

This course gives a self-contained introduction to the philosophy of Aristotle (384-322 BC). It has no prerequisites and can serve as an introduction to Greek philosophy, but for students who have already taken Plato, Presocratics, or another course in Greek philosophy, it will allow them to build on what they have already studied.

Aristotle spent twenty years as a student or junior member in Plato's Academy at Athens (367-347), and then, after twelve years travelling, returned to Athens in 335 to found his own school, the Peripatos. He taught and wrote on a vast range of philosophical subjects including logic (where his teaching is recorded in the so-called Organon, consisting of the Categories, On Interpretation, Prior and Posterior Analytics, Topics, and Sophistical Refutations), physics (Physics, De Caelo ["On the Heavens"], On Generation and Corruption, Meteorology), psychology (De Anima ["On the Soul"]) and the series of minor treatises called the Parva Naturalia, biology (Parts of Animals, Generation of Animals, History of Animals, and some minor works), metaphysics (Metaphysics), ethics (the Eudemian and Nicomachean Ethics), politics, rhetoric and poetics (Politics, Rhetoric, Poetics). But while we will touch on many parts of Aristotle's philosophical work, our focus will always be on his goals and methods as a philosophical teacher, and on his critical response to Plato's methods.

Aristotle and Plato, like the sophists before them, are offering their teaching largely to an audience aspiring to a political career at Athens in other Greek cities. Plato uses Socrates' questioning to argue that someone cannot rule the state [πόλις] well, or even run his own household [οἶκος] or his own life well, without knowledge, and that the ordinary kinds of so-called knowledge are mere opinion, or merely hypothetical, or are knowledge merely of a limited specialized domain, and are all insufficient for living or ruling well; and Plato offers, as a way to the desired knowledge, a method of dialectic, developed out of Socratic question-and-answer and partly modelled on mathematical reasoning, which is supposed to lead to knowledge of an unhypothetical first principle, the one; the object is supposed to be the best object, and the knowledge of it is supposed to be both intrinsically most desirable, and a guide to the practice of life. Aristotle doubts that mathematics can tell us anything about goodness, and he doubts that such knowledge of the best object (if achieved) would give practical guidance. He offers instead a method of developing and solving aporiai [problems or difficulties] beginning with ordinary beliefs and concerns, in order to motivate his students and to introduce his own doctrines and conceptual distinctions as solutions to the aporiai. He tries to lead his audience in this way to a view of the happy life, for individuals and for the πόλις, as the exercise of virtue, dependent on prudence or practical wisdom [φρόνησις] but not on theoretical science. But he also tries to show that, even though the political life does not need theoretical science, an even happier life depends on the exercise of theoretical wisdom [σοφία], that is, a wisdom valued merely for the sake of contemplation and not for any further practical purpose, and he tries to show what such a wisdom would be like and how we would acquire it. It must be a science, and Aristotle develops an account of the necessary conditions for scientific knowledge. Plato argues that physics, the account of the natural world as developed by the pre-Socratics (and by Plato himself in the Timaeus), cannot be a science, and that there can be sciences only of objects existing apart from matter and motion, namely mathematical things and the Forms grasped by definitions reached by dialectic. Aristotle agrees that pre-Socratic and Platonic physics are not scientific, but he tries to construct a reformed physics that will be a science, beginning from definitions that grasp forms

of things inseparable from their matter, and proceeding to demonstrations; and he argues that Platonic dialectic, which tries to grasp forms of things separately from their matter, cannot achieve scientific knowledge. But Aristotle agrees with Plato that theoretical wisdom, the most intrinsically valuable science, will be a science of things existing separately from matter, and so he tries, beyond physics, to construct a science of eternal first causes of physical things, which will be a corrected scientific version of popular beliefs about the gods, or of Plato's account of the Forms and of the one-itself or good-itself; this leads beyond the physical writings to the Metaphysics. In all of these texts we will be interested in Aristotle's critique of Plato and his attempts to do better than Plato by standards that Plato himself would accept, in his use of aporiai and solutions, and in his ideal of science and his attempts to construct new scientific disciplines.

