

COURSE OUTLINE/ **PHIL 355 ARISTOTLE**  
Winter term 2016: T TH 11:30 – 13:00

PROFESSOR M. DESLAURIERS

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 16:00-17:00; Thursday 13:30-14:30

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 the first book 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.

Note on pedagogy: Students should expect to interact, with the instructor and with one another, during class time. This will require preparation in advance, and active participation during classes.

Texts: *A New Aristotle Reader*, ed. J. L. Ackrill, is available at the Word Bookstore, 469 Milton Street. The Word accepts cash and personal cheques in payment. Additional readings will be made available on MyCourses.

Course Requirements: one in-class reading comprehension test (20%); one assignment (30%); one take-home exam (50%). The tests will be written by hand in class. All other work must be submitted through the MyCourses portal on the date and at the time indicated in order to avoid penalties. Students are advised to save electronic versions of all their work. 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. 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 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 syllabus 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/](http://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.