

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

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Office hours: Wednesdays 1:00-2:30, or by appointment
Class meets Mondays, 11:30-2:20, in UH 312

Course Description:

In this course we will examine Aristotle's views on sense perception, as presented in his *De Anima* ("On the Soul") and related works. We will begin with his views on the nature of soul (*psuchê*), and on the relationship between soul and body. Next, we will examine Aristotle's general strategy of studying the soul by analyzing the various capacities characteristic of living things: self-nourishment, growth, reproduction, perception, desire, movement, and thought. We will then focus on the specific case of perception (*aisthêsis*). Aristotle regarded perception as the distinguishing mark of animal life, and dedicated considerable attention to it, both in *De Anima* and in many other places. We will start with his views on the nature of perception and its objects in general, before turning to his detailed discussions of each of the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch). We will then consider his views on the relationship between the five senses and other operations of the perceptual faculty broadly construed, including self-awareness, imagination, memory, and dreams. We will conclude by examining Aristotle's views on the overall unity of the perceptual faculty, and, time permitting, the connections between perception, thought and desire.

All texts will be read in translation. However, any students with reading knowledge of ancient Greek will be encouraged to draw on this in discussion and in their essay. The course will be pitched as an advanced introduction – no prior knowledge of Aristotle will be presupposed.

Required Text:

There is only one required text for this course:

- *Aristotle: On the Soul, and Other Psychological Works*. Translated, with an introduction and notes, by Fred D. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

This single volume contains good recent translations of Aristotle's *De Anima* and of several related short psychological writings by Aristotle. It also has a useful introduction and notes. It is very reasonably priced. If you are interested in using a different translation, please consult me. Selected secondary literature will be provided, mostly through the course website.

Note that the complete works of Aristotle are readily available online in the original (unrevised) Oxford translations, through "Past Masters" (library subscription, McMaster login required).

For the Greek text, W. D. Ross's 1961 critical edition of *De Anima* can be accessed online through the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (the "TLG"). This website also contains Greek texts for the other works we will read in this course. If you are interested in reading Aristotle in the original Greek, feel free to consult me about the available critical editions of each work.

Course Website:

I will be using a website on Avenue to Learn (<http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/>) to distribute material relevant to the course and to post updates. You will also find there copies of the course outline and of all handouts distributed in class. Please be sure to check in regularly.

Assessment:

Assessment is based primarily on a research paper, to be completed shortly after the end of classes. You will also be asked to give an oral presentation, to submit an essay proposal, and to prepare brief written reflections each week based on the weekly assigned readings.

1. Presentation (20%): You will be asked to give a single oral presentation at some point during the semester. Presentations will involve summarizing a selected piece of secondary literature for the group, then offering some brief critical remarks. Presentation topics will be allocated at the beginning of the semester. You will have the opportunity to meet with me to discuss your presentation before you are due to give it. Further information about the presentations, and my expectations for them, will be placed on the course website.

2. Research Paper (70%): Final essays are due by **11:59pm on Friday, April 26**. Please contact me in advance of this due date with any requests for extensions. All essays should be submitted through the course website, using the “Assignments” tool. Aim for 15-20 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 point font, regular margins). You will be encouraged to develop your own topic, although I will offer guidance and suggestions. Further information about the final essays, and my expectations for them, will be placed on the course website.

3. Essay Proposal (2%): You will be asked to submit a brief written essay proposal by the end of Week 12 (**due 11:59pm on Saturday, April 6**). This should include a statement of the problem or issue you plan to address, a tentative statement of your thesis (the main claim you anticipate arguing for), a working list of primary and secondary readings, and a draft outline. Proposals should be submitted through the course website. You are not bound to adhere to what you say in your proposal in your final paper. You are welcome to discuss your essay topic with me at any time, both before and after you submit your written proposal.

4. Participation (8%): In this seminar course, you will be expected to attend class regularly, to come prepared to discuss the assigned readings, and to actively participate in discussion. In advance of each class, you will be asked to submit some brief informal reflections (through the website), based on the assigned readings for that class. Students who submit reflections regularly (not necessarily every week – but at least 8 over the semester) *and* who make regular contributions to discussion will receive the maximum possible 8% towards participation.¹

If you are unable to attend class in some given week, for any reason, that’s fine – but please do let me know in advance that you will be absent, if you can.

