

Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics

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Course Description

Philosophy was not a “discipline” to Aristotle. It was a way of life and a way of understanding life. In his work, *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle tackles the subject of Ethics not as a project of abstract reflection, but as a study on how to be happy. Aristotle argues that human happiness hinges on whether we can acquire virtue. This course will examine Aristotle's theories regarding human nature, the meaning of goodness, and the virtues necessary for happiness. The class will proceed through each of the ten books of the *Ethics* with an eye on how his philosophy works and why it is that so many great Christian thinkers have taken it as a starting point for ethical reflection.

Course Format

The format of the course will be predominantly one of guided discussion. The instructor will often be doing most of the talking, but generally to illuminate and draw out themes from the text for discussion, rather than in lectures. Thus, students will be expected to come having read and engaged with the text selection for the week, and with thoughts and questions prepared to contribute.

Classes will meet via Zoom for one hour each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Additional student participation and instructor interaction can take place on our private Davenant Commons discussion board.

Course Objectives

Objectives for this course include: (1) to grasp the essential meaning of Aristotle's Ethics; (2) to understand how and why Christian theology incorporates, critiques and otherwise interacts with Aristotle's thought; (3) to explore the particular understanding the early reformed movement had of Aristotle.

Course Requirements

1. Weekly readings (due before our meeting each week).
2. Weekly interaction with fellow participants and the instructor in live class sessions.

Additional Recommended Course Elements:

1. Weekly submissions of reactions to/questions about the readings.
2. Participation on the course discussion board on Davenant Commons.
3. Following along with Vermigli's Commentary on the Ethics.

Course Texts

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. trans Ostwald. Prentice Hall, 1999.

Vermigli, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*. Davenant Press (this text provided to you upon registration).

Course Schedule

Wee k	Dates	Discussion Topics	Reading
1	2/2-8	The Good and the <i>Human</i> Good	Ethics Book 1
2	2/9-15	Virtue, Habit, and the Golden Mean	Ethics Book 2
3	2/16-22	Action, Will, and Thought	Ethics Book 3
4	2/23-29	Virtue with an eye on desire	Ethics Book 4
5	3/1-7	Justice	Ethics Book 5
6	3/8-14	Wisdom's relationship to Prudence	Ethics Book 6
7	3/15-21	Morality, strong and weak	Ethics Book 7

8	3/22-28	Friendship Defined	Ethics Book 8
9	3/29-4/4	Friendship Explored	Ethics Book 9
10	4/5-11	Reality, Philosophy, and Pleasure	Ethics Book 10