

**Philosophy 242/Classics 242: The Philosophy of Aristotle (Spring 2008)**  
**Prof. Wareh (Humanities 214A, wareht@union.edu, 388-6743)**

**Description**

Students explore the philosophical ideas of Aristotle, perhaps the most celebrated and influential thinker in the history of philosophy. Particular attention will be paid to Aristotle's theory of being, which addresses the organic structure of both living things (plants and animals) and entities whose complex articulation is similarly "organic" (human political communities, works of art and other human artefacts). Readings will be from a variety of Aristotle's writings and may include *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul*, *On the Parts of Animals*, *Politics*, *Poetics*, and Aristotle's writings on logic, ethics, and rhetoric.

**Special Note on Clusters**

This course is part of two General Education clusters. Students are encouraged to consider declaring these clusters and, especially if they have done previous work within these clusters, to use this course's discussions and assignments as an opportunity to reflect on the significance of our material from the interdisciplinary perspective of these two groupings.

**1.** Aristotle's contributions to the methodology of rational inquiry make his philosophy an important chapter in the development of Western traditions of systematic and abstract creation and organization of knowledge.

**"Ordering the West From Ancients to Moderns: Abstraction & Reason in Music, Mathematics, Politics, Philosophy, Literature & Art"**: What are the ancient origins of order, harmony, and proportion, and what are the applications of these notions in philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, the social sciences, art, and other areas? This cluster studies the growth and spread of rationalism, as expressed both in scientific and philosophical thought and in the formal systematization of economic and political life.

**2.** Aristotle, known simply as "the Philosopher" to the most advanced Jewish, Muslim, and Christian intellectuals of the Middle Ages, is easily the Classical Greek thinker whose work exercised the greatest influence on the history of ideas of this period. His terms, methods, and specific arguments were adapted to serve as the basis and framework for cutting-edge innovations tied to the utterly different later social and intellectual context (e.g., Maimonides' rationalization of Jewish theology, or William of Ockham's work on the methodology of the sciences).

**"The Western Classical Tradition & its Roots"**: Roman armies conquered Greece, but Greek culture captured the Roman imagination, and the resulting Greco-Roman amalgam lived on after Rome's fall to inspire creative adaptations from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance to the present day. Greco-Roman themes may be found in Medieval epic, Renaissance art, the political theories of the Enlightenment, and Hollywood movies—just to name a few. This cluster invites courses that explore this tradition as well as its roots.

## Assigned Texts

1. Aristotle, *Selections*, translated with introduction, notes, and glossary by Terence Irwin and Gail Fine, Hackett, 1995 (ISBN 0915145677)
2. Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, Cambridge, 1988 (ISBN 0521347629)

## Requirements and Grading

Weekly written assignments	30%
Reading diagram/presentation (twice)	10%
Midterm quiz (and any unannounced quizzes)	10%
Paper	15%
Final exam	25%
Attendance, preparation, discussion contributions	10%

*Regular, punctual attendance and completion of all assignments are the minimal requirements for passing this course. Any arrangements for absences or missed work must be agreed to in advance.*

*A Note on Notes.* Aristotle can be a difficult author. A large and basic part of succeeding in this course is setting the bar high for understanding and thinking through what you read & what we discuss together in class. To meet your responsibilities as a student in this course you should be doing all of the following:

- reading and rereading the Aristotle assignments, making careful use of Irwin and Fine's notes and glossary;
- taking careful and complete reading notes (which should reflect the best understanding of each section that you can arrive at with the help of rereading, checking previous relevant passages, and thinking through Aristotle's arguments), and consulting these notes later as needed in class discussions and on your own;
- preparing specific questions about each reading that cover everything you don't understand, and making sure that they are answered during class;
- keeping up with the secondary reading (and taking reading notes on it as well);
- taking careful and complete class notes, and making every effort to follow all our discussions, ask questions, and make your own thoughtful contributions;
- treating all assignments as important opportunities to push your understanding to the limit of your abilities;
- consulting me in person & by email as often as you are in doubt, need to, or want to.

If you are coming away from any reading without a couple of pages full of substantial notes that required you to think, plus some very specific points that you know you have not understood as well as you want to and intend to follow up, you are almost certainly not doing enough.

