

PHILC 1301: Philosophy of Nature and the Human Person

Logistical Details

Instructor: Ryan Miller, ryan.miller@stthom.edu. You are welcome and encouraged to email me anytime you have a question your peers cannot answer. You may also message me on Blackboard or Perusall.

Course meetings: fully asynchronous, with approximately five reading assignments and one other submission per week from 14 December to 11 January.

Blackboard: https://blackboard.stthom.edu/ultra/courses/_59596_1/outline

Perusall: <https://app.perusall.com/join/miller-8d3wv> Enrollment code: MILLER-8D3WV

Required text: *Plato: Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo* 2nd Ed by Plato, ed. Grube and Cooper. Must be purchased for \$8.95 through Perusall. All other texts will be freely available on Perusall.

Office hours: as this is an asynchronous course, office hours are only by appointment on Teams. Email me to make an appointment for any of the following (or for any other course need you might have):

- Go over the instructions for an upcoming assignment to make sure you understand everything
- Brainstorm and talk about how you might approach an assignment
- Chat about your thoughts and half-formed ideas about the readings
- Review your progress in the class so far and talk about strategies for improvement

If you want to have someone review your assignments before submission and offer advice, subject specific tutoring is available in philosophy by making an appointment at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1QZVi_tGCQ71dMsXMteefXcKWdnYWsmXoHAe6E-c8-N4/viewform?edit_requested=true

If you are having difficulties that go beyond the scope of this specific course, I encourage you to make use of the resources of UST, including the Counseling and Wellness Services (https://www.stthom.edu/Campus-Student-Life/Counseling-and-Wellness-Services/Index.aqf?Aquifer_Source_URL=%2FCounseling&PNF_Check=1). If you have or suspect you have a disability and want testing and/or accommodations please see the Access and Disability Services (<https://www.stthom.edu/Campus-Student-Life/Access-and-Disability-Services/Index.aqf>).

Course Description

Students will be introduced to what makes them distinctive in comparison to irrational animals, and the reasons why this distinctiveness is important. Thus, they will come to understand themselves as persons endowed with innate dignity, freedom of choice, and the capacity for rational reflection. Self-knowledge thus serves as the foundation of the philosophical habit of mind and heart that animates their journey through their liberal education.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Students will learn or review the basics of deductive reasoning.
2. Students will learn the doctrines of hylomorphism and nature in the Aristotelian tradition.
3. Students will learn the essence of the human person and the incorruptibility of the human soul in the Aristotelian tradition, as well as contrast the Aristotelian view of the human person with competing views, especially materialism and dualism.
4. Students will learn the powers of the human person, including the exterior and interior senses, the intellectual powers, and the appetitive powers, with an eye to the freedom of the will in the perfection of the human person.
5. Students will lay the ontological groundwork for the further study of ethics by investigating happiness and its relationship to virtue as understood in the Aristotelian tradition.
6. Students will learn how to read a philosophical work carefully and critically.
7. Students will learn how to express ideas and arguments in writing and speech.
8. Student will begin to learn how to evaluate philosophical arguments.

Course Schedule (Readings Posted to Perusall)

#	Date	Text	Note
Early Greek Views of Nature and the Soul			
1	12/17	Graham, "The Ionian Program"	
2	12/18	Graham, "Anaximenes and the Generating Substance Theory" and "Parmenides and the...Elemental Substance Theory"	introduction posts and replies due
3	12/19	<i>Phaedo</i> 59c-72e, 86e-91d, 95a-118a	
4	12/20	<i>Meno</i> 70a-86b and <i>Phaedo</i> 72e-78b	
5	12/21	<i>Phaedo</i> 78b-86d, 91e-95a	
6	12/22		reading reflection posts due
Aristotle's Philosophy of Nature			
7	12/23	<i>Physics</i> I.1-3	oral exam signups
8	12/24	<i>Physics</i> I.4-6	
9	12/26	<i>Physics</i> I.7-8	
10	12/27	<i>Physics</i> I.9	
11	12/28	<i>Physics II.1-3</i>	
12	12/29		logical reconstruction posts due
13	12/30		oral exams
Aquinas's View of the Soul			
14	12/31	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> I.75	
15	1/2	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> I.76, I.90	
16	1/3	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> I.77-8, I.80	
17	1/4	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> I.79, I.84	
18	1/6		Summa article due

