

# PHIL 4/51070: Aristotle

Spring 2024 · MW 2:15-3:30 · 315 Bowman Hall

**Professor:** Dr. Gina Zavota (*she/they*)

**Office:** 320 Bowman Hall, Room G

**Office Hours:** MW 12:15-2:15 & 3:45-4:15  
and remotely by appointment

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The times listed above are the hours I'll definitely be available for in-person appointments. You don't need to make an appointment to meet with me at those times; just come to the office. If those times aren't good for you, I'd be happy to schedule a different time to meet remotely. I look forward to seeing you during office hours, whether in person or remotely!

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this course, we will undertake a detailed exploration of some of Aristotle's most important works in metaphysics and natural philosophy, focusing on *On the Soul* and the central books of the *Metaphysics*, with supplementary material drawn from several other texts. We will approach these works in the spirit of Peripatetic inquiry, employing rigorous, critical analysis with a view toward understanding not only the texts themselves, but also their applicability to our experience of the world around us. In order to do this successfully, we will take care to situate Aristotle's work within the cultural and philosophical context out of which it arose, paying special attention to his responses to Platonic doctrine. In addition, we will explore the relevance of Aristotle's thought to our world today.

**Learning Outcomes:** This course has several distinct but related learning outcomes. In particular, **after successfully completing this course, you should be able to:**

- discuss the content and principal arguments contained in several of Aristotle's texts
- argue for your own interpretation of the texts, in both written and oral form
- express your understanding of the central, enduring philosophical questions addressed in the texts
- understand the ways in which Aristotle's ideas are still relevant today, both within academic philosophy (and other disciplines) and with respect to everyday life outside the academy

**Prerequisites:** [PHIL 41070](#) - Junior standing or one course from PHIL 31001-31020.

[PHIL 51070](#) - Graduate standing.

Students without the proper prerequisites risk being deregistered from the course.

## REQUIRED TEXTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

**Required Texts:** McKeon, Richard, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (Random House)  
Furth, Montgomery, trans., *Metaphysics, Books VII-X* (Hackett) – OPTIONAL  
Hamlyn, D. W., trans., *De Anima* (Clarendon) – OPTIONAL

In addition to these texts, other works will be made available to you at no cost on Canvas. These additional readings are also required.

For each class meeting, you will be expected to read the assigned pages and to arrive prepared to discuss them. **Please bring the McKeon anthology and any other relevant text(s) to each class meeting.** Classes will consist of lectures, discussions, careful study of the texts, and presentations by graduate students. Make sure to write down any questions you have about the readings and ask them in class or during office

hours. After we've discussed a given text in class, you should read it again to see whether your questions have been answered; if not, come to office hours so that we can work through any difficulties you might still be having with the text.

**Assignments:** All assignments, grades, and feedback on assignments will be made available in Canvas. A running total of your weighted average in the course will also be available in the "Grades" tab in Canvas throughout the semester. Grades will generally be posted approximately a week after the due date for the assignment.

Your final grade will be determined based on your performance on the following items.

### **Undergraduates (PHIL 41070)**

- 1) **Short Writing Assignments:** During the course of the semester, you will be required to complete short (650-750 words) writing assignments on assigned topics. These papers are meant to assess not only your understanding of the main arguments presented in the texts we will read, but also your ability to see the implications of, and respond critically to, these arguments. Think of these assignments more as take-home, open-book essay exams, as opposed to short research papers. *See Syllabus Attachment #1 for further details.* – **60% of final grade**
- 2) **Reading Summaries:** You will be required to submit a brief (300-450 words) summary of one of the week's readings most weeks of the semester. Each summary will be due *before* we discuss the relevant reading in class. **Your lowest summary grade will be dropped.** *See Syllabus Attachment #1 for further details.* – **20% of final grade**
- 3) **Class Participation:** For each class meeting, you will be expected to read the designated selections and arrive prepared to discuss them. I would suggest that you take notes while reading, especially if you have questions you would like to ask in class. While attendance and punctuality will be taken into account in the calculation of your participation grade, this grade will primarily reflect the extent to which you make meaningful contributions to class discussions (this includes asking questions about material that you don't understand). *See Syllabus Attachment #2 for further details.* – **15% of final grade**
- 4) **Discussion Questions:** Each week, one undergraduate will be responsible for contributing questions or topics that they would like to see covered during the week's discussion. More details will be given during the first week of class. – **5% of final grade**

