Having made a successful comeback in moral philosophy in the form of virtue ethics, Aristotelianism is now becoming one of the most promising new trends in metaphysics. This is particularly fair given that the word 'metaphysics' itself comes from the Aristotelian tradition. The main feature that makes Aristotelianism intellectually attractive is the way it frames and handles the traditional philosophical problem of being. Aristotelian approach, described as essentialism, is based on a particular interpretation of being, or substance, as essence, which accounts for a thoroughly rationalist outlook of Aristotelian metaphysics. As any philosophical gain, this one also comes at a price. In this course we shall read the core texts for Aristotelian metaphysics of substance and discuss some of the main philosophical problems these texts set for the whole tradition of analytical metaphysics.

We shall start with close reading and discussion of Aristotle’s texts, mastering the Aristotelian method in metaphysics and raising philosophical questions within and without his system. In the end we'll devote one session to modern critical appraisals of Aristotle's metaphysics in the format of a round-table presentation and discussion of the most interesting themes. The final class will be an essay workshop, where students will have an opportunity to present the ideas for their essays and have early feedback from classroom discussion which they can use later in writing the final essay.

Readings

Our main texts will be Categories 1-5 and Metaphysics Z and H. The recommended primary texts are:

- J.L. Ackrill, Aristotle: Categories and De Interpretatione, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963 (many reprints)
- C.D.C. Reeve (ed) Aristotle, Metaphysics,

We will use some scholarly literature, which will be referring us to a much broader range of texts. Typically, scholarly quotations will be clear from context, but if you wish to understand more and dig deeper on particular issues, you may want to consult Aristotle’s other works. In this case, you might want to use a more comprehensive selection of Aristotle’s texts, such as:


or


If you would like to have all the works of Aristotle in English, then the Revised Oxford Translation edited by J. Barnes is a good value for money:

The secondary literature on our topics is enormous. I list here only the key monographs devoted to Aristotle's theory of substance. For each class, there is an assigned short (but tough) reading from Aristotle and two or three pieces of secondary literature. On the handout for each class I will give a list of further readings on the topics covered: these can be used in preparing the essays.

Availability of the texts. I have ordered the copies of several key works (particularly the primary texts and some secondary titles that have no electronic version) through Blackwells, and they have them for our class. Most other texts will be available electronically through our Library catalogue. For any additions, please don’t forget to check the folders on LEARN which are updated weekly.

Assessment includes two essays: mid-term worth 40% and final worth 60% of the final grade. There is no formal participation mark, but participation is strongly recommended as an excellent way to prepare for an essay.

Short bibliography


Weekly time-table and readings

Week 1. Introduction. Context and plan of Aristotle's Categories.

*Primary sources*

+ R. McKirahan Philosophy Before Socrates, University of California Press, 1994 (and 2nd edition), ch.11 ('Parmenides')
+ Plato *Phaedo, Parmenides*
+ Aristotle *Metaphysics A.9*
Aristotle *Categories 1*

*Secondary literature*

W. Mann, *The Discovery of Things*, 39-50
M. Wedin, *Aristotle's Theory of Substance*, Chapter 1

Week 2. Aristotle’s Metaontology in the *Categories*. Inherence

*Primary sources*

Aristotle, *Categories* 2-4

*Secondary literature*

W. Mann, *The Discovery of Things*, 75-124

Week 3. Aristotle’s Metaontology in the *Categories*. Substance

*Primary sources*

Aristotle, *Categories* 5

*Secondary literature*


Week 4. The place of substance in *Metaphysics*
Primary sources

Aristotle Metaphysics Z 1-3

Secondary literature


**Week 5. Substance and essence**

Primary sources

Aristotle *Metaphysics* Z 4-6
Post. An. 1.3

Secondary literature


**Week 6.**

Primary sources

Aristotle *Metaphysics* Z 7-9

Secondary literature


**Week 7. Essence and definition**

Primary sources

Aristotle *Metaphysics* Z 10-12

Secondary literature


**Week 8. Substance and universals**

*Primary sources*

Aristotle *Metaphysics* Z 13-16

*Secondary literature*

M. Wedin, *Aristotle’s Theory of Substance*, 343-404

**Week 9. The Unity of Substance**

*Primary sources*

Aristotle *Metaphysics* Z 17 and H 6

*Secondary literature*

M. Wedin, *Aristotle’s Theory of Substance*, 405-454

**Week 10. Modern Appraisals: A Round Table Discussion**

*Secondary literature*

E.J. Lowe, ‘Form without Matter’
P.M. Simons, ‘Farewell to Substance: A Differentiated Leave-Taking’
J. Haldane, ‘A Return to Form in Philosophy of Mind’
K.Fine, ‘Mixing Matters’
J. Hoffman & Gary S. Rosenkrantz, ‘On the Unity of Compound Things: Living and Non-Living’
M. Rea, ‘Sameness without Identity: An Aristotelian Solution to the Problem of Material Constitution’

(all readings in David S. Oderberg (ed) *Form and Matter: Themes in Contemporary Metaphysics*, Blackwell, 1999)

**Week 11. Essay Workshop**