

PHIL 403: TOPICS IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

Aristotle's Psychology

Instructor

Robert Howton
(rhowton@ku.edu.tr)

Office Hours

Th 14:30–16:30 and by appt.
SOS 156

Course Website

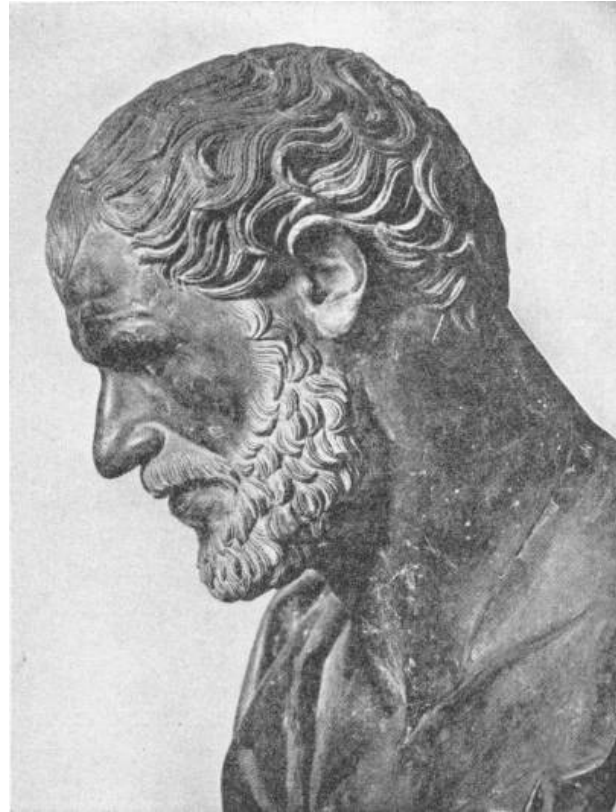
Blackboard
(blackboard.ku.edu.tr)

Lectures

TuTh 10–11:15,
CASE B34

Prerequisites

PHIL 213 + one other PHIL course,
preferably PHIL 215 or PHIL 338



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Aristotle's treatise *On the Soul*, often referred to by its Latin name *De anima*, is not a work of epistemology or philosophy of mind, though it is often read as such. Rather, it is a work of “psychology”, the study of “soul” (*psuchê*)—a word that for Aristotle refers to the cause and source of life in living things. *De anima*, in other words, is a work in the science of soul, an attempt to explain the phenomenon of life by answering questions such as: what distinguishes the living from the non-living, the alive from the dead; how do the various forms of life—plant, animal, and human—differ from one another; and what enables each form of living creature to engage in those activities that distinguish it as living, for instance growth, self-nourishment, reproduction, locomotion, perception, and thought?

Our aim in this course will be to understand Aristotle's *De anima* on its own terms, as a contribution to the science of soul. We'll begin by looking at the historical and theoretical background to Aristotle's psychology, focusing on traditional Greek conceptions of the soul and Aristotle's theory of scientific explanation. Next, we'll proceed slowly through the text of *De anima*, stopping along the way to consider Aristotle's views on perception, thought, consciousness, mental representation, desire, and action, as well as their significance for contemporary epistemology and philosophy of mind. Finally, we'll examine the influence of Aristotle's psychology on his biology and ethics, his most lasting contributions to Western thought.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course aims to establish a broad understanding of core issues in Aristotle's psychology and to develop the skills necessary for appreciating these and other issues in ancient and contemporary philosophy. The successful student will demonstrate the ability:

- to state and articulate, verbally and in writing, major ideas and controversies related to Aristotle's thought,
- to read and critically assess both primary and secondary literature on Aristotle,
- to identify the elements of an argument and assess it for soundness and validity, and
- to apply these skills to novel cases.

The key to success in this course is to keep up with the assigned readings and to attend and participate regularly in class activities. *If you keep up with the course you will not be assigned anything for which you are unprepared.*

EVALUATION

Students' success in meeting these course goals will be evaluated on the following bases:

1. Students will be expected to write **two passage commentaries** and a **final paper**. The commentaries are designed to stimulate in-depth historical and philosophical engagement with one of the major passages discussed in class, as well as to prepare the student for the final paper, which will require the student to defend an interpretation of an aspect of Aristotle's psychology on the basis of a critical analysis of relevant passages and secondary literature.
2. Attendance will be taken, and class participation will be evaluated on the basis of the student's answer to **reading response questions**, which will be distributed in advance and must be turned in prior to the start of the meeting in which the relevant reading is to be discussed. (Students may opt out of reading responses with no penalty a maximum of *three* times; students who do not opt out of three reading responses may use these to replace lower-scoring responses; with the exception of University excused absences, which must be supported by official documentation, students must complete all other reading responses and attend all other class meetings.)
3. Finally, students will give at least one 10–15 minute in-class presentation. Presentation topics and secondary literature will be chosen in consultation with me.