Summary and Weights:

Presentation:	20%
Research Paper:	70%
Essay Proposal:	2%
Participation:	8%

¹ I want to encourage even shy students to participate in discussion in class, by asking questions and offering their thoughts. However, if you find speaking in class difficult, due to social anxiety, you are welcome to see me early in the semester to make special arrangements for allocating this part of your grade.

Schedule of Readings and Topics:

*This schedule and list of readings may be modified and updated as the course proceeds.

I include below a list of the topics for each meeting of this course, together with the required reading for each week. This required reading includes both passages from the primary text and also selected secondary literature (usually two pieces). Student presentations will generally focus on (one piece of) the assigned secondary literature for each meeting.

Items marked with a dagger (†) are available online, either as open access resources, e-books accessible through the library website, or full-text articles in journals to which McMaster subscribes. Items marked with a star (*) will be placed on the course website as pdfs. Items on course reserve in Mills Library are identified with a hash (#). Books on course reserve, and further resources, are listed in a separate document on the website.

Week 1 (Jan 7) Introduction and Overview

Required reading: Nil

Additional reading: “Introduction” in Fred D. Miller (ed.), *Aristotle: On the Soul and Other Psychological Works* (the course text).

†Christopher Shields, “Aristotle’s Psychology,” in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (provides a useful overview of our topic for the semester).

†Hendrik Lorenz, “Ancient Theories of Soul,” in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (provides some relevant background).

Week 2 (Jan 14) Analyzing and Defining the Soul

Required reading: Aristotle, *De Anima (DA)* Book I Chapter 1, Book II, 1-2

†*Michael Frede, “On Aristotle’s Conception of the Soul,” in Martha Nussbaum and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (eds.), *Essays on Aristotle’s De Anima* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 93-109.

†*Jennifer Whiting, “Living Bodies,” in Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.), 75-92. [Largely a response to problems originally raised by Ackrill.]

Additional reading: †John Ackrill, “Aristotle’s Definitions of *Psuché*,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 73 (1972-3), 119-33.

†Richard Sorabji, “Body and Soul in Aristotle,” *Philosophy* 49 (1974), 63-89.

*Christopher Frey, “Organic Unity and the Matter of Man,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 32 (2007), 167-204.

Week 3 (Jan 21) Soul as Cause; Capacities of Soul; the Nutritive Capacity

Required reading: *DA* II, 3-4; *Physics* II, 1-3.

†*Thomas Johansen, *The Powers of Aristotle’s Soul* (Oxford University Press, 2012): Ch. 4 “The Definition of *Dunamis*” and Ch. 5 “The Priority of Objects Over Capacities of the Soul.”

Additional reading: †R.J. Hankinson, "Causes," in *A Companion to Aristotle*, Georgios Anagnostopoulos (ed.) (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 213-29.

*K. Corcilius and P. Gregoric, "Parts and Capacities of the Soul in Aristotle," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 39 (2010), 81-119.

†Rebekah Johnston, "Aristotle's *De Anima*: On Why the Soul is Not a Set of Capacities," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19.2 (2011), 185-200.

Jessica Gelber, "Form and Inheritance in Aristotle's Embryology," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 39 (2010), 183-212.

†Gareth Matthews: "De Anima 2. 2-4 and the Meaning of Life," in Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.), 1992, 185-94.

Week 4 (Jan 28) The Power of Perception in General; Perception and Change

Required reading: *De Anima* II.5. See also *Physics* III.3 (to be provided).

†*Myles Burnyeat: "Is an Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind Still Credible?" In Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.), 1992, 15-26.

†*John Bowin: "Aristotle on Various Types of Alteration in *De Anima* II.5," *Phronesis* 56 (2011), 138-61.

Additional reading:

†Myles Burnyeat, "De Anima II.5," *Phronesis* 47.1 (2002), 28-90. [Excellent and important, but too long to make required reading.]

*Hendrik Lorenz: "The Assimilation of Sense to Sense Object," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 33 (2007), 179-220. [Good, but challenging -- pages 179-88 are the most relevant for this week.]

†Richard Sorabji: "Body and Soul in Aristotle." *Philosophy* 49 (1974), 63-89. (Already listed for week 2.)

†Steven Everson, *Aristotle on Perception* (1997), 89-96.

†S. Marc Cohen: "Hylomorphism and Functionalism," in Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.), 1992, 57-74.