### **Graduates (PHIL 51070)**

- 1) **Reading Summaries:** You will be required to submit a brief (300-450 words) summary of one of the week's readings most weeks of the semester. Each summary will be due *before* we discuss the relevant reading in class. **Your lowest summary grade will be dropped.** *See Syllabus Attachment #1 for further details.* – **30% of final grade**
- 2) **Class Participation:** For each class meeting, you will be expected to read the designated selections and arrive prepared to discuss them. I would suggest that you take notes while reading, especially if you have questions you would like to ask in class. While attendance and punctuality will be taken into account in the calculation of your participation grade, this grade will primarily reflect the extent to which you make meaningful contributions to class discussions (this includes asking questions about material that you don't understand). *See Syllabus Attachment #2 for further details.* – **20% of final grade**
- 3) **Final Paper:** Your final assignment will be a paper of approximately 3500 words in length in which you will state and defend an original thesis of your choosing relating to one or more of the texts we will read (and possibly other texts as well), using several secondary sources. You will also complete three preliminary

assignments during the semester, which will help you develop your final essay. *See Syllabus Attachment #3 for further details.* – **40% of final grade**

- 4) **Presentation:** Each graduate student will lead one class meeting for approximately 25 minutes. During this time, you will explain the content of your final paper and lead a discussion on questions arising from your topic. *See Syllabus Attachment #4 for further details.* – **10% of final grade**

**Online Assignment Details:** As mentioned above, **all writing assignments will be handled via Canvas.** Each writing assignment will be made available at least a week before the due date. **All assignments other than Reading Summaries will be due at 11:59pm Eastern US time on the due date. Reading Summaries will be due at 2:15pm Eastern US time on the due date** (i.e. before the start of class).

- You will have two chances to upload a file, but this is only in case you upload the wrong file or forget to attach a file the first time. If you upload two versions of the assignment, only the second one will be read and used to calculate your grade.
- **Late papers will be accepted but will be marked as late and penalized as described below. Late summaries will not be accepted.**

## GRADING AND ATTENDANCE PRACTICES

Your final numerical grade will be calculated using the percentages given above. It will then be translated into a letter grade using the table below.

Total Points	Final Grade
93-100	A
90-92.99	A-
87-89.99	B+
83-86.99	B
and so on...	
67-69.99	D+
60-66.99	D
<60	F

**Late or Missed Assignments:** If you think that you will not be able to complete an assignment on time, you will be allowed to turn the assignment in late with no penalty **only if** (1) you have an acceptable reason for the delay (see below), **and** (2) you provide documentation of whatever caused you to miss the assignment. **Assignments (except summaries) which are simply submitted late will be penalized 10% of their total possible points for each 48-hour period (or part of such period) that they are late**, e.g. a paper that is submitted 72 hours late will be penalized 20%. **Summaries submitted late will receive a grade of zero.**

**Attendance Policy:** Regular attendance is vital to success in this course. As a result, unexcused absences will result in points being deducted from your overall course grade according to the following schedule:

- **0-3 unexcused absences:** no effect on final grade
- **4-6 unexcused absences:** final grade reduced by a full letter (e.g. from a B+ to a C+)
- **7-9 unexcused absences:** final grade reduced by two full letters (e.g. from a B+ to a D+)
- **10 or more unexcused absences:** automatic grade of F

**Acceptable reasons for an excused absence or late assignment** include illness or a medical emergency, a field trip for another class, a one-time work conflict (a work schedule that conflicts with class on a regular basis is *not* acceptable), or a family emergency. Documentation is required for an absence to be excused, either prior to the absence or as soon as possible after your return to class. Situations where documentation is impossible will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If you are part of a KSU sports team that competes out of town, you must provide documentation of your travel schedule at the beginning of the semester.

