

PHIL 1040

ARISTOTLE

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The course will provide a general introduction to Aristotle by focussing on some of his most distinctive ideas in the fields of ethics, psychology, physics and metaphysics. The topics addressed will be the following: 1. Happiness and Virtue; 2. Soul and Life; 3. Nature and the Natural World; 4. Substance and God.

Textbook: *Aristotle, Introductory Readings*. Translated with Introduction and Notes and Glossary by Terence Irwin and Gail Fine, (Hackett 1996).

Grading and Course Requirements: The final grade for the course is determined by 3 short papers, each counting 33% of the final grade. Each one of these short papers will be an *exercise in close textual reading*. You will be given a passage from Aristotle and asked to write an exegetical account of maximum three single spaced pages. You will have to identify the main topic of the passage and explain *in your own word* any claims, distinctions, or arguments made with respect to this topic.

Attendance: Doing well in the course depends on understanding and learning the material I present in class. The book we will be using contains material from various ancient sources, and many of these sources are difficult for beginners in philosophy to understand. So, I strongly recommend that you not miss any class sessions. **Participation can raise the grade.**

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

W1-4: VIRTUE and HAPPINESS. According to Aristotle, an ethical life is a rational life, and a rational life is a life centered on some final good. The final good is what gives unity to our life. The final end is *happiness* (= flourishing). However, flourishing requires *virtue*. Whereas intellectual virtues are taught, moral virtues are acquired through habituation. What we acquire is a disposition to act *and* to feel in a certain way.

W1 *Introduction*

W2-3: *Aristotle on Happiness*

READING:

NE I 1-10 (Irwin-Fine 192-213)

W4-5: *Aristotle on Virtue*

READING:

NE I 13 (Irwin-Fine 213-216)

NE II-III (Irwin-Fine 216-241)

W6-8: SOUL and LIFE. The soul is that which animates the body and provides it with the functions that distinguish the living from the non-living body. Aristotle's considered view is that life takes various forms and that there are different levels, and ultimately different types, of life. Life is said in many ways because it manifests itself in a variety of activities. These activities are *signs of life* in the sense that their presence suffices for life. More directly, should only one of the following activities be present, then something is alive: *nous* (thinking), perceiving, moving around, taking in food and transforming it.

W6: *Aristotle on Life*

READING:

DA II 1-4 (Irwin-Fine 80-90)

W7: *Aristotle on Animal Life*

READING:

DA II 5-III 3 (Irwin-Fine 90-97)

W8: *Aristotle on Thinking*

READING:

DA III 4-8 (Irwin-Fine 97-100)

APost II 19 (Irwin-Fine 28-30)

Metaph I 1 (Irwin-Fine 115-117)

W9-11: NATURE and THE NATURAL WORLD. Aristotle is not merely concerned with solving a list of problems or discussing a certain number of topics. He is engaged in an ambitious project of investigation of the natural world. This project consists of an attempt to establish the right sort of connections – *explanatory connections* – between the things of the world. If this investigation is successful, it not only provides us with knowledge but it gives us *understanding*. This understanding is strongly dependent upon a specific conception of the natural world and the substantial assumption that this particular department of reality is intelligible to us.

W9: *Spring Recess for Students*

W10-11: *Aristotle on Nature*

Phys II 1-9 (Irwin-Fine 42-62)

Meteor. I 1 (not in Irwin-Fine)

PA I 5 (Irwin-Fine 104)

W12-15: SUBSTANCE and GOD. Aristotle is famously committed to the view that the natural world can be adequately explained only by recourse to a certain number of *transcendent* or *extra-natural principles*. This helps us to specify the position of Aristotle. He is not committed to the causal closure of the natural world. On the contrary, in his view the natural world is only a department of reality, and a fully adequate account of this department of reality takes us outside the natural world.

W 12: *Aristotle on Substance*

READING:

Metaph. XII 1-5 (not in Irwin-Fine)

W 13-14 *The God(s) of Aristotle*

READING:

Metaph XII 6-10(Irwin-Fine 187-194)

W 15 FINALE: *Aristotle the systematic philosopher*

NB: this schedule is tentative and may be subject to change. All changes will be made in class with ample time for adjustments