

## 470 POLITICAL THOUGHT

Section 001	T Th 3:00-4:50	105 BESSEY	Mr. Allen
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307 S. Kedzie Hall

432-9967

HRS: TTh 1:30-3:00

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Capstone course in one area of political thought. The 2005 topic will be: Nature.

**Credits:** Total Credits: 4 *Lecture/Recitation/Discussion. Hours: 4. 4(4-0)*

**Prerequisite:** (PLS 371 or PLS 372 or PLS 377) and completion of Tier I writing requirement.

**Restrictions:** Open only to juniors or seniors in the Department of Political Science or Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Science major with political science as the disciplinary cognate or approval of department.

### Description:

#### SPRING 2005

#### ARISTOTLE: *PHYSICS*

This capstone course aims to illuminate one area of political thought. In 2005 the topic will be Aristotle's account of nature and the reasoning associated with it. We will read his book, *Physics*. Prior to beginning the text, we will review the prior works by Plato, *Parmenides* and *Timaeus*. Our goal is to understand just how ideas of nature structure human understanding of the cosmos and how, within that context, ideas of humanity come to be structured.

In the initial meeting I will review at some length the question of ancients and moderns. Aristotle is often taken as the iconic pre-modern scientist of essential forms, in light of whose theorizing it is believed that none of the criteria of explanation inherited from the ancient world can be meaningfully applied in a world that has discovered the essential plasticity of beings. To determine how far removed from our habits of explanation Aristotle may stand, we will read his work on the "growth of beings" as a our primary concern. However, we will anticipate it by reviewing two brief works of Plato's first: the *Parmenides* and the *Timaeus*. For it is in distinguishing the discussions of being and form among the ancient thinkers that we gain the clearest perspective for assessing the relation of ancient science to modern science (and, hence, modern moral theorizing).

**METHOD** This is a seminar class. Though by necessity the instructor will lead most discussions through textual analysis, the class is designed to call upon the student's talents of reading, observation, and conversation. Properly speaking, the texts are our teachers. We have the obligation to get to know them and to discuss them with our colleagues in a responsible manner. The "first" student in the seminar will have the obligation to open conversation with a question and to

encourage all other students to participate. What will be new will be the opportunity to pursue our conversation electronically as well as in person. I invite each enrolled class member to access the electronic discussion group to address specific questions and responses to other class members (including the instructor). You may do so at <http://angel.msu.edu>.

Individual students will be assigned weekly explications to prepare and deliver in class as we start each section of the *Physics*. Then all students will be asked to write a mid-term essay that identifies and analytically defines the central themes of the course and then a final essay that discusses them contextually. That final paper will be submitted in draft form, commented upon and returned, and then finally submitted in a polished form for grading. This course satisfies MSU's Tier-II writing requirement. Accordingly, the excellence of the writing will be as important as the correctness of the argument. In fact, though, I have never seen a case of bad writing and good thinking in a single production. If someone believes that is possible, however, and wishes to challenge the proposition that a paper ill written cannot qualify for meritorious evaluation even when its argument is sound, I respond at the outset that it will be the policy of this course to make good writing a pre-condition for meritorious evaluation of every paper (please see appendices to this syllabus for criteria used to evaluate written work). Subject to limitations of numbers (and hence a revision in approach), final papers may be subject to final examination in a seminar setting in the regularly scheduled final examination slot).

*This course will be conducted in accord with MSU and Department of Political Science policies respecting academic honesty and academic responsibility. Anyone in doubt about the requirements of those codes and policies should contact the professor at the outset of the course.*

One finds most of the books to be referred to in this course in the local bookstores, either the MSU Bookstore at the International Center or the independent bookstores in East Lansing. They should also be available, ideally, through <http://www.varsitybooks.com>.

**Honors Option:** Students wishing to pursue the honors option should make their wishes known to the professor before the end of the second week of the term. The actual honors option assignment and sessions will be determined after that time, but will involve additional readings and scheduled discussion of these readings. Then H/O students will incorporate the additional assignments in the development of the term assignment for the course.

