

PHIL 210: Seminar on Greek Philosophy
Aristotle's Philosophy of Science

UC, San Diego Fall 2012 W 3-5:50
Professor Monte Johnson
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Seminar Description:

This seminar is designed to help graduate students learn how to conduct research into Aristotle. We will aim to review Aristotle's logic and scientific method, exercise the ability to read and criticize diverse parts of his corpus, and develop other research interests by relating them to his thought.

The Professor will offer an overview of Aristotle's life and works (including both the Aristotle Corpus and lost works), and his scientific method, as developed in the *Organon*, especially the *Posterior Analytics*, and in scientific practice, in works such as *On the Heavens*, *On the Soul*, *On the Parts of Animals*, *Mechanical Problems*, *Metaphysics*, *Ethics*, *Politics*, *Rhetorics*, and *Poetics*.

The rest of the participants will choose a specific subject that relates to their research interests (on any topic, including ethical and political subjects), and select (in consultation with the Professor) about 20-25 pages in English translation on the subject to be read and discussed by the seminar (along with recommended secondary sources).

After the third meeting, each meeting will consist of two parts. In the first part, we will have a roundtable discussion of the progress of each seminarian's research, followed by general comments by the Professor on the status of contemporary research in the specific subject area. In the second part, the Seminarian will lead the seminar through a philosophical discussion of her subject area on the basis of her selected readings and handouts. The seminarian assigned to lead the next week's seminar will distribute her readings (though not necessarily her handout) at the end of the seminar.

Seminarrians will develop their presentations into a 10 to 20-page research paper (on any topic; taking into account discussion and criticism offered during the roundtable discussion), due at the final meeting of the seminar. Evaluation consists of the following components:

1. Attendance and Participation. Up to 10 points may be earned.
2. Seminar presentation, handout, selection of readings, and provisional bibliography. Up to 40 points may be earned.
3. Final research paper. Up to 50 points may be earned.

Grading scale: 91-100 points = A; 90-91 points = A-; 88-89 points = B+; 82-87 = B; 80-81 = B-; <80 = C. Any unexcused absence from the seminar or lateness on an assignment will result in an F.

Note: The Professor will be on Sabbatical leave from UCSD during Winter-Spring 2013 and so cannot assign incomplete grades.

Provisional Schedule:

Meeting 1 (2012 October 3). Overview of the life and works of Aristotle. The Professor will introduce the Aristotle Corpus and discuss: citation methods; ancient lists of Aristotle's writings; manuscript traditions, lost writings and fragments; the continuation of Aristotle's school and Aristotelianism; and ancient, medieval, and modern commentators on Aristotle.

Handouts: M. R. Johnson, 'The Aristotle Corpus and How to Cite it'; M. R. Johnson, 'Ancient Lists of Aristotle's writings'; M. R. Johnson, 'Basic Aristotle Bibliography'.

Meeting 2 (2012 October 10). Reconstructing a lost work of Aristotle. The Professor will discuss his collaborative research project to reconstruct a lost and early work of Aristotle's, a dialogue entitled the *Protrepticus*. He will demonstrate how to work with fragmentary evidence, and methods for relating fragments to extant works of the Aristotle Corpus through the identification of parallels.

Readings: Aristotle: *Protrepticus* (a provisional reconstruction by D. S. Hutchinson and M. R. Johnson).

Optional: D. S. Hutchinson and M. R. Johnson, 'Authenticating Aristotle's *Protrepticus*' (*Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 2005); D. S. Hutchinson and M. R. Johnson, 'Protreptic Aspects of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*' (forthcoming in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. R. Polansky); D. S. Hutchinson and M. R. Johnson, 'The Antidosis of Isocrates and Aristotle's *Protrepticus*' (unpublished essay). See also: www.protrepticus.info

Meeting 3 (2012 October 17). Aristotle's philosophy of theoretical science. The Professor will highlight some problems in relating Aristotle's theory of scientific method to his actual scientific practice, with illustrations from meteorology, biology, and mechanics. Issues to be discussed include: syllogism and explanatory form, autonomy and subalternation of sciences, the role of empirical data and mathematical principles; and teleological and materialist schemes of explanation.

Readings and Handouts: Selections from: the *Organon*, *Physics*, *Meteorology* and *Mechanical Problems*. M. R. Johnson, 'The Aristotelian Explanation of the Halo' (*Apeiron* 2009); M. R. Johnson, 'Aristotelian Mechanistic Explanation' (forthcoming in *Teleology in the Ancient World: the dispensation of nature*, ed. J. Rocca, Cambridge University Press).

Optional: M. R. Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology* (Oxford University Press 2005); M. R. Johnson, 'The Medical Background of Aristotle's Theory of Nature and Spontaneity' (*Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 2012).

Meetings 4-10 (2012 October 24-November 28).

Part A: Discussion of progress on research projects. Brief overview of the status of contemporary research in one or more areas of Aristotle studies.

Part B: Individual seminarian presentation. Readings and Handouts will have been distributed at the end of the previous week's seminar.