

PHIL5600F – Seminar in Philosophy before the Modern Period

Carleton University, Fall 2011

Thursdays, 11:30-2:30pm¹, Room TBA

Professor: Annie Larivée

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ARISTOTLE ON THE CARE OF THE SOUL

I – DESCRIPTION

Thanks to Pierre Hadot, Michel Foucault, and Martha Nussbaum we are now used to seeing ancient philosophy as an art of caring for the soul, a form of therapy for the passions. According to these interpreters, ancient philosophy has a practical goal : it aims to *transform*, not just inform its practitioner. Indeed, the question of the care of the self (more specifically care of the soul, *psyché*) is a recurrent theme not only in Platonic dialogues but in the schools of the Hellenistic period and the Roman Empire as well (especially Epicureanism and Stoicism). These schools frequently compared philosophy to medicine –philosophy would be medicine for the soul. But what of Aristotle? Is the Stagirite not an exception in ancient philosophy in this regard? Is it not the case that his vision of philosophy is closer to our idea of science (inherited from him) as a purely theoretical activity of research? And is it not the case that, in this regard, contemporary philosophy (as a mostly disengaged and abstract activity) is Aristotle’s legacy?²

In this seminar we will read various texts by Aristotle (including but not limited to those concerning practical philosophy) in order to see just to what point this view of Aristotle is justified –or not. In our inquiry we will pay special attention to the care of the soul, a prevalent theme in Aristotle’s political and ethical writings. The aim of this seminar is twofold: 1) to initiate students into research in ancient philosophy and 2) to provide them the opportunity to discover several works in the Aristotelian corpus with which they are probably not familiar (the *Politics*, *De Anima*, or the *Rhetoric*, for example) and to deepen their knowledge of already familiar works through a rigorous, communal reading.

II – REQUIRED TEXTS

The two following books will be available at **Haven Books**

43 Seneca Street (at Sunnyside), tel: 613-730-9888, info@havenbooks.ca:

1-*The Complete Works of Aristotle*, The Revised Oxford Translation. Edited by Jonathan Barnes, Bollingen Series LXXI.2, vol. 2, Princeton University Press, 1984, 1256pages, 1.3 Kg, ISBN-10: 0691016518; ISBN-13: 978-0691016511.

¹ If it works out for all students who signed up for the seminar, I will suggest that we hold the seminar from 1:00 to 3:30pm instead of 11:30 to 2:30pm. This potential change will be discussed at our first meeting (which will begin at 11:30)

² This is the opinion Foucault expresses in his course *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (edited by F.Gros, New York, 2005, Picador, p.17): “...throughout Antiquity (in the Pythagoreans, Plato, the Stoics, Cynics, Epicureans, and Neo-Platonists), the philosophical theme (how to have access to the truth?) and the question of spirituality (what transformations in the being of the subject are necessary for access to the truth?) were never separate. There is, of course, the exception, the major and fundamental exception: that of the one who is called “the” philosopher, because he was no doubt the only philosopher in Antiquity for whom the question of spirituality was least important; the philosopher whom we have recognized as the founder of philosophy in the modern sense of the term: Aristotle. But as everyone knows, Aristotle is not the pinnacle of Antiquity but its exception”. As we will see in this seminar there are good reasons to think that Foucault is led into error here by adopting a stereotyped view of Aristotle.

Amazon.ca sells this book (new) for less than \$40. It is thus less expensive to buy this edition than to purchase each treatise individually. Besides, this volume (2nd of two volumes) of the complete edition of Aristotle's works is a smart investment for any serious philosophy student.

One of the treatises we will read (the *De Anima*) is not included in that volume. You can either read it online at: (<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.html>) or buy it separately. I haven't ordered the first volume of *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (in which the *De Anima* is included) but if you have a serious interest in Aristotle, I suggest that you purchase both volumes.

2- Rubin, Gretchen, *The Happiness Project*, Collins Publ., 2011, Paperback, ISBN: 978-1-55468 280-5.
(The books is needed only for those who choose Option 2 –see below— for their essay)

III – OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

Students are expected to attend all classes and to do the readings in advance of class meetings.

- 1) 09/08.....Introduction to the seminar and explanations on the fragments of Aristotle's *Protreptic*
- 2) 09/15..... *De Anima* (<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.html>)
- 3) 09/22..... *Nicomachean Ethics* I-IV inclusive
- 4) 09/29..... *Nicomachean Ethics* V-VII inclusive
- 5) 10/06 *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII-X inclusive
- 6) 10/13..... *Eudemian Ethics*
- 7) 10/20..... *Magna Moralia* + *On Virtues and Vices*
- 8) 10/27..... *Politics* I-III inclusive
- 9) 11/03..... *Politics* IV-VI inclusive
- 10) 11/10..... *Politics* VII-VIII + *Economics*
- 11) 11/17..... *Rhetoric* I-II chap.17 inclusive
- 12) 11/24..... *Rhetoric* II, chap. 18–end
- 13) 12/01.....*Poetics* – Conclusion

