Seminar in Philosophy Before the Modern Period- PHIL 4003
Carleton University, Fall 2017
Tuesdays, 11:35-2:25, Seminar Room (PA 3A36)

Professor: Annie Larivée
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Critical Reading of Aristotle:
Aristotle and the Philosophical Roots of 'Ableism'

I – DESCRIPTION

The notion of capacity/ability is crucial in the current Western experience of the world. Not only does it play a central role in influential contemporary philosophical trends (such as virtue ethics, or Nussbaum's capability approach) but, more importantly, it is one of those deep-seated conceptual foundations on which modern Western culture is built. We tend to assign a lot of value to capacities and to see their cultivation as a condition of happiness at the individual and social level. Not possessing, losing or being unable to develop a certain set of basic abilities is often seen as a failure and is likely to create self-loathing, shame and blame. Refusing to develop or giving up on some abilities (trans-ableism) may even have you diagnosed with a mental illness...

The work of Aristotle (especially on practical philosophy), with its insistence on the need to develop virtues in order to reach human flourishing is one of main bases in which this orientation of Western culture is anchored. With its strong teleological framework, its emphasis on human function (*ergon*), its normative understanding of nature, and its (Platonic) emphasis on form, it also seems to provide a rather rigid and narrow view of the specific set of capacities that can and should be developed by different types of individuals. Moreover its perfectionist orientation –with the adoption of the divine as a model of pure and absolute 'actualization'–places intellectual activity at the top of the hierarchy of values. In the seminar, we will try to gain a better understanding of the 'ableist' presuppositions on which Aristotle's virtue ethics is based. This will enable us to become aware of their pervasiveness in our culture and, possibly, to challenge them in several respects.

II – REQUIRED TEXTS

Each class will involve two readings: 1) a reading taken from the Aristotelian corpus and 2) a reading of secondary literature.

All texts of secondary literature will be available via Ares (Carleton's online reserve system). As for the primary texts, I ordered the following book at **Haven Books** (43 Seneca Street, at Sunnyside, tel.: 613-730-9888, info@havenbooks.ca):

> **The Basic Works of Aristotle**, edited by Richard McKeon; introduction by C.D.C. Reeve. New York: Modern Library, 2001., Modern Library paperback edition.

A copy of this book will be placed on reserve at the library as well as *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Volume 1 and 2: The Revised Oxford Translation, Jonathan Barnes (Editor).

III – OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

Students are required to attend all classes and to do the readings in advance of class meetings.
Classes start at 11:35 sharp. Please be on time, systematic lateness is disruptive.

Week 1 09/12 **Introduction to the Seminar**

Week 2 09/19 **TOWARDS A GENEALOGY OF THE PRESENT**

- Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection,* chap. 1 "Ideology of Cure", 2 "Violence of Cure", 3 "In Tandem with Cure", 5-48.
- Kumari Campbell, *Contours of Ableism: The Production of Disability and Abledness*, chap. 1 "The Project of Ableism", 3-15.

Optional: "Unspeakable Conversations" By HARRIET MCBRYDE JOHNSON, NYTimes magazine, FEB. 16, 2003 http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/16/magazine/unspeakable-conversations.html

Week 3 09/26 **HAPPINESS, HUMAN FUNCTION, VIRTUE**

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1 and Book 2.
- MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chap. 1-"A disquieting suggestion"; chap. 10 "The Virtues in Heroic Society"; chap. 12 "Aristotle's account of the virtues".

Optional: Sherman, N., *The Fabric of Character. Aristotle's Theory of Virtue.* Cchap. 5 "The Habituation of Character", 157-199.

Week 4 10/03 **ABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITY; PARTICULAR VIRTUES**

- Aristotle, *NE*, Book 3 and Book 4.
- Slote, *The Impossibility of Perfection. Aristotle, Feminism, and the Complexities of Ethics.* Introduction; chap. 1 "Feminism and Partial Values"; chap. 2 "The Impossibility of Perfection", 3-53.

Week 5 10/10 **VARIOUS DEGREES OF (IN)CAPACITY**

- Aristotle, *NE*, Book 7 and Book 10.
- Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Chap. 3 "Foundations: Well-Being", 30-53.

Week 6 10/17 **ABILITIES AND SOCIAL LIFE**

- Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1 and Book 3
- Nussbaum, M. -"Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism", 202-46.