The course will be divided into three units, U1 and U2 of about four weeks each, U3 of about five weeks:

U1 Aporetic method in ethics/politics; ways of life, happiness, virtues, ἔξις and ἐνέργεια

U2 Theoretical virtue; conditions of σοφία, science, and other syllogistic arts

U3 The art-nature analogy and its limits; turning the Timaeus into science; soul; eternal motion

The main texts for the course are in the Basic Works of Aristotle, edited by McKeon (with a new preface by Reeve), and Plato: Complete Works, edited by Cooper and Hutchinson, both available at the Word Bookstore. However, I will also assign some texts of Aristotle which are not in McKeon, or which McKeon gives only fragmentarily or in an unacceptable translation. In these cases, students will have to do the readings in the Complete Works of Aristotle, edited by Jonathan Barnes. A copy will be available on reserve in McLennan-Redpath, and, in addition, the library has the book as an e-book. Go to <http://mcgill.worldcat.org> and search the keywords "aristotle complete barnes," and click on the e-book icon; then click on the particular title (e.g. "Eudemian Ethics") on the left-hand page. Further assigned texts will be distributed electronically via the iversity site for the course. In all of these cases, is not sufficient to do these readings in the reserve room or on the web: you must bring photocopies or printouts of the readings with you to class, so that you are prepared to discuss them and to answer questions about them. All of these readings, and not just the books available at the Word Bookstore, are equally required, and you must always have the relevant readings with you in class. Computers and other electronic equipment may not be used in class; if you have accessed material electronically, you must print it out and bring it with you. The readings are not supplements to help you understand the topic that the course is about; the readings are what the course is about.

The course will meet for two 90-minute lecture-discussion sessions per week. Discussions will depend very heavily on details of the reading: you must always have done each day's reading carefully and on time, and must have the texts with you in class, so that you are prepared to answer questions about them. Do not come to class if you have been unable to do the readings. The lectures and discussions will make no sense without the readings.

All students and auditors must sign up for the course on iversity, <http://un.iversity.org>, on the first day of class, so that they can receive reading assignments and any other messages for the course.

This course has no particular prerequisites, but is not intended as a first course in philosophy. Students must understand how philosophers evaluate arguments, and what is expected of a philosophy paper. No knowledge of Greek (beyond the alphabet) is required, but you should be

ready to listen to discussions of the meaning of Greek words. Any further background in classical Greek language or culture would of course be an advantage.

Grades will be based on a 5-7 page paper (20%; there will be two choices of due date to be announced in class), a 12-15 page term-paper due on the last day of class (40%), class participation (20%), and two short handout-analyses of the arguments of particular texts (each 10%). I will ask each student twice during the term to prepare such an analysis and to copy it and distribute it at the beginning of class as an aid to discussion; please also put a copy in my mailbox in Leacock 414 (across from the elevators) at least two hours before class time. Students will also have to learn the Greek alphabet, and must pass a test on the Greek alphabet to remain in the course. Do not ask for extensions: if a paper is handed in late, I may or may not grade it, but I will make no guarantees ahead of time. The papers should be on texts or topics that we have not discussed, or have only touched on, in class; you should design them as if they were additional lectures or discussion-pieces on a text or a topic that the class did not have time to get to. You should consult with me well before the end of term on your proposed topic for the term-paper. 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. To receive a passing grade for the course, students must show that they have kept up with the readings and are able to discuss them in class. Students who are unable to do this will be asked to withdraw.

In all papers and class handouts, references to the texts of Aristotle must always be to the Bekker page and line numbers printed in the margins of most editions and translations (e.g. "1042b21") or to book and chapters numbers (e.g. "De Anima II,7"), never to the page numbers in McKeon or Barnes; likewise references to the texts of Plato must be to the Stephanus page and line numbers printed in the margins of most editions and translations, never to the page numbers in Cooper-Hutchinson. Don't worry if your line numbers may be one or two lines off.

McGill requires me to add the following paragraph: "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 (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information)."

Computers and other electronic equipment may not be used in class; classes may not be recorded under any circumstances.

My office is Leacock 921; I will be available there Wednesdays from 4:00 to 6:00. My office phone number is 398-4400, extension 094720 (no voicemail); I am sometimes there in the afternoons and evenings. I cannot in general respond to emails; I might be able to respond to short messages on the iversity site, but it is better to talk to me in person.