Aquinas on the Good of the Soul		
18	1/7	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> I.82-3, I-II.6
19	1/8	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> I-II.1-2, I-II.4
20	1/9	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> I-II.8-10
21	1/11	Summa article presentation due

Assessments

1. Introductions and Replies (2%) – 12/18

As this is an asynchronous course, we should learn who our conversation partners are. You must introduce yourself in a Blackboard discussion (following the seven-part prompt) and make a relevant reply to another student’s introduction.

2. Perusall Annotations (20%) – dates on Perusall

As Socrates makes clear in the *Phaedo*, philosophy is a discussion sport; the material can only be understood by active engagement. In this asynchronous course, that takes the form of at least four high-quality Perusall annotations per reading (following the suggestions made for the reading) and responding to and voting on your classmates’ contributions. Simple questions and clarifications can help your grade on the margins, but cannot replace high quality comments which engage the main themes of the reading and illustrate focused critical thinking.

3. Reading Reflections (8%) – 12/22

Make two posts in the Blackboard discussion which extend, clarify, and reflect on two of your Perusall annotations (one on Graham and one on the *Phaedo*), following the discussion prompt. These will help to bridge between the more informal conversations on Perusall and the oral exam.

4. Logical Reconstructions (10%) – 12/29

Make two posts in the Blackboard discussion giving logical reconstructions of valid syllogistic arguments from two different sections of Aristotle’s *Physics* alpha. For each, identify the line numbers of the two selected premises and conclusion. Then give the syllogism, paraphrasing the text in your own words to make the syllogism valid. State the mood (A, E, I, O) of each premise and the conclusion, and give the name of the figure. There is an Aristotelian logic review handout and video on Perusall to help you.

5. 8-10 Minute Oral Exam (10%) – 12/30

An 8-10 minute oral exam will be held on Monday 30 December on Teams, with timeslot signups in advance. I will pick one of your two reading reflections and one of your two logical reconstructions as exam questions, in each case asking you to defend your interpretation of the text and explain how your selections relate to its overall thesis. I realize that you may not have done an oral exam before, but please do not stress unduly while you prepare. It is a small percentage of your grade, and an opportunity for me to get to know you and how you are doing in the course as much as anything else. You have the exam questions in advance, and any concerns can be discussed in class or by email. Oral exams must be conducted on the agreed timeslot, and missing or being late for the exam will be treated the same as missing or being late for an in-class exam.

6. *Summa* Article Rewrite (20%) – 1/6

Rewrite one article that we have read from Aquinas's *Summa* in your own words, using modern sources for the objections, *sed contra*, and citations in the replies. You must make a sound argument while treating your sources charitably and exhibiting nuance.

All direct quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks and all direct quotations and paraphrases must be cited in-text (MLA or APA style) or with a footnote. All cited works, including primary sources, must appear in a bibliography. Do not submit a separate document for your bibliography; it must appear at the bottom of your question. Turning in work without proper citations or that you did not write yourself is plagiarism. All essays are checked for plagiarism, which is a violation of the academic integrity policy and will result in (at minimum) a zero on the assignment.

7. *Summa* Article Presentation (30%) – 1/11

Make a 15-minute video presentation of your rewritten *Summa* article with appropriate slides or other visual aids, and incorporating feedback from the instructor on the written version. You must be visible during the entirety of the video, which can easily be recorded from Teams. Videos must be uploaded to Blackboard; no late work will be accepted as grading must be completed.