## READINGS

### **Required:**

Plato, *Timaeus*  
-- , *Parmenides*

Aristotle, *Physics*, Apostle translation.  
 -- , *Physics*, Sachs translation and commentary

**Recommended:**

Bolotin, *An Approach to Aristotle's Physics*  
 Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*

*Physics* **Author:**[Aristotle](#) [Richard Hope](#) (Translator) **Publisher:**[University of Nebraska Press](#)  
**IBN:**0-8032-5093-2

*Physics, or Natural Hearing;* **Author:**[Aristotle](#), [Glen Coughlin](#) (Editor), (Translator), **Publisher:** [Saint Augustine's Press, Incorporated](#), **ISBN:** -58731-629-3, **LCCN:** 2002-151730, **LC Call#:** Q151.A7513 2003. **Synopsis/Annotation:** The *Physics* is the fundamental text in Western philosophy, as Heidegger said. The text analyzes the most common features of the natural world, such as motion, place, and time, grounding its arguments in common experience and proceeding to a proof of the prime mover. As the first part of Aristotelian natural philosophy, the *Physics* is necessary to an understanding of the later natural works, including *On the Soul*; its proof of the first mover is presupposed to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*; its arguments that nature acts for an end are assumed by Aristotle's ethical and political works; and its analyses of change enter into Aristotle's discussions of knowing and so finally into an understanding of his *Organon*. Given Aristotle's influence, the effect of the *Physics* on later philosophical and theological developments cannot be overemphasized. This translation uses simple language without completely discarding the traditional renderings of Aristotelian terminology. It attempts to imitate Aristotle's concrete style and to be consistent in its translation of terms. The edition includes the translation, introduction, glossary, index, and explanatory notes.

*On Aristotle's "Physics 2"*, **Author:** [John Philoponus](#), [A R Lacey](#) (Translator), **Publisher:** [Cornell University Press](#); **ISBN:** 0-8014-2815-7

*On Aristotle's "Physics 4, 1-5 and 10-14"* **Author:**[Simplicius](#), [J O Urmson](#) (Translator), **Publisher:**[Cornell University Press](#); **IBN:**0-8014-2817-3;**LCCN:**92-025477 **LC Call#:**Q151.A8S53 1992. "This volume offers a new translation of the Neoplatonist philosopher Simplicius' commentary on the chapters concerning place and time in Aristotle's *Physics*, Book Four. Written after the closing of the Athenian Neoplatonist school in A.D. 529, the commentary clarifies the structure and meaning of Aristotle's arguments and provides a rich account of 800 years of interpretation." "Surprisingly, in the first five chapters of Book Four Aristotle shows place as two-dimensional: one's place is the two-dimensional inner surface of one's surroundings. He also suggests that the upward motion of air and fire and the downward motion of earth and water are partly explained by the natural places to which they tend. Place thus has power (*dunamis*) of its own. In his last five chapters, Aristotle argues that if time did not entail change its passage would be undetectable, and that time, by definition countable, requires the existence of conscious beings to do the counting. Among the many relevant views that Simplicius records are those of Galen, who attacks this claim, and of Eudemus, who rebuts the Pythagorean theory that history will repeat itself exactly. J. O. Urmson's translation serves as a companion to his earlier translation of the *Corollaries on Place and Time*, in which Simplicius sets forth his own views as distinct from those of Aristotle." "A major sourcebook for the interpretation of Aristotle, this volume will be welcomed by scholars and students in the fields of classics, ancient philosophy, ancient history, and medieval studies."--BOOK JACKET. Title Summary field provided by Blackwell North America, Inc. All Rights Reserved (Blackwell)

*On Aristotle's "Physics 5-8"*, with Simplicius on Aristotle on the Void, **Author:** [Philoponus](#) [Simplicius](#), [Paul Lettinck](#) (Translator), [J O Urmson](#) (Translator), **Publisher:**[Cornell University](#)

[Press](#); **ISBN:** -8014-3005-4; **LCCN:** 3-031609; **LC Call#:** Q151.P48 1994; **Dewey #:** 500 "This volume makes available for the first time in English key commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics* by Philoponus and Simplicius, rival Neoplatonists of the sixth century A.D." "Paul Lettinck has restored a lost commentary by Philoponus - which has survived in the Greek only in fragments - by translating it from annotations to an Arabic translation of *Physics*. The annotations presented here paraphrase Philoponus' commentary on *Physics*, Books 5-7, and include as well two excerpts from the annotations on Book 8. Among the most interesting features of the text are Philoponus' arguments against infinite time, his comments on the divisibility of changing bodies and of motion, and his treatment of Zeno's paradox of the stadium." "Translated from the Greek by J.O. Urmson, Simplicius' commentary focuses on Aristotle's views on the existence of the void as they emerge in chapters 6-9 of *Physics*, Book 4. Simplicius addresses some objections to Aristotle by later philosophers, particularly by Philoponus and by the Epicureans and the Stoics. There are three crucial points in Simplicius' argument: his reply to Stoics who had attacked Aristotle's reservations about extracosmic void, his response to Aristotle in defense of the idea of motion through void, and his belief that Aristotle does not sufficiently recognize that the ground for the natural motion of bodies, whether in a void or not, is internal. Peter Lautner has provided an introduction and notes to the translation."--BOOK JACKET. Title Summary field provided by Blackwell North America, Inc. All Rights Reserved (Blackwell)

