Course description: This course introduces the great philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) through two of his most influential treatises: *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Poetics*, supplemented with background information from other works by Aristotle and with important critical material from the secondary literature. Through Aristotle, students will also be introduced to the philosophical fields of ethics and aesthetics. Art, for the Greeks, was subordinate to ethics so, to identify great art, one might begin by asking whether the art makes people better. Hence we will look first at what Aristotle thinks makes people good and happy, then turn to the subject of how art might help in that process. Although both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Poetics* grow out of Platonic/Academic philosophy of the late fourth century B.C.E., the attention paid to Aristotle by the influential Roman Catholic Church throughout the medieval and early modern periods of philosophy greatly magnified the influence of those two treatises.

Goals of the course: In the seminar setting, students will learn to identify, to clarify, to develop, to criticize, and to defend significant Aristotelian positions in ethics and aesthetics by practicing and refining their oral and writing skills.

Required texts:


Recommended texts:


Optional text:


Reading for pleasure:


Schedule of assignments:
**Tuesday 10 January**  introduction to the course, to ethics generally, and to Aristotle

**Thursday 12 January**  Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics (NE)* introduction and book I

**Tuesday 17 January**  NE I

**Thursday 19 January**  NE II

**Tuesday 24 January**  NE II

**Thursday 26 January**  NE III

**Tuesday 31 January**  NE III

**Thursday 2 February**  Aristotle, *Politics and Metaphysics* — **writing assignment 1 due**

**Tuesday 7 February**  NE IV

**Thursday 9 February**  NE V

**Tuesday 14 February**  NE VI

**Thursday 16 February**  I’ll be at the Arizona Colloquium for Ancient Philosophy (Tucson).

**Tuesday 21 February**  NE VI

**Thursday 23 February**  NE VII

**Tuesday 28 February**  NE VII

**Thursday 2 March**  NE VII— **writing assignment 2 due**

**Tuesday 14 March**  NE VIII

**Thursday 16 March**  NE IX

**Tuesday 21 March**  NE X

**Thursday 23 March**  I’ll be at the Pacific APA meeting (Portland).

**Tuesday 28 March**  NE conclusions— **if writing term paper, last day for approval of thesis**

**Thursday 30 March**  introduction to aesthetics and to Aristotle’s *Poetics (Po.)*

**Tuesday 4 April**  Po. I.1

**Thursday 6 April**  I’ll be at the Terry Penner Roundtable (Denver).

**Tuesday 11 April**  Po. I.2

**Thursday 13 April**  Po. I.3

**Tuesday 18 April**  Po. I.4

**Thursday 20 April**  Po. I.5–6— **writing assignment 3 due**

**Tuesday 25 April**  Po. II (Janko, tr. pp. 44–55)

**Thursday 27 April**  I’ll be at the Central APA meeting (Chicago).

*There are two films we must see or read:  *Oedipus Tyrannos* and *Adaptation.*

**Evaluation:**  All students are expected to be prepared to discuss the readings in every class period. The readings are brief but dense. Each student will sign up for two oral presentations during the semester. In addition, everyone will submit writing assignments 1–3 (though the 3rd for term paper writers will be a literature review and abstract). Undergraduate students who miss more than three classes or who fail to submit one of the five assignments must take a comprehensive final exam in lieu of the term paper. Half the grade in the course will be the average of the five grades (two oral plus three written); half will be the term paper or final. Students missing one or more of the five grades must take the final exam, the grade on which will replace grades of 0, making the final worth more than 50%. Students who write the term paper can use it to replace any lower, earlier grade except 0.

**Policies:**
Preparation for class: read the assigned passage as many times as it takes to understand the material, and always read the commentary as well as the passage. It usually helps to look at secondary sources although those are provided primarily to aid research for term papers. Write something: questions, comments, a diagram of an argument, objections, elaborations, assumptions, implications —something that will make you more likely to participate in discussion.

During class discussions: Be civil. If you find yourself hogging the conversation, ask questions of your classmates to take the spotlight off yourself. The best discussions are ones that bounce around the room instead of ping-ponging back and forth from me all the time. Don’t hesitate to tell me to lower my voice or that I’m talking too much. Please help me notice when class time is over.

Make-ups: Oral presentations must be made when scheduled, not when the class has moved on. The final exam serves as a do-all make-up, your insurer of last resort. In the event of illness or other emergency circumstances, a written assignment may be turned in within 48 hours of when it was due.

Office hours: I keep office hours from long practice, warning you in advance if I anticipate some unusual commitment that will keep me away; but I enjoy my office hours when students visit, so please don’t hesitate to drop in. If the posted hours are inconvenient, please make an appointment with me by phone or e-mail.

Your own work: Do not submit for credit in this course any work completed for another course; and do not submit work that is not your own. A zero received for failure to cite your sources cannot be overcome by taking the final exam. You are strongly encouraged to study, discuss, and dispute with others everything we do in this course. Over the years, students who have performed best are those who meet together outside of class and share their written work.