*** October 23-27: Reading week, no class! ***

Week 7 10/31 **ABILITIES AND SOCIAL LIFE**

- Aristotle *Politics*, Book 7 and Book 8
- Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, Section vii of chap 1, 'The Capabilities Approach', and chap. 3 "Capabilities and Disabilities", 155-223.

Week 8 11/07 **NATURE AS NORM**

- Aristotle, *Physics*, Book 2 and Book 7 section 3 (245b3-248a10).
- Annas, J., *The Morality of Happiness*, chap. 4 "Nature and Naturalism", and chap. 5 "Aristotle: Nature and Mere Nature", 135-58.

Week 9 11/14 **NATURE AND ABILITIES**

-Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book 2 and Book 3.
- Foot, Ph., *Natural Goodness*, chap. 2 "Natural Norms" (25-37); chap. 3 "Transition to Human Beings" (38-51); chap. 5 "Human Goodness" (66-80).

Week 10 11/21 **ONTOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS**

- Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book A=1 (sections 1 and 2) and Book Z=7.

- Canguilhem, G., *The Normal and the Pathological*, "A Critical Examination of Certain Concepts" (125-50); "Disease, Cure, Health" (181-202); "Conclusion" (227-29); "From the Social to the Vital", "On Organic Norms in Man" (237-74).

Week 11 11/28 **ONTOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS**

- Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book H=8 and Book Theta=9.
- Hursthouse, R., "Human Nature and Aristotelian Virtue Ethics", 169-88.

Week 12 12/05 **FULL ACTUALIZATION AS PERFECTION**

- Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book L=12
- Nussbaum, M., "Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics", 86-121.

IV – COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

1. Discussion facilitation……..…: 20%
2. Discussion Prep. Sheets + Diary……..……..……: 40%
3. Final seminar report ……..……..……..…..: 20%
4. Attendance and class participation……..……..…..: 20%

1. Discussion Facilitation:

Each student will be in charge of the discussion for one of our weekly meetings. In order to give a structure to our discussions, please follow these guidelines:

a) Summarize, *in one sentence*, the main thesis of the text or the objective pursued by the author of that text.

b) Present two problems you were confronted with while reading the text either because some ideas were unclear. or because you found them disputable. *Favor problems that are conducive to discussion* and *relevant to the seminar's general theme!*

These items are needed for each of the texts assigned that day.

Send me your preparation sheet via e-mail on the previous Sunday night at the latest (there will be a penalty for late submission). Also, please provide each member of the seminar with a printed copy of your discussion outline so that we can examine it together and discuss it critically. ***ONE PAGE MAXIMUM!***

2. Discussion Preparation Sheets + Diary: *ONE PAGE MAXIMUM!!!*

In order to prepare for our weekly meeting, each of you is asked to write a *Discussion Preparation Sheet* on the text(s) to be discussed that day. You will hand in this sheet at the end of the class and I will give it back to you at the beginning of next class. *Keep all of them. I will collect them at the end of the semester for making purposes.*

Part 1 – Discussion Preparation: This part shall include the same items listed above. You can, however, limit yourself to one problem for each of both texts examined that day.

Part 2 **–** *Gnothi seauton Diary*: The purpose of this part of the weekly assignment is to incite you to engage in self-observation and to apply the material to your own situation. Observe your relationship to abilities/lack thereof, be attentive to the types of abilities you possess or seek to develop and observe the impact it has on the organisation of your life, your mental state, your relationship with others. You may also discuss one idea found in the text(s) that was of special interest to you and explain why you found it particularly stimulating. You may try to make sense of your experience of abilities/lack of abilities by discussing some of the ideas present in the texts, or offer a critique of an idea or argument in light of your experience. Try to be as honest as possible (I don't expect to be 'edified' by your responses).

3. Seminar Final Report:
The seminar report (5-7 pages maximum) is due on Dec. 5th.

At the beginning of the semester, identify one specific question that you have (or a problem that you face) concerning abilities/lack of abilities and submit it to me in written form (one ten lines paragraph minimum—one page maximum) on September 26th. In your final report, explain how our course texts have contributed to bring an answer to that question, helped to modify it, or make your position toward your initial question more complex. Staple your initial question to your final report.

Note: you do not have to discuss all texts and may focus on the one(s) that seem the more relevant in light of your question.

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. Punctuality will also be taken into account.