Final grades will be determined according to the following rubric:

Commentary 1	20%
Commentary 2	25%
Final Paper	30%
Reading Responses	10%
Class Presentation	15%
<hr/>	
Total	100%

Students must complete all assignments in order to pass the course.

NB: All work submitted to me outside of class, i.e. fair copies and term papers, *must* be submitted in a format readable by Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat. Work not submitted in these formats will *not* be graded.

GRADING SCALE

96–100	A+	<i>Surpasses All Grading Criteria</i>
90–95	A	<i>Satisfies All Grading Criteria; No Errors</i>
87–89	A-	<i>Satisfies All Grading Criteria; At Least One Minor Error</i>
83–86	B+	<i>Satisfies Most Grading Criteria; Minor Errors</i>
80–82	B	<i>Satisfies Most Grading Criteria; Perhaps Some Major Errors</i>
77–79	B-	<i>Satisfies Most Grading Criteria; One or More Major Errors</i>
73–76	C+	<i>Satisfies Some Grading Criteria; Some Major Errors</i>
70–72	C	<i>Satisfies Some Grading Criteria; Several Major Errors</i>
67–69	C-	<i>Satisfies Some Grading Criteria; Many Major Errors</i>
64–66	D+	<i>Satisfies Almost No Grading Criteria; At Least One Fatal Error</i>
60–63	D	<i>Satisfies Almost No Grading Criteria; One or More Fatal Errors</i>
0–59	F	<i>Satisfies No Grading Criteria, Incomplete, or Plagiarized</i>

NB: Final grades are rounded up from the 2nd decimal place; no exceptions will be made.

IMPORTANT DATES

Dates subject to change.

11 October	Commentary 1 Passages Posted
26 October	Commentary 1 Due
8 November	Commentary 2 Passages Posted
23 November	Commentary 2 Due
3 January	Final Paper Due

COURSE MATERIALS

The required text for the course is:

Shields, Christopher (ed.). *Aristotle: De Anima*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Shields' edition is the newest and (personal grievances aside) the best contemporary English translation of *De anima*, containing both a helpful introduction and extensive commentary on the text. I will put in an order for Shields' text with the bookstore.

Additional readings will be posted to Blackboard, many of which will be drawn from the standard Revised Oxford Translation (ROT) of Aristotle's works, published here:

Barnes, Jonathan (ed.). *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (2 vols.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

The state of Aristotelian scholarship since the late 20th century has been for the most part excellent. Students seeking additional resources on the *De anima* are encouraged especially to consult:

Johansen, Thomas K. *The Powers of Aristotle's Soul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Polansky, Ronald. *Aristotle's De anima: A Critical Commentary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Additionally, several classic articles on different issues in *De anima* are collected in:

Nussbaum, Martha C. and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (eds.). *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

I'll try to have both these books and Barnes' ROT on reserve at the library throughout the semester.

DISABILITIES AND DIFFERENT STYLES OF LEARNING

Education is a pluralistic enterprise: there are several and often incompatible styles of learning. If you believe there is an alternative approach to this material that would better suit your style of learning, do not hesitate to bring it up with me. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both me and the Office of Disability Services at +90 (212) 338 1042 as early as possible in the term. ODS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

The goal of this course is to promote and assess *your* satisfaction of the above-stated course objectives. Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University's policy on academic integrity, noted below, will be required to participate in the required procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam, or paper will be imposed.

For KU's complete policy on academic dishonesty, consult the Student Code of Conduct here: <https://vpaa.ku.edu.tr/academic/student-code-of-conduct#09>.

OTHER IMPORTANT LINKS

Student Rights & Responsibilities

<https://vpaa.ku.edu.tr/academic/student-code-of-conduct#stdrights>

Academic Grievance Procedure

<https://vpaa.ku.edu.tr/academic/grievance-procedures>

Classroom Code of Conduct

<https://vpaa.ku.edu.tr/academic/student-code-of-conduct/>

EMAIL POLICY

Allow me two business days to respond to emails. Please do not email me with questions of philosophical substance—that is what lecture, discussion, and office hours are for—and please consult this syllabus before asking questions about course policy.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Schedule, topics, and readings subject to change. Readings that are not taken from Shields' edition of De anima will be posted to Blackboard. See below for a guide to the abbreviations of Aristotle's works.

