

St.Jerome's in the University of Waterloo
Department of Philosophy
PHIL 403-CLAS 461 Studies in Ancient Philosophy
Aristotle's *Physics*
Course Outline
Winter 2019

Lecture Time, Building, Room number: Tu. Th. 10:00-11:20, STJ #3013

Professor: Stephanie Gregoire

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Email policy: Use emails for administrative purposes only and not to ask about course content. For example, before a test, you may email me to set up an appointment but not to ask a question about the material.

Office hours: Tu. Th. 11:30-12:15, or by appointment

Course Description/Learning Objectives

Among those who approached the study of nature in a properly philosophical, non-mathematical way, Aristotle is certainly the most important. He is often said to be the founder of biology, and he wrote more than twelve very detailed treatises on a large variety of natural things, i.e. things whose existence does not depend on man: the *Physics*, *On the Heavens*, *On Generation and Perishing*, *Meteorology*, *On the Soul*, *On sense and Sensible Objects*, *On Memory and Recollection*, *History of Animals*, *Parts of Animals*, *Generation of Animals*, *Movement of Animals*, *Progression of Animals*, etc. This course is an introduction to Aristotle's study of natural things. It aims at helping students to develop an appreciation of its method and of its value through a reflection on some of the Stagirite's seminal texts in which he described the general framework of what he conceived to be a single enterprise.

The course will focus mainly on two questions. First of all, the fundamental problem of motion. What is involved when things change? How should this basic natural phenomenon be explained? This is the subject of Book One of the *Physics*. Secondly, what is the discipline called natural philosophy? How should its subject, nature, be defined, and how should it proceed? This is the subject of Book Two of the *Physics*. We will proceed to a systematic study of Books One and Two of the *Physics* of Aristotle, as well as of Books One and Two of the *Commentary to Aristotle's Physics* by Saint Thomas Aquinas, and of the whole of his famous summary of this aspect of the Aristotelian doctrine, the *Principles of Nature*.

We will also situate Aristotle's contribution to the knowledge of the natural world in its historical context. In order to understand well Aristotle's conception of motion, it will be necessary to ponder the solutions brought by the Pre-Socratics, because they truly constitute the dialectical background of the first book of the *Physics*. In order to grasp the

specificity and legitimacy of the Aristotelian method, we will compare it with the method of the modern experimental sciences.

Students will be referred to readings to do in advance. Classes will consist of a presentation by the professor followed by discussions and exchanges.

Here is the order in which topics will be covered in class. The determination of a period of time devoted to each is tentative only, because we must have enough flexibility to accommodate class discussion.

Weeks 1, 2

Part One, Introduction

Weeks 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

Part Two, Principles of motion and principles of natural philosophy: *Physics* Books One and Two and *Principles of Nature*

Rejection of some opinions

Examination of the naturalists' opinion

Three principles of motion

Distinction Matter and Privation

Definition of Nature

Causality

Chance and Luck

Finality

Course Requirements and Marking Scheme

Tests and examinations will consist of multiple-choice, true or false, short answer questions and essay questions. They will cover both the material presented in class and the reading material. There will be two short tests each worth 8% (January 31, February 14) and two in-class examinations (March 7, April 4) worth 39% and 25%. You will also have to write two short papers to be handed in on March 21 and April 4. They will each be worth 10%. There will be a 2% penalty for each day an assignment is late (including weekends), unless there is a valid, documented excuse. I emphasize that class attendance is critical for good performance in this course. As for missed tests, I will be following the UW policy. That means that if you are prevented from writing a test because of sickness, a medical certificate must be presented and must provide all of the information requested by the "University of Waterloo Verification of Illness" form or it will not be accepted.

Required Text and Readings

You will be provided in class and on UW LEARN with documents entitled 'Guidelines for Study' which are more or less detailed lists of the main points raised in the lectures.

These are to help you to take and to structure your course notes. You will also be provided with a number of handouts. You must obtain *Aristotle, Physics or Natural Hearing*, Translated and Introduced by Glen Coughlin, St. Augustine's Press, 2005 ISBN 1-58731-628-5 and the courseware for PHIL 403 at the UW Bookstore.

Important Information:

Academic Integrity: To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

Academic Integrity Office (UW): A resource for students and instructors

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Students who decide to file a grievance should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances). For more information, students should contact the Associate Dean of St. Jerome's University.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline or University of Waterloo Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, read University of Waterloo Policy 72 (Student Appeals).

Note for Students with Disabilities: The AccessAbility Services (AS) Office, located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.