TERM 2 (WINTER), 2018-19
PHIL 750: SELECTED TOPICS IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY:
ARISTOTLE ON PERCEPTION

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Course Description:
In *De Anima* (“On the Soul”), Aristotle provides his account of what it is to be alive by systematically analyzing the various capacities characteristic of living things. These include self-nourishment, growth, reproduction, perception, desire, movement, and thought. However, by far the largest part of the work is dedicated to perception. In this seminar, we will examine Aristotle’s account of perception, beginning with *De Anima* but extending to related passages in the *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, and various short psychological writings traditionally grouped together under the label *Parva Naturalia* (“Short Works on Nature”), including *De Sensu et Sensibilibus* (“On Perception and its Objects”), *De Memoria et Reminiscencia* (“On Memory and Recollection”), and *De Insomniis* (“On Dreams”). We will primarily aim to understand what Aristotle’s view were, based on a close reading of the texts, while also at all times remaining attentive to the merits of those views and to the philosophical issues they raise.

Tentative schedule of topics (by week):
1. Introduction and Overview
2. Aristotle on Body and Soul, Matter and Form
3. Powers of the Soul; Nourishment, Growth and Reproduction
4. Perception in General; Perception and Change
5. The Objects of Perception; Perceptual Error
6. Sight and Hearing
7. Smell, Taste and Touch
8. Perception in General: Receiving Form Without Matter
9. The Five Senses and the Common Sense
10. Perceiving that we Perceive
11. Imagination (*Phantasia*)
12. Perception, Desire and Locomotion
13. Memory and Dreams

Text:
(Tentatively): *Aristotle: On the Soul, and Other Psychological Works*, Fred D. Miller (trans.) (Oxford University Press, 2018). This is one of three (!) good new English translations of the whole of *De Anima* published in the last three years (the others are by Shields and Reeve).

Assessment:
Assessment will be based primarily on a single research paper, to be completed by shortly after the end of the term. You will also be asked to give an oral presentation to the class, to submit an essay proposal, and to prepare some brief written reflections based on the weekly readings. Details to follow closer to the start of term 2.