

Aristotle to Pico (Fall 2019)

The in-class, open-book exam will consist of four brief essays, each chosen from some larger group. Along with the primary texts, you may also use one sheet of notes during the exam.

1. What is “**being qua being**” for Aristotle? What does he mean by primary and secondary substances, and primary and secondary accidents? How are they distinguished and why is this important? What does it mean to say that being, for Aristotle, has *pros hen* (or “focal”) homonymy?
2. Describe and give examples of Aristotle’s **four causes**. How did Aristotle view the historical emergence of these explanatory models? What were they used to explain?
3. What is **science**, for Aristotle? How does he understand deduction and demonstration? What role does induction play?
4. What is **hylomorphism**? How is this related to Aristotle’s discussion of actuality and potentiality? Be sure to discuss prime matter and pure actuality.
5. What is Aristotle’s account of **change**, and how does he compare his account of change with that of his predecessors? What is the difference between alteration and coming-to-be? What are their points of agreement and disagreement?
6. What is a **soul**, for Aristotle? What kinds are there?
7. Aristotle on the **Good** and **Human Virtue**: Be able to describe Aristotle’s understanding of the good and the highest good, of happiness, the function of human beings, the parts of the human soul, the role of virtue and the difference between moral and intellectual virtue, the doctrine of the mean, and human flourishing.
8. How does Aristotle distinguish between voluntary and involuntary **actions**?
9. Describe Epicurean **atomism**. How does it differ from that of Democritus?
10. Compare and contrast Epicurean and Stoic philosophy in general.
11. What is “**the good life**” and how do I attain it? How would Aristotle, Epicurus, and Epictetus answer this?
12. Describe the account of **sensible knowledge** (e.g., noting the presence of a nearby dog) given by Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus.
13. Compare and contrast **Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Neo-Platonism** – i.e., how are they similar and how are they different?
14. How does Aquinas understand **creation and God’s relation to creation**?
15. What is the **problem of universals**, and why was it important? Be able to describe the problem and the possible solutions.
16. Be able to discuss the relationship between **faith and reason**, as understood by Averroes (Ibn-Rushd), Aquinas, and Ockham.
17. What is **negative theology**? Which arguments support this?
18. Discuss the concepts of knowledge, personal survival, and the Agent Intellect for **Avicenna** (Ibn-Sina).
19. How does Aquinas argue against “those who say that the existence of God, being self-evident cannot be demonstrated”?
20. Be able to describe and critique Anselm’s and Aquinas’s attempts to prove **God’s existence**.

21. Why does **Ockham** emphasize divine omnipotence, and what does this omnipotence imply?
22. What is **Pico** della Mirandola's understanding of the place and status of human beings?