†Martha Nussbaum and Hilary Putnam, "Changing Aristotle's Mind," in Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.), 1992, 27-56.

†Richard Sorabji: "Intentionality and Physiological Processes: Aristotle's Theory of Sense Perception," in Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.), 1992, 195-226.

*Ursula Coope, "Aristotle's Account of Agency in *Physics* III.3," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 20.1 (2005), 201-227.

Sarah Broadie (née Waterlow): *Nature, Change and Agency in Aristotle's Physics* (1982), Ch. 4 (esp. 195-9).

Week 5 (Feb 4) The Objects of Perception; Realism; Perceptual Error

Required reading: *De Anima* II.6., III.1. See also the part of *DA* III.2 subtitled "Relation of the Senses to Their Objects" in Miller.

†*Anna Marmodoro, *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects* (Oxford UP, 2014), Chapter 3: “Aristotle’s Subtle Perceptual Realism” (pp. 125-55).

†*Mark Johnstone, “Aristotle and Alexander on Perceptual Error,” *Phronesis* 60.3 (2015), 310-38.

Additional reading: †*Sarah Broadie, “Aristotle’s Perceptual Realism,” in J. Ellis (ed.) *Ancient Minds (Southern Journal of Philosophy* 31 (1993), suppl., 137-59.

*Justin Broackes: “Aristotle, Objectivity and Perception,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 17 (1999), 57-114.

†Irving Block, “Truth and Error in Aristotle’s Theory of Sense Perception,” *Philosophical Quarterly*, 11 (1961), 1–9.

†Joseph Owens, “Aristotle on Common Sensibles and Incidental Perception,” *Phoenix*, 36 (1982), 215–36.

†*Stanford Cashdollar, “Aristotle’s Account of Incidental Perception,” *Phronesis* 18 (1973), 156-75.

†Pavel Gregoric: *Aristotle on the Common Sense* (2009), Ch. II.2, 69-82.

†Steven Everson, *Aristotle on Perception* (1997), 148-57

Week 6 (Feb 11)

Sight and Hearing, Colours and Sounds

Required reading:

De Anima II.7-8; *De Sensu* 1-3 (especially 3). (See also *GA (Generation of Animals)* V.1)

†*Myles Burnyeat: “How Much Happens When Aristotle Sees Red or Hear Middle C?” In Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.), 421-34. Added as an additional essay in the 1995 reissue of this influential 1992 collection.

†*Mark Johnstone, “Aristotle on Sounds,” *The British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 21.5 (2013), 631-48.

Additional reading:

*Katerina Ierodiakonou, “Aristotle on Colours,” in *Aristotle and Contemporary Science, Vol. II*, Demetra Sfendoni-Mentzou (ed.), 2001.

#Thomas Johansen, *Aristotle on the Sense Organs*, Chs. 2-3.

†Allan Silverman, “Color and Color Perception in Aristotle,” *Ancient Philosophy* 9 (1989), 271-92.

†Robert Pasnau, “Sensible Qualities: The Case of Sound,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38.1 (2000), 27-40.

†Todd Ganson, “A Puzzle Concerning the Aristotelian Notion of a Medium of Sense Perception,” *Die Philosophie der Antike* 14 (2002), 65-73 [available on his website]

Mid-Term Recess, Feb 18-24

Week 7 (Feb 25)

Smell and Taste, Odours and Flavours. Sensible Qualities.

Required reading:

De Anima II. 9-11; *De Sensu* 4-5. (See also *GA* V.2, *Meteorology* IV)

†*Mark Johnstone, “Aristotle on Odour and Smell,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 43 (Winter 2012), 143-83.