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ARISTOTLE ON WHAT IS

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*Secondary reading: Lear, Ch. 1*

M 3/31	Introduction to Aristotle
W 4/2	<i>Categories</i> <b>1-5</b> (pp. 1-6)
F 4/4	<i>Categories</i> <b>5</b> (pp. 6-10)

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PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE

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*Secondary reading: Lear, Chs. 2-3 (to p. 65)*

M 4/7	<i>Physics</i> <b>1.1,5-7</b> (pp. 83-91)
W 4/9	<i>Physics</i> <b>1.8-9, 2.1</b> (pp. 91-99)
F 4/11	<i>Physics</i> <b>2.2-3</b> (pp. 99-105)
M 4/14	<i>Physics</i> <b>2.7-9</b> (pp. 112-119)
W 4/16	<i>Physics</i> <b>3.1-3</b> (pp. 120-126)
F 4/18	No class (Attend the Classics conference at Skidmore!)
M 4/21	<i>On Generation and Corruption</i> <b>1.1,3-5</b> (pp. 146-157)

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THE SOUL

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*Secondary reading: Lear, Ch. 4*

W 4/23	<i>On the Parts of Animals</i> <b>1.1,5</b> (pp. 206-217)
F 4/25	<i>On the Soul</i> <b>2.1-6,11,12; 3.4-5</b> (pp. 176-193, 198-202) [Part 1]
M 4/28	<b>Midterm quiz</b>
W 4/30	<i>On the Soul</i> [Part 2]

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METAPHYSICS

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*Secondary reading: Lear, Ch. 6 (from p. 247)*

F 5/2	<i>Metaphysics</i> <b>4.1-2</b> (pp. 244-250)
M 5/5	<i>Metaphysics</i> <b>7.1-4</b> (pp. 272-282)
W 5/7	<i>Metaphysics</i> <b>7.5-9</b> (pp. 282-294)
F 5/9	Discussion of papers
M 5/12	<i>Metaphysics</i> <b>7.10-17</b> (pp. 294-314)
W 5/14	<i>Metaphysics</i> <b>8.1-3,6</b> (pp. 315-323)
F 5/16	<b>Paper due</b> 2:45 p.m. (no class or reading assignment)

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ETHICS

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*Secondary reading: Lear, Ch. 5 (pp. 152-191)*

M 5/19	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> <b>1.1-10</b> (pp. 347-363)
W 5/21	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> <b>1.13; 2.1-6</b> (pp. 363-374)
F 5/23	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> <b>2.7; 3.1-5</b> (pp. 374-388)
M 5/26	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> <b>5.1-2,7,10; 8.1-3,9; 9.4</b> (pp. 391-398, 417-425)
W 5/28	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> <b>9.7-9,12; 10.6-8</b> (pp. 425-432, 438-445)

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THE NATURE OF CITY AND CITIZEN

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*Secondary reading: Lear, Ch. 5 (pp. 192-208)*

F 5/30      *Politics* 1.1-6; 2.1-5 (pp. 450-465)

M 6/2      *Politics* 3.1-4,6-11 (pp. 465-483)

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POETICS

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*Secondary reading: James Hutton, "Introduction," pp. 5-24*

W 6/4      *Poetics* 4, 6-11, 13-15 (pp. 543-557)

F 6/6      **Paper revisions due**

**Academic Honor Code.** All work submitted for this course must be your own. You may work with others in preparing reading assignments, but your paper and other written assignments must be entirely the product of your own effort, with clear and specific citation of all sources used. You will not be asked to use unassigned secondary sources in this course, and if you do consult any you must provide with the assignment an annotated list of everything you looked at. The minimum penalty for using others' ideas without complete, specific, and clear attribution is an F in the course, so please do not leave any grey areas. If you ever have any question about the use of sources or the propriety of collaboration, please consult with me.

Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code. The Academic Honor System of Union College is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility to:

- ☛ Uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student's own work,
- ☛ Refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the college community, and
- ☛ Foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the college community.

The *Student Handbook* gives a fuller statement of the honor code. See also Union's Statement on Plagiarism (<http://www.union.edu/PUBLIC/LIBRARY/UNION/nocheat/statement.htm>).

**Disabilities.** It is Union College policy to make accommodations for individuals with disabilities. If you have any disability or special concern, please let me know what your needs are in order that they may be accommodated. All discussions will remain confidential to the extent permissible by law. Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations must also:

- ☛ Register with and provide documentation to the Dean of Students Office.
- ☛ Bring a letter to the instructor from the Dean of Students Office indicating what academic accommodations you require. This must be done within the first two weeks of the term. For more information about services available to Union College students with disabilities, please contact the Dean of Students Office (Shelly Shinebarger, shinebas@union.edu, Director of Student Support Services, Dean of Students Office, 388-6116).