IV – COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

1) Oral presentation.....:	20%
2) Seminar diary.....:	25%
3) Essay.....:	35%
4) Attendance and class participation.....:	20%

1) Oral 'presentation' (i.e.: discussion facilitation):

Each student will be in charge of the discussion for one of our weekly meetings. You are requested to provide each member of the seminar with a copy of your 'presentation' (i.e. discussion) outline so that we can examine it together and discuss it critically. In order to give the discussion a certain structure, you are requested to follow these guidelines:

- 1- Identify the (main) issue discussed in this [part of] the text. Summarize it in one sentence (!)
- 2- Present two ideas that were of special interest *to you* and explain why you found them especially challenging/stimulating.
- 3- Discuss two problems you were confronted with while reading this dialogue (either because some passages were unclear or because you found some ideas disputable)

***Note that this oral 'presentation' is not a presentation in the traditional sense of the word. You are not asked to 'lecture' or read a text you wrote. Rather, you are in charge of *facilitating our discussion*.

2) Seminar diary:

In order to synthesize our previous discussion and prepare for our weekly meeting, each of you is requested to hand in a seminar diary sheet at the end of each class including:

- a) A short description of one point that struck you in our previous discussion (either something that was obscure before our last meeting and became clearer thanks to our discussion, or a new question that you have, or a point of interest that you hadn't noticed before, etc.)
- b) Your 'answers' to points 2 and 3 (see oral presentation instructions) on the text to be discussed that day.

3) Essay:

There will be two options for the essay. The second option will be more original and will involve an examination and a comparison of Aristotle's *NE* and of G. Rubin's best seller *The Happiness Project* (see instruction below). Here is the first (more traditional) option:

Option 1:

The essay (15 pages) is due on Dec. 1st. You are asked to write an in-depth analysis about one specific question raised in/by the text you orally presented in the seminar. This analysis will take the form of a critical discussion of two recent articles written about this text.

Instructions:

- a) Search for 20 articles (or books) that have been published about this text in the last 25 years by using databases available at the library. Include all these sources in the bibliography to be added at the end of your paper.
- b) Choose one (undergraduates) or two articles (graduates) that seem especially interesting to you among the sources you found and read it (them) very carefully.
- c) Expose the main these defended in each of these articles and contrast them with one another *critically*. (*Needless to say, in order to discuss this or these articles critically, you need to have an excellent understanding of the original text as such!*)

Option 2: This project will take the form of a research group. An instruction sheet will be provided at our first meeting.

4) Attendance and class participation:

In order for this kind of seminar to work, it is important that everyone reads the texts assigned before our weekly meeting and actively takes part in discussions. Hence the 20% devoted to attendance and class participation.

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies

Assignments:

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips
- must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box)
- must include the following in the lower right corner of the cover sheet:
 - student name
 - student number
 - course number and section
 - instructor's name
- The Philosophy Department does not accept assignments by FAX. You may send them by courier, if necessary.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates in next column.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by **4:15** on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a final assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral of examination/assignment. For deferred examinations, you must apply within 5 working days after the scheduled date of your exam. To apply for deferral of a final assignment, you must apply within 5 working days of the last scheduled day of classes. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. (Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations, section 14.3, or <http://www4.carleton.ca/calendars//ugrad/current/regulations/acadregsuniv14.html#14.3>)

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/>

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/>

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD),

psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that I receive your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by the deadlines published on the PMC website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

Important Dates:

Sept. 8	Classes start (after Orientation events).
Sept. 21	Last day for registration and course changes in Fall term and two-term courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses.
Oct. 7	University Day – no classes.
Oct. 10	Thanksgiving Day – university closed.
Nov. 21	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000 level before the Final Examination period.
Dec. 5	Last day of classes, Fall term. Last day for handing in term assignments, subject to any earlier course deadline.
Dec. 5	Last day to withdraw from Fall term courses (academic purposes only).
Dec. 8-21	Final examinations for Fall courses, mid-terms for Fall/Winter courses.
Jan. 4	Winter term classes begin.
Jan. 17	Last day for registration and course changes in Winter term classes.
Jan. 31	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter courses or winter portion of two-term courses.
Feb. 20	Family Day – university closed
Feb. 20-24	Winter Break, classes suspended.
Mar. 22	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000 level before the Final Examination period.
Apr. 5	Last day of Fall/Winter and Winter term classes. Last day for handing in term assignments, subject to any earlier course deadline.
Apr. 5	Last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter and Winter term courses (academic purposes only).
Apr. 6	Good Friday – university closed.
Apr. 11-24	Final Examinations.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:	3A46 Paterson Hall www.carleton.ca/philosophy
Registrar's Office:	520-2110 300 Tory www.carleton.ca/registrar
Student Academic Success Centre:	520-3500 302 Tory www.carleton.ca/sasc
Paul Menton Centre:	520-7850 500 University Centre www.carleton.ca/pmc
Writing Tutorial Service:	520-6608 4 th Floor, Library www.carleton.ca/wts
MacOdrum Library	520-6632 http://www.library.carleton.ca/ 520-2735