

# SUBJECT: ON BEING, LANGUAGE AND REASON, AND CAUSE IN ARISTOTLE'S ORGANON

SEMINAR SYLLABUS

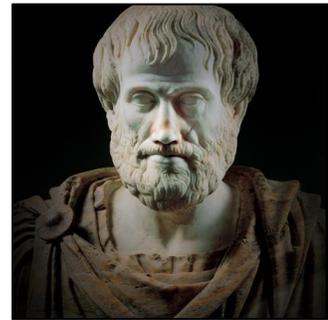
[SUMMER 2021]



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## DESCRIPTION

In order to be a proper ἀκροατής (*akroates*), i.e., *hearer* or student of Aristotle's, such that one might read and understand the Stagyrite's treatment of specific subjects like nature (*Physics*), the soul (*De Anima*), ethics (*Nicomachean Ethics*), politics (*Politics*) or *metaphysics* (*Metaphysics*), one must first obtain a general understanding of Aristotle's rigorous logical method. This method is disclosed in a set of works that, since Alexander of Aphrodisias (A.D. 200), has been called the ὄργανον (*organon*) because it provides an account of the *instrument* of coming to know being or reality (οὐσία/*ousia*).



This seminar treats Aristotle's methodology for coming to know reality in two parts. In the first part, to be led by Dr. Daniel Wagner, students will gain understanding of the primary terms for defining (*Topics*), the classification of the most general concepts of the intellect (*Categories*), and the method of reasoning used for defining beings, which Aristotle calls induction (ἐπαγωγή/*epagoge*) and division (διαίρεσις/*diairesis* and ἀνάλυσις/*analysis*) (*Posterior Analytics*). In the second part, to be led by Dr. John Boyer, students will gain understanding of Aristotle's method of deductive demonstrative reasoning and explanation by proper cause (αἰτία/*aitia*), which constitutes scientific understanding (*Posterior Analytics*).

## METHOD

The seminar is 8 weeks long, with one recorded lecture and one discussion session each week. Each discussion session is structured around a reading from Aristotle. Participants are expected to have read the assigned reading and listened to the lecture prior to the session, so that they may engage in a semi-structured discussion directed and moderated by the instructor. As this is an advanced seminar, one *cannot* participate well without a *deep engagement* with the assigned reading. Moreover, *continual discussion* will foster that participation and engagement throughout the week. Participants will be expected to partake in these discussions on a regular basis, and will be challenged to do so directly.

## READINGS

The primary texts for this seminar are all available online: *Categories*, *Posterior Analytics* and selections from *Topics*, *Physics*, *De Anima*, and *Metaphysics*. **Readings are subject to change.**

## LECTURE

Each week there will also be a 20-40+ minute audio lecture, posted to Teams at the beginning of the week. This lecture will be based upon the assigned reading, but will also stray into related topics, or may use the reading as a launching point for addressing some related issue (perhaps one more general, or perhaps one more specific). The primary (but not sole) purpose of these lectures is to help clarify some of the more difficult concepts and arguments contained within the reading, as well as to raise specific questions that should help structure and guide our discussion sessions.

There *may* be accompanying visual aids (not necessarily) in order to provide some clarity as to textual points, but one *should* be able, in most cases, to simply listen to the lecture (and perhaps consult the visual aids later). This should allow more flexibility: making the lectures suitable accompaniment for a commute, while doing chores, going for a run, etc.

## DISCUSSION

The heart of the seminar is the discussion session (**Saturdays at 1:00-2:00pm ET**): where all the thoughts emergent and encountered throughout the week—via the reading, lecture, and on-going conversations in the Teams channel—are brought into explicit conversation. This allows us to attempt a concerted effort at bringing resolution to our difficulties, and—failing such a resolution—to direct our inquiry further.

Each discussion session will begin with a brief synopsis of the week's material and a focusing on whichever aspects of that material seem most pressing. Beyond the direction provided by the instructor, participants are encouraged to bring their own concerns explicitly into view and to engage with the instructor and one another in civil debate and collective inquiry.

## CONTRIBUTION

It is hoped and expected that each participant in the seminar will provide a contribution: a piece of writing, recorded presentation, or something else, within one month of the seminar's conclusion, as a way of coalescing what has been learned in a demonstrative manner. The instructor is available for discussions and assistance in composing your contribution.

## SESSION SCHEDULE

June 12	<p>Week One</p> <p>Lecture : On the Predicables, Predication, and the Categories</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Primary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topics: I.1-9</li> <li>• Categories 1-4</li> </ul> <p>Secondary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Porphyry, Isagoge</li> </ul>
June 19	<p>Week Two</p> <p>Lecture : On οὐσία (being/substance)</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Categories 5</li> </ul> <p>Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Categories 6-14</li> </ul>
June 26	<p>Week Three</p> <p>Lecture : Aristotelian Science &amp; the Puzzle of First Principles</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Primary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posterior Analytics I.1-10, 18, and II.13-14 and.19</li> <li>• Physics I.1</li> </ul>
July 3	<p>Week Four</p> <p>Lecture: Division</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parts of Animals I-II.1; De Anima I.1 and II.1-4</li> </ul>
July 10	<p>Week Five</p> <p>Lecture: Conditions for Science (episteme)</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posterior Analytics I.1-4</li> </ul>
July 17	<p>Week Six</p> <p>Lecture: Degrees of Science</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posterior Analytics I.10, 13, 24, 30, 31, 33</li> </ul>
July 24	<p>Week Seven</p> <p>Lecture: The Method of Scientific Investigation</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posterior Analytics II.1-10</li> </ul>
July 31	<p>Week Eight</p> <p>Lecture: Causality &amp; Scientific Knowledge</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posterior Analytics II.11, 12, 16, 17</li> </ul>