18 September	0.1	Introduction: Course Basics & Life of Aristotle
20 September	0.2	Overview of <i>De anima</i> & its Controversies
UNIT 1 <i>Aristotle's Psychology in Context</i>		
25 September	1.1	Aristotle & the Ancient Greek Notion of <i>Psuchê</i>
Readings		Lorenz, "Ancient Theories of Soul"
27 September	1.2	Plato on Soul & Body I
Readings		Plato, <i>Phaedo</i>
2 October	1.3	Plato on Soul & Body II
Readings		Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> , cont'd
4 October	1.4	Plato on Soul & Body III
Readings		Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> , cont'd
9 October	1.5	Aristotle's Initial Reflections on Soul & Body
Readings		Aristotle, Fragments <i>Eudemus</i> ; <i>An.</i> 1.1
11 October		Commentary Workshop
UNIT 2 <i>De anima 1: Outlining the Explanatory Project</i>		
16 October	2.1	What is a "Natural Scientific" Account of Soul?
Readings		<i>An.</i> 1.1; <i>Phys.</i> 2.1–3
18 October	2.2	Criticism of Earlier Theories I
Readings		<i>An.</i> 1.2–3
23 October	2.3	Criticism of Earlier Theories II, Preliminary Conclusions, and Remaining Puzzles

	Readings	An. 1.4–5
<hr/>		
25 October	Catch-Up	
<hr/>		
UNIT 3	De anima 2.1–4: Towards a Positive Account of Soul	
<hr/>		
30 October	3.1	Hylomorphism Introduced
Readings	An. 2.1; Phys. 1.7–9	
	Shields, “Introduction” Sect. III	
<hr/>		
1 November	3.2	“Living is Said in Many Ways”
Readings	An. 2.2–3; An. 2.4, up to 415b28; APo. 1.2, 4–5	
<hr/>		
6 November	3.3	The Priority of Nutrition
Readings	An. 2.4; GA 2.1, up to 732a24	
	Shields, “Introduction” Sect. IV.A	
<hr/>		
UNIT 4	De anima 2.5–3.2: Perceptive Soul	
<hr/>		
8 November	4.1	What is Perception?
Readings	An. 2.5–6; Phys. 3.1–3; GC 1.7	
	Shields, “Introduction” Sect. IV.B	
<hr/>		
13 November	4.2	Aristotle on the Senses
Readings	An. 2.7–12	
<hr/>		
15 November	4.3	Common Sense and the Unity of Perception
Readings	An. 3.1–3.2; Sens. 7	
<hr/>		
UNIT 5	De anima 3.3–3.8: Thinking Soul	
<hr/>		
20 November	5.1	Phantasia, Perception, and Thought
Readings	An. 3.3	
	Plato, Selections from Republic and Sophist	
<hr/>		
22 November	5.2	What is Thinking?
Readings	An. 3.4	

Shields, "Introduction" Sect. IV.C

27 November 5.3 Dualism Resurgent?: "Agent Intellect" and the Separability of *Nous*

Readings *An.* 3.5; *Metaph.* Λ 6, 7, 9

29 November 5.4 Perception, Thought, & Aristotelian "Empiricism"

Readings *An.* 3.6–8; *Metaph.* A 1; *APo.* 2.19

UNIT 6 *De anima* 3.9–3.11: Desire and Animal Motion

4 December 6.1 A Puzzle About "Locomotive Soul"

Readings *An.* 3.9–10; *MA* 6–10

6 December 6.2 Rational vs. Non-Rational Desire

Readings *An.* 3.7, 11; *EN* 7.1–3

UNIT 7 *Conclusions: Aristotle's Psychology at Work*

11 December 7.1 Controversies of *De anima* Revisited

Readings *An.* 3.12–13

13 December 7.2 Soul as an Explanatory Principle

Readings *Sens.* 1; *PA* 1.1; *EN* 1.13, 6.1

18, 20 December *Catch-Up, Final Paper Workshop*

ABBREVIATIONS OF ARISTOTLE'S WORKS

<i>An.</i>	<i>De Anima</i>	<i>(On the Soul)</i>
<i>APo.</i>	<i>Analytica Posteriora</i>	<i>(Posterior Analytics)</i>
<i>EN</i>	<i>Ethica Nicomachea</i>	<i>(Nicomachean Ethics)</i>
<i>GA</i>	<i>De Generatione Animalium</i>	<i>(On the Generation of Animals)</i>
<i>GC</i>	<i>De Generatione et Corruptione</i>	<i>(On Generation and Corruption)</i>
<i>MA</i>	<i>De Motu Animalium</i>	<i>(On the Motion of Animals)</i>
<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metaphysica</i>	<i>(Metaphysics)</i>
<i>PA</i>	<i>De Partibus Animalium</i>	<i>(On the Parts of Animals)</i>
<i>Phys.</i>	<i>Physica</i>	<i>(Physics)</i>
<i>Sens.</i>	<i>De Sensu and Sensibilibus</i>	<i>(On Perception and Perceptual Objects)</i>