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

**Internet Access:** All assignments for this course will be completed on Canvas. As a result, it is extremely important that you ensure that you have regular access to a laptop or desktop computer with consistent, reliable internet access, as well as a backup plan if your Wi-Fi goes out or your computer breaks. Computer malfunction or lack of internet access will not be accepted as an excuse for not completing an assignment on time.

**Canvas:** This is the official platform for this class, and it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with it before the start of the semester. In order to login to Canvas, you will need a Kent State FlashLine User ID and password. You can access Canvas at <https://canvas.kent.edu> or through FlashLine. Canvas works best using the latest version of Chrome, Safari, or Firefox. Do not use Internet Explorer.

**Email:** A university-assigned student e-mail account is the official university means of communication with all students at Kent State University. Students are responsible for all information sent to them via their university-assigned e-mail account. Students who choose to forward information in their university e-mail account are responsible for all information, including attachments, sent to any other e-mail account. To stay current with university information, students are expected to check their official university e-mail account on a frequent and consistent basis.

I will communicate with the class through the Announcements function in Canvas, so make sure that your Canvas account is configured to notify you whenever there is a new announcement in this course. I will check my email at least once per day Monday through Friday, and at least once during the weekend. **I will generally respond to all emails within 24 hours during the week, and within 48 hours on the weekend.** If there are special circumstances that will delay responses, I will make an announcement to the class.

**Technology Help:** Kent State University offers 24/7 technology support to all students. For technical issues with your computer, any KSU-supported software, Canvas, FlashLine, or your kent.edu email, please contact Information Services via phone, email, or Live Chat. More information, including contact information, is available on the [Information Services](#) web page. Students can access tech help day or night by calling 330-672-HELP. **Please contact the Helpdesk for technical assistance; I will not be able to assist you with technical issues.**

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**Students with Disabilities:** University policy 3-01.3 in the *University Policy Register* requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note that you must first verify your eligibility through Student Accessibility Services (contact (330) 672-3391 or visit <http://www.kent.edu/sas> for more information on registration procedures).

**Academic Dishonesty:** University policy 3-01.8 in the *University Policy Register* deals with the problem of academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism. None of these will be tolerated in this class. The sanctions provided in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. It is recommended that students familiarize themselves with this policy at <http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/administrative-policy-regarding-student-cheating-and-plagiarism>. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

**Academic Complaint Procedure:** The Philosophy Department Grievance Procedure for handling student grievances is in conformity with the Student Academic Complaint Policy and Procedures set down as University Policy 4-02.3 in the *University Policy Register*, which can be found at <http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/administrative-policy-and-procedure-student-academic-complaints>. For information concerning the details of the grievance procedure, please see the departmental chairperson.

**Add/Drop and Withdrawal Deadlines:** The official registration deadline for this course is **January 22, 2024**. The last day to drop the course without a “W” appearing on your record is **January 29, 2024**. The withdrawal deadline for this course is **April 1, 2024**. University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Students must confirm enrollment by checking their class schedule in FlashLine prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.

**Intellectual Property:** Any intellectual property displayed or distributed to students during this course (including but not limited to PowerPoint presentations, notes, quizzes, examinations) by the professor/lecturer/instructor remains the intellectual property of the professor/lecturer/instructor. This means that the student may not distribute, publish, or provide such intellectual property to any other person or entity for any reason, commercial or otherwise, without the express written permission of the professor/lecturer/instructor. Additionally, students may not distribute or publish recordings and/or links to live classroom presentations, lectures, and/or class discussions. **Please respect the intellectual property of your instructor by not posting class materials online.**

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Kent State University is committed to the creation and maintenance of equitable and inclusive learning spaces. This course is a learning environment where all will be treated with respect and dignity, and where all individuals will have an equitable opportunity to succeed. The diversity that each student brings to this course is viewed as a strength and a benefit. Dimensions of diversity and their intersections include but are not limited to: race, ethnicity, national origin, primary language, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, mental and physical abilities, socio-economic status, first-generation student status, family/caregiver status, and veteran status.