*On Aristotle's "Physics 7"*, [Simplicius](#), [Charles Hagen](#) (Translator), **Publisher:** [Cornell University Press](#); **ISBN:** -8014-2992-7, **LCCN:** 3-026377, **LC Call#:** 151.A8S563 1994 "Book 7 of Aristotle's *Physics* - once regarded as merely an undeveloped early version of Book 8 - has recently attracted renewed interest. Differences of opinion concerning its importance are as old as Aristotle's text, and Simplicius' commentary, written in the sixth century A.D., is an indispensable tool for understanding Book 7. Charles Hagen here gives the English reader access to this commentary for the first time." "Among the most important aspects of the commentary are Simplicius' explanation of the interconnections among the chapters of Book 7 and his references to a more extensive second version of Aristotle's text than the one that survives today. Acknowledging that Book 8 offers a more precise discussion of the subject covered in Book 7, the case for a prime mover, Simplicius both identifies ways in which Book 7 reveals Aristotle's acumen and clarifies its relationship to the other books in the *Physics*."--BOOK JACKET. Title Summary field provided by Blackwell North America, Inc. All Rights Reserved (Blackwell)

*On Aristotle's "Physics 8.6-10"* **Author:** [Aristotle](#), [Richard McKirahan](#) (Translator), **Publisher:** [Cornell University Press](#); **ISBN:** 0-8014-3787-3, **LCCN:** 2001-028243 **LC Call#:** Q151.S4513 2001 **Dewey #:** 509.021 **Synopsis/Annotation:** The very magnitude of the sixth-century AD Greek philosopher's commentary is impressive, says McKirahan (classics and philosophy, Pomona College, Claremont, California), but its real value lies in his thorough knowledge of Aristotle and the entire Greek philosophical tradition, his frequent quotes from earlier commentaries now lost, and his acuity in dissecting arguments. A Greek-English index and an English-Greek glossary explains the translation of technical or difficult terms. Annotation c. Book News, Inc., Portland, OR (booknews.com)

*The Order of Nature in Aristotle's Physics: Place and the Elements* **Author:** [Helen S Lang](#), **Publisher:** [Cambridge University Press](#); **ISBN:** 0-521-62453-3. **Synopsis/Annotation:** This book enters into the point of view of the ancient world in order to explain how they saw the world, and to show what arguments were used by Aristotle to support this view. Lang demonstrates a new method for reading the texts of Aristotle by revealing a continuous line of argument running from the *Physics* to *De Caelo*, and analyzes a group of arguments that are almost always treated in isolation from one another to reveal their elegance and coherence. She establishes the case that we must rethink our approach to Aristotle's physical science and Aristotelian texts. Demonstrating a method for reading the texts of Aristotle by revealing a continuous line of argument running from *Physics* to *De Caelo*, Lang analyzes a group of arguments that are usually treated separately, revealing their elegance and coherence.

Part I. Place: 1. Aristotle's physics and the problem of nature; 2. Nature and motion; 3. Place; 4. Void; Part II. The Elements: 5. Inclination: an ability to be moved; 6. Inclination as heaviness and lightness; 7. Inclination: the natures and activities of the elements; Part III. Nature As a Cause of Order: 8. The order of nature in Aristotle's physics. Part I. Place: 1. Aristotle's physics and the problem of nature; 2. Nature and motion; 3. Place; 4. Void; Part II. The Elements: 5. Inclination: an ability to be moved; 6. Inclination as heaviness and lightness; 7. Inclination: the natures and activities of the elements; Part III. Nature As a Cause of Order: 8. The order of nature in Aristotle's physics. Part I. Place: 1. Aristotle's physics and the problem of nature; 2. Nature and motion; 3. Place; 4. Void; Part II. The Elements: 5. Inclination: an ability to be moved; 6. Inclination as heaviness and lightness; 7. Inclination: the natures and activities of the elements; Part III. Nature As a Cause of Order: 8. The order of nature in Aristotle's physics. Part I. Place: 1. Aristotle's physics and the problem of nature; 2. Nature and motion; 3. Place; 4. Void; Part II. The Elements: 5. Inclination: an ability to be moved; 6. Inclination as heaviness and lightness; 7. Inclination: the natures and activities of the elements; Part III. Nature As a Cause of Order: 8. The order of nature in Aristotle's physics.

### REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance on each seminar in the course, as reflected by log-in records and participant affirmation.
2. Classroom participation – Regular reading of lesson assignments, as attested by participant affirmation, and seminar discussion
3. Each class member will be assigned a section of *Physics* on which to prepare an explication not exceeding four pages and to be presented in seminar. 15%
4. Mid-Term 35%

A mid-term essay as described above must be submitted no later than the end of class on Tuesday, March 1, 2005. The essays will be graded and the results reported by March 7th. The essay will be graded on a 100-point scale, and it will contribute 35% of the average class grade.

5. Final Paper 50%

A final paper as described above must be submitted no later than the end of class on Tuesday, April 26, 2005. The paper will be graded on a 100-point scale, and it will contribute 65% of the average class grade. Moreover, *in order to qualify a final paper*

for evaluation, it must be preceded by submission of a draft final paper, no later than the end of class on Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Grade calculation**

Course averages, on the 100-point scale, will be converted to MSU 4-point grades on the following table:

96-100 =	4.0
90-95 =	3.5
84-89 =	3.0
78-83 =	2.5
72-77 =	2.0
66-71 =	1.5
60-65 =	1.0
< 60 =	0.0

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READING CALENDAR

WEEK ONE:	JAN 11 JAN 13	<i>Parmenides</i> <i>Timaeus</i>	
WEEK TWO:	JAN 18 JAN 19	<i>Physics I, 1-3</i> <i>Physics I, 4-9</i>	
WEEK THREE:	JAN 25 JAN 27	<i>Physics, II, 1-3</i> <i>Physics, II, 4 -6</i>	
WEEK FOUR:	FEB 01 FEB 03	<i>Physics, II, 7-9</i> <i>Physics, III, 1-2</i>	
WEEK FIVE:	FEB 08 FEB 10	<i>Physics, III, 3-4</i> <i>Physics, III, 6-8</i>	
WEEK SIX:	FEB 15 FEB 17	<i>Physics, IV, 1-2</i> <i>Physics, IV, 3-5</i>	
WEEK SEVEN:	FEB 22 FEB 24	<i>Physics, IV, 6-10</i> <i>Physics, IV, 11-14</i>	
WEEK EIGHT:	MAR 01 MAR 03	<i>Physics, V, 1-2</i> <i>Physics, V, 3-6</i>	<b>mid-term due</b>
WEEK NINE:	MAR 08	SPRING BREAK	

WEEK TEN:	MAR 15	<i>Physics</i> , VI, 1-3
	MAR 17	<i>Physics</i> , VI, 4-6
WEEK ELEVEN:	MAR 22	<i>Physics</i> , VI, 7-9
	MAR 24	<i>Physics</i> , VI, 7-9
WEEK TWELVE:	MAR 29	<i>Physics</i> , VI, 10
	MAR 31	<i>Physics</i> , VII, 1-2
WEEK THIRTEEN:	APR 05	<i>Physics</i> , VII, 3-4
	APR 07	<i>Physics</i> , VII, 5
WEEK FOURTEEN	APR 12	<i>Physics</i> , VIII, 1-2
	APR 13	<i>Physics</i> , VIII, 3-4
WEEK FIFTEEN	APR 19	<i>Physics</i> , VIII, 5-6
	APR 21	<i>Physics</i> , VIII, 7-8
	APR 26	<i>Physics</i> , VIII, 9-10
	APR 27	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE</b>

Final Exams 5/2 – 5/6

Commencements 5/6 – 5/8

#### APPENDIX I:

##### Rules Governing Written Compositions

1. A margin of about an inch should be observed at the left and a margin of one-half inch on the right of every theme.
2. Paragraphs must be indented another inch.
3. All compositions should be neatly written.
4. One line should be left between the title and the composition.
5. Choose words carefully to avoid repetition and to give variety.
6. All numbers up to 100 should be written out except in addresses, dates, and statistics, or where consistency demands that the Arabic numbers be used.

##### *Punctuation*

11. A comma is used after *yes and no* in answering questions.
12. Set off nouns of address by commas.
13. Words in a series are separated-by-commas.
14. The second and all following items in addresses and dates should be set off by commas.
15. Set off words in apposition by commas.
16. Commas should be used before conjunctions joining coordinate clauses.
17. Introductory adverbial clauses must be followed *by* a comma.
18. Participial groups coming first should be set off by commas.
19. Participial groups coming far after their nouns should be set off by commas.

