *Physics*, *Categories*, *On Generation and Corruption*, and *Generation of Animals*, all of which tell us something about substance: what it is, what it is not, how it comes into being and how it changes. *On the Soul*, a work concerned with questions in biology and psychology as well as epistemology, will serve as a bridge between the investigation of substance and Aristotle's moral and political philosophy. We will then turn to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which takes up explicitly the question of moral character and its development. Finally, we will read parts of Aristotle's *Politics*, and consider the importance of conceptions of nature and political life with respect to moral character. Among other issues and problems we will investigate are: the categories and the theory of predication; form and matter; change; causation and explanation; perception and cognition; the role of choice in action and virtue; inequality and its justification.

Texts: *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Richard McKeon (ed.), C.D.C. Reeve (intro.), revised edition 2001. Additional readings will be made available on myCourses.

Course Requirements: You are expected to have read the assigned material before each class, and to be prepared to discuss it.
You will be evaluated on: one textual analysis (20%); one assignment (30%); one take-home final exam (50%). All work will be submitted through the myCourses portal.

*Students are advised to save electronic versions of all their work.
Written work for this course may be submitted to text-matching software.*

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

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:
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. If you wish to be exempted for medical or academic reasons, please send me an e-mail setting out your reasons. 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 prior approval from the instructor. Requests for extensions must be made in writing, by e-mail, to marguerite.deslauriers@mcgill.ca; include if possible a proposed date of submission. If you have not received approval for an extension, 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+.

Content warning:

Some of the reading for this course discusses the social and political position of women from the perspective of men, and the nature and justification of slavery from the perspective of slave owners.

Required Course Outline Statements:

Policy statement: 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](#) (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003) (See [McGill's guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l'honnêteté académique de McGill](#)).

Policy statement: Language of Submission

Conformément à [la Charte des droits de l'étudiant](#) de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté, sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue.

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. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.