12 marks for attendance:
- One class missed: -2
- Two classes missed: -4
- Three classes missed: -8
- More than three classes missed: -12

8 marks for participation
Penalty for regular lateness (more than twice): -4 of the total

Bibliography with Complete References:

ANNAS, J. (1993). *The Morality of Happiness*, Oxford University Press.
ARISTOTLE, (1984). *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. 1 and 2, Revised Oxford Translation, J. Barnes (Ed), Princeton U. Press.
_____(2001). *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon; introduction by C.D.C. Reeve, Modern Library.
CAMPBELL KUMARI, F. (2009). *Contours of Ableism: The Production of Disability and Abledness*. Palgrave Macmillan.
CANGUILHEM, G. (1991), *The Normal and the Pathological*, with an intro by M. Foucault, Zone Books.
CLARE, E. (2017). *Brilliant Imperfection. Grappling with Cure,* Duke University Press.
FOOT, Ph. (2001), *Natural Goodness*, Oxford University Press.
HURSTHOUSE, R. (2012). "Human Nature and Aristotelian Virtue Ethics". *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 70, 169-188.
MCBRYDE JOHNSON, H. (2003). "Unspeakable Conversations" , *New York Times Magazine*, FEB. 16.
http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/16/magazine/unspeakable-conversations.html
MACINTYRE, A. (1981), *After Virtue*, University of Notre Dame Press, third edition, 2007.
NUSSBAUM, M. (1992)."Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism"*Political Theory*, 20: 202-46.
_____ (1997). "Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics", *World, Mind, and Ethics: Essays on the Philosophy of Bernard Williams*, Altham, J. E. G., and Ross Harrison (Eds.) Cambridge University Press, 86-131.
_____ (2006). *Frontiers of Justice*. *Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
SHERMAN, N. (1989). *The Fabric of Character. Aristotle's Theory of Virtue*, Clarendon Press.
SLOTE, M. (2016). *The Impossibility of Perfection*. *Aristotle, Feminism, and the Complexities of Ethics,* Oxford University Press.
WILLIAMS, B. (1985). *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Harvard University Press.

Additional Suggestions:

FREELAND, C. A. (1998). *Feminist Interpretations of Aristotle*. Pennsylvania State University Press.
GOODLEY, D. (2014). *Dis/ability Studies: Theorising disablism and ableism*, Routledge.
NUSSBAUM, M. (1992). "Aristotle, Feminism, and Needs for Functioning." *Texas Law Review*, vol. 70, no. 4, 1019-1028.
____, (1999). "Virtue Ethics: A Misleading Category?" *The Journal of Ethics*, vol. 3, no. 3, 163-201.
____, (2000). "Aristotle, Politics, and Human Capabilities: A Response to Antony, Arneson, Charlesworth, and Mulgan." *Ethics*, vol. 111, no. 1, 102-140.
_____, (2009). "The Capabilities of People with Cognitive Disabilities", *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 40, no. 3-4, 331-351.

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:
  student name
  student number
  course number and section
  instructor's name
- 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 Final Exams:

If you miss a final examination (formally scheduled or take-home) because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral. You must apply within 3 working days after the scheduled date of your formally scheduled exam or within 3 working days after the due date of a take-home exam. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information:
http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv2/#2.5

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. https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/

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 your professor 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/

Religious obligation: write to your professor 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/

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The **Paul Menton Centre** for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your ***Letter of Accommodation*** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/

Important Dates:

Sept. 6	Classes start.
Sept. 19	Last day for registration and course changes for Fall term and Fall/Winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from Fall term or two-term courses.
Oct. 9	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 23-27	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 24	Last day for summative or final examinations in Fall term courses before the official examination period.
Dec. 8	Last day of Fall term classes. **Classes follow a Monday schedule**. Last day for academic withdrawal from Fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a Fall term course.
Dec. 10-22	Final examinations for Fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 22	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 8	Classes begin.
Jan. 19	Last day for registration and course changes in the Winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from Winter term courses or from the Winter portion of two-term courses.
Feb. 19	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 19-23	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 27	Last day for summative or final examinations in Winter term or two-term courses before the official examination period.
Mar. 30	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 11	Last day of two-term and Winter term classes. **Classes follow a Friday schedule**. Last day for academic withdrawal from Fall/Winter and Winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for Winter term courses.
Apr. 14-26	Final examinations for Winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 26	All take home examinations are due on this day.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 Paterson Hall www.carleton.ca/philosophy 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory www.carleton.ca/registrar 520-3500
Academic Advising Centre:	302 Tory www.carleton.ca/academicadvising 520-7850
Writing Services:	4th Floor, Library http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/ 520-3822
MacOdrum Library	http://www.library.carleton.ca/ 520-2735