- †*Todd Ganson, “What’s Wrong with the Aristotelian Theory of Sensible Qualities?” *Phronesis* 42 (1997), 263–82.
- Additional reading: #Thomas Johansen: *Aristotle on the Sense Organs*, Chapters 4, 5.
- Week 8 (Mar 4) Touch; Distinguishing the Senses; Perception and Teleology**
- Required reading: *DA* II.11, III.1, III.12-13. (See also *GC* II.2; *Meteorology* IV)
- †*Richard Sorabji, “Aristotle on Demarcating the Five Senses,” *The Philosophical Review*, 80 (1971), 55–79.
- *Mark Johnstone, “Aristotle on the Unity of Touch” (draft)
- Additional reading: †Cynthia Freeland, “Aristotle on the Sense of Touch,” in Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.), 227-48.
- †Gareth Matthews, “Aristotle on the Organ of Touch,” *Ancient Philosophy* 31 (2001), 327-337.
- Week 9 (Mar 11) “Receiving the Sensible Form without the Matter”**
- Required reading: *De Anima* II.12. (See also *DA* III.7)
- *Victor Caston: “The Spirit and the Letter: Aristotle on Perception.” In Salles (ed.), *Metaphysics, Soul and Ethics in Ancient Thought*, 2005, 245-320. (Especially 299-316.) [defends a “third way” view]
- Additional reading: *David Bradshaw, “Aristotle on Perception: The Dual-Logos Theory,” *Apeiron* 30 (1997), 143-61. [defends a “third-way” view]
- †Julie Ward, “Perception and *Logos* in Aristotle,” *Ancient Philosophy* 8.2 (1988), 217-33.
- #Thomas Johansen: *Aristotle on the Sense Organs*, Chapter 6, Conclusion. [defends “spiritualism”]
- Myles Burnyeat: “Aquinas on ‘Spiritual Change’ in Perception,” in Perler (ed.), *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality* (2001), 129-53. [defends “spiritualism”]
- *Richard Sorabji: “Aristotle on Sensory Processes and Intentionality: A Reply to Burnyeat.” In D. Perler (ed.), *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality* (2001), 49-61. [defends “literalism”]
- *D. Murphy, “Aristotle on Why Plants Cannot Perceive,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 29 (2005), 295-339 [defends “spiritualism”]
- Various readings for Week 4, listed above, are also relevant.
- Week 10 (Mar 18) Self-Awareness: “Perceiving that we Perceive”**
- Required reading: *De Anima* III.2. Selected additional readings to be provided.
- †Pavel Gregoric, *Aristotle on the Common Sense* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), Ch. III.4 (pp. 174-92).
- *Thomas Johansen: “In Defense of Inner Sense: Aristotle on Perceiving that One Sees,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 21 (2006), 235-76.

Additional reading: †Victor Caston, "Aristotle on Consciousness," *Mind* 111 (2002), 751-815.
 †Aryeh Kosman, "Perceiving that we Perceive: *On the Soul* III, 2," *The Philosophical Review* 84 (1975), 499-519.
 †John Sisko, "Reflexive Awareness Does Belong to the Main Function of Perception: Reply to Victor Caston," *Mind* 113 (2004), 513-21.
 †Victor Caston, "More on Aristotle on Consciousness: Reply to Sisko," *Mind* 113 (2004), 523-33.
 †Jerome Dokic, "Common Sense and Metaperception," podcast of presentation at Oxford, September 2013, available at <http://www.power-structuralism.ox.ac.uk/podcasts>.

Week 11 (Mar 25) "Imagination" (*Phantasia*)

Required reading: *De Anima* III.3. See also *DA* III.7-8 (on *phantasia* and thought), 9-11 (on *phantasia* and desire), *De Insomniis* ("On Dreams")
 †*Victor Caston, "Why Aristotle Needs Imagination," *Phronesis* 41 (1996), 20-55.
 †Thomas Johansen, *The Powers of Aristotle's Soul* (Oxford UP, 2012), Chapter 10: "*Phantasia*" (pp. 199-220).

Additional reading: †Krisanna Scheiter, "Images, Appearances, and *Phantasia* in Aristotle," *Phronesis* 57 (2012), 251-78.
 †Dorothea Frede, "The Cognitive Role of *Phantasia* in Aristotle," in Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.), 279-96.
 †Malcolm Schofield, "Aristotle on the Imagination," in Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.), 249-78.
 †Victor Caston: "Aristotle and the Problem of Intentionality," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58 (1998), 249-98.
 †Steven Everson, *Aristotle on Perception*, Ch.4 (esp. pp. 157-86).
 Deborah Modrak, "Dreams and Method in Aristotle," *Skepsis* 20 (2009), 169-81.

Week 12 (Apr 1) The Unity of the Perceptual Faculty

Required Reading: *De Sensu* 6-7; Selected other passages, TBC
 Additional Reading: †Pavel Gregoric: *Aristotle on the Common Sense* (2009) (selections)
 †Anna Marmodoro: *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects* (2014) (selections)
 †Thomas Johansen: *The Powers of Aristotle's Soul* (2012) (selections)

Week 13 (April 8): Conclusion and Review