

ARISTOTLE ON CONTEMPLATION (PHL-4611)

TIME TBD

Instructor: Dr. Zita Toth

Office: St. Maur, room A 002

Office hours: MW 4:00–5:00 p.m., TR 2:00–3:00 p.m., and by appointment. To make an appointment, please go to <http://zitavtoth.com/2016/01/19/Officehours/> and click on the desired slot.

Phone: 2924 (office extension); 917-544-3364 (cell; please use it with consideration).

E-mail: ztoth@conception.edu.

Expected time required outside class: Approximately 2 hours for every class hour.

REQUIRED TEXTS

There are three required books for the course. There will be some additional readings posted on Moodle.

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Any edition.
- Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Any edition.
- Josef Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*. Any edition.

DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

In book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle describes the contemplative life as the life which is the most fulfilling and consequently the happiest. Contemplation, Aristotle goes on, is the only activity that brings about happiness. There are numerous questions that are raised by Aristotle's description. What do we mean, precisely, by contemplation? How does it relate to other human activities? What does a contemplative life consist in? In this course we will address some of these questions as they present themselves in Aristotle, Aquinas, and Josef Pieper. We will also discuss some interpretative issues relating to these thinkers, and compare their overall approach in answering the question of what makes a life the best possible life.

GRADING

Grading scale:

Grade	GPA	Description
A	4.00	excellent, outstanding
A-	3.67	still excellent
B+	3.33	very good
B	3.00	good; solid, and above average
B-	2.67	good; still above average
C+	2.33	average
C	2.00	acceptable
C-	1.67	minimally acceptable
D	1.00	passing but unsatisfactory
F	0.00	failure

Grade break-down:

Component	Percentage
Participation and preparedness	50%
Papers	50% total

Papers: There will be three paper assignments during the semester, with a longer, combined paper as the capstone of the course. Details will follow later.

COURSE POLICIES

Electronic Devices: Electronic devices are not allowed in class. They can be very distracting, and new research shows that even when computers are used solely for taking notes, learning is impaired, because the keyboard encourages taking verbatim notes while the pen requires you to process as you take notes.¹ Everyone is expected to leave their devices (phones, laptops, tablets, etc.) at home or keep them turned off and out of sight during class time. For any special concerns about this policy, please ask me directly.

E-mail: There will be some official communication via e-mail, and everyone is expected to check their e-mail accounts regularly and read their e-mails carefully. You can expect me to read and answer my e-mails within 24 hours; please do not send me e-mails at midnight expecting a response by the next morning class.

Outside resources: You will not have to do outside research beyond the assigned books. If you feel you must read more than what is assigned, please do not rely on wikipedia (which tends to be rather unreliable in philosophy). Instead, I recommend an excellent and free website, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: plato.stanford.edu. An up-to-date, reliable catalogue of philosophy papers can be found at philpapers.org (but please note that they do not store the papers; you will still have to find them in the library).

1. Pam A Mueller and Daniel M Oppenheimer, "The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking," *Psychological Science*, 2014,

Plagiarism: If you use or copy a source without properly citing it, whether this act is intentional or not, you commit plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of stealing. It is very easy to detect, and will result in your automatic failure of the course.

Lateness: Late assignments will not be considered unless for very serious reasons. If you have such reasons, please let me know as soon as you can. I will not accept excuses related to technology (“my e-mail address wasn’t working,” “it remained in my Draft folder,” etc.) unless it is a major technical issue that affects the campus and the IT department knows about it. Seminary-related events and assignments for other courses do not count as very serious reasons.

This course complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written request for accommodation to me and the Academic Dean before the fourth day of class.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

The schedule is tentative, which means it might change at any point during the semester.

Abbreviations: M = on Moodle

Preliminary matters		
Week 1	Introduction	
Week 2	Preliminaries: before Aristotle	Bonazzi (M)
Aristotle		
Week 3	Aristotle, 1	Nicomachean Ethics X, 1–4
Week 4	Aristotle, 2	NE X, 5–6
Week 5	Aristotle, 3	NE X, 7–8
Week 6	Some interpretative issues	Liu; Riel (M)
Aquinas		
Week 7	After Aristotle: Augustine	Bonazzi (M)
Week 8	Twelfth-century predecessors	Valente (M)
Week 9	Aquinas	Aquinas, commentary (sel.)
Week 10	Aquinas	Aquinas, commentary (sel.)
Week 11	Aquinas on prayer as contemplation	ST (sel.)
Week 12	Some interpretations	Sommers (M)
Pieper		
Week 13–15	Pieper	<i>Happiness and Contemplation</i>
Week 16	Review	