**Land Acknowledgment Statement:** We acknowledge that the lands of Kent State University were the previous homes of people who were removed from this area without their consent by the colonial practices of the United States government. Before removal, these groups created networks that extended from Wyoming to the Florida Coast and Appalachia and to the northern reaches of Lake Superior. These societies included people of the Shawnee, Seneca-Cayuga, Delaware, Wyandots, Ottawa and Miami. We honor their lives – both past and present – and strive to move beyond remembrance toward reflection and responsibility through honest accounts of the past and the development of cultural knowledge and community.

**Accommodations for Religious and Spiritual Beliefs:** In accordance with House Bill 353, KSU permits students to request class absences, without penalty, for up to three days per term in order to participate in organized activities conducted by a religious or spiritual organization. The request must be made to your instructor, in writing, during the first fourteen (14) days of the semester and must include the date(s) of each proposed absence. The request must clearly state that the proposed absence is to participate in religious activities and must describe the particular accommodation(s) you desire. For further information, please contact the Student Ombuds at [ombuds@kent.edu](mailto:ombuds@kent.edu).

# READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

**Week 1      Jan 17      Introduction to the course; the Platonic background**

**The *Physics*: What is the Structure of the Natural World**

**Week 2      Jan 22, 24      *Physics*, Book I, Ch. 1; Book II, Ch. 1, 3; *Categories*, Ch. 1-5; *Topics*, Book I, Ch. 5, 9**

**Week 3      Jan 29, 31      *Physics*, Book III, Ch. 1, 6, 7; *On Sense*, Part 6**

**Week 4      Feb 5, 7      *Physics*, Book IV, Ch. 1-4, 10, 11; *Metaphysics*, Book X (I), Ch. 1, 2**

**Week 5      Feb 12, 14      *On Generation and Corruption*, Book I, Ch. 3, 4**

**WA #1 Due**

**On the Soul: What are the Capacities and Functions of Living Things?**

**Week 6      Feb 19, 21      *On the Soul*, Book I, Ch. 1; Book II, Ch. 1-3**

**Week 7      Feb 26, 28      *On the Soul*, Book II, Ch. 4-7, 12; *The History of Animals*, Book VIII, Ch. 1; *On Sense*, Parts 1-3**

**Final Paper Topic Due (Grad)**

**Week 8      Mar 4, 6      *On the Soul*, Book III, Ch. 1-6; *On Memory*, Ch. 1; *Parts of Animals*, Book I, Ch. 2, 4**

**Week 9      Mar 11, 13      ”**

**WA #2 Due**

**The *Metaphysics*: What Can Be Said to Exist Most Fundamentally?**

**Week 10      Mar 18, 20      *Metaphysics*, Book VII (Z), Ch. 1-6**

**Final Paper Outline Due (Grad)**

**Week 11      Mar 25, 27      **SPRING BREAK****

**Week 12      Apr 1, 3      *Metaphysics*, Book VII (Z), Ch. 7-9**

**Week 13      Apr 10      *Metaphysics*, Book VII (Z), Ch. 10-13, 17 – **NO CLASS APRIL 8: ECLIPSE!****

**WA #3 Due**

**Week 14      Apr 15, 17      *Metaphysics*, Book VIII (H), Ch. 2, 6; Book XIII (M), Ch. 1-3, 6, 7**

**Final Paper Draft Due (Grad)**

**Week 15      Apr 22, 24      **TBD****

**Week 16      Apr 29, May 1      **Graduate Presentations****

**WA #4 Due**

**NOTES**

- “WA” = Writing Assignment
- All assignments other than summaries are due on Wednesday unless otherwise specified
- **Blue = Readings available on Canvas (required)**

**THERE WILL BE NO FINAL EXAM IN THIS CLASS · FINAL PAPER (GRADS): Due by 11:59pm on Wednesday, May 8**