20. Participial groups used to explain why or how or when should be set off by commas.  
 21. Direct quotations are indicated by comma, quotation marks, and capital letter. They are closed by period or question mark and quotation marks.

Examples of three types of quotations:

- (a) John said, "May I go to the show?"  
 (b) "May I go to the show?" said John.  
 (If this had not been a question, a comma would have been used)  
 (c) "May I," said John, "go to the show?"

22. Non-restrictive clauses should be set off by commas.  
 23. A period is used at the close of a declarative sentence.  
 24. A period is used after all abbreviations.  
 25. A question mark is used after an interrogative sentence.  
 26. An exclamation mark should be used only after an exclamatory sentence.  
 27. The first word of every sentence should be capitalized.  
 28. The first and all other words except prepositions, articles, and conjunctions in the title should be capitalized.  
 29. Proper nouns and proper adjectives should be capitalized.

#### *Grammar and Structure*

31. A pronoun should always refer to a definite antecedent.  
 32. A participle should always modify a noun or pronoun.  
 33. Verbs should always agree with their subjects in number.  
 34. Tense consistency should be observed.  
 35. The correct case form of pronouns should be used.  
 36. Every sentence must be complete.

#### *Spelling*

41. All words whose spelling is not known should be looked up in a dictionary.  
 42. Final e is dropped before adding ing, ed, er, est.  
 43. A word ending in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel and having the accent on the last syllable doubles the final consonant before adding ing, er, est, ed.  
 44. *i* before *e* except after *c* or when sounded as *a* as in neighbor and weigh.  
 45. The plural of words ending in *y* preceded by a consonant is formed by changing *y* to *i* and by adding *es*.  
 46. The correct form of abbreviations should be used.  
 47. The singular possessive of a noun is formed by adding an apostrophe and *s*. The possessive form of a pronoun does not use an apostrophe.  
 48. The plural possessive of a word whose plural ends in *s* is formed by adding an apostrophe.  
 49. The plural possessive of a word whose plural does not end in *s* is formed by adding an apostrophe and *s*.  
 50. Words should be properly divided at the end of the line.  
 51. An apostrophe is used in contractions to designate the omission of a letter or successive letters: e.g.

they're=they *are*

it's=it is

doesn't=does not

I'd=I would or I should



### **Criteria Used in Evaluating Written Work:**

While there will be many opportunities for oral discussion of written work, it will be helpful to adopt a grading scale and to commit ourselves to the use of certain explicit criteria.

The scale is numerical, as follows:

- 1- excellent
- 2- good
- 3- satisfactory
- 4- poor
- 5- very poor

To receive a 1 rating a paper should demonstrate the following:

- a. There should be a clearly stated thesis and a clearly developed line of argument.
- b. There should be a sense of organization in both the individual paragraphs and in the theme as a whole.
- c. The individual paragraphs should be developed and related logically to one another and to the thesis of the paper as a whole.
- d. There should be few glaring errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
- e. Generalizations should be supported by concrete supporting evidence, and the paper should avoid stereotyped lines of argumentation.

To receive a 2 rating a paper should have all the ingredients of an excellent essay (1 rating), except that there will probably be minor problems in one or two of the above areas (a-e).

To receive a 3 rating a paper should demonstrate the following:

- a. The basic criteria for a satisfactory essay is that the student must make himself understood and must communicate ideas in spite of some technical problems.
- b. It follows that a paper receiving a 3 rating should demonstrate by college standards an adequate sense of organization, paragraphing, argumentation, spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. Otherwise, of course, the student will not communicate ideas clearly and concisely.

Essays receiving a 4 rating are generally characterized by any combination of the following:

- a. There is oftentimes an insufficient development of ideas.
- b. The student often avoids discussing the topic.
- c. There are frequent errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
- d. There is no clearly stated thesis and no clearly developed argument.
- e. Principles or organizing both paragraphs and the theme as a whole are ignored or applied in a very haphazard manner.
- f. There is oftentimes a lack of adequate subordination and coordination of ideas, thus resulting in too many short, choppy sentences.
- g. Generalizations oftentimes go unsupported by concrete detail, and the line of argument (if one exists) is oftentimes a rehash of clichés and stereotypes.

Essays receiving a 5 rating are generally characterized by the student's inability to make himself understood due to frequent and major problems in many of the above areas (a-g of the 4 rated essays). Due to these problems the essay is almost incoherent.