

Teaching Philosophy



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TZIPORAH KASACHKOFF AND EUGENE KELLY, CO-EDITORS

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LETTERS FROM THE EDITORS

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In this fall 2022 issue of the *APA Studies on Teaching Philosophy* (formerly the *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy*) we present to readers one article, a review of the newly translated Aristotle work, *Da Caelo*, and a poem.

The article, by Professor Mitchell-Yellin, is entitled "Generating Ownership of Learning and Community in the Classroom Through an Interconnected Sequence of Assignments." As the title indicates, Professor Mitchell-Yellin argues that we can help students come to truly understand and fully appreciate the philosophical significance of the positions presented in the course by having the students engage in various classroom assignments, some in conjunction with fellow classmates and some in competition with other classmates. Helpfully, Professor Mitchell-Yellin not only presents detailed descriptions of some of the assignments that he himself has given in his classroom but offers readers general samples of these assignments so that readers might apply his methods to undergraduate philosophy courses of their own choosing.

The book review that we present in this issue is by Thomas Moody and is of C. D. C. Reeve's new translation of Aristotle's *De Caelo* accompanied by Reeve's Introduction and Notes. Given that until the mid-seventeenth century the views expressed by Aristotle in *De Caelo* had extensive influence on Western thinking about our place in the universe, it is most welcome to now have Reeve's English translation of this important book. (The last complete translation of *De Caelo*, by W. K. C. Guthrie, appeared in 1939.)

To conclude this issue, we have the pleasure of presenting Rich Eva's poem, "Thinking Time."

As always, we encourage readers of our publication to write of their own experiences as teachers—whether as constructors of philosophy syllabi for their classes, as promoters of classroom discussion, as examiners of what students have learned, or of anything else that might interest and be helpful to fellow teachers of our subject.

Additionally, we encourage readers to write articles that respond to, comment on, or take issue with any of the material that appears within our pages.

Eugene Kelly

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We welcome our readers to the fall 2022 edition of the newly renamed *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy*, now called *APA Studies in the Teaching of Philosophy*. We offer in this edition one article, a review, and a poem.

Professor Mitchell-Yellin's concept of the ownership of learning surprised some of our reviewers. Does it mean mastering some given body of knowledge? Mastery is, after all, a kind of ownership. Such an interpretation would have its own problems: What is it to master philosophy, and how does a person recognize herself or someone else as having the skills of a master philosopher? The author's interpretation of the term takes in a large swath of what teachers recognize as central to philosophy teaching. For students to take ownership of their learning, they must be self-motivated to learn, able to set specific goals for themselves, able to build their confidence through teamwork with their peers, and capable of metacognition and persistence. If these conditions are met, we are told, students become invested in what they are learning, know why they are learning it, how they are learning it, and how well they are learning it. Professor Mitchell-Yellin's paper presents an account of a complexly structured course with these ends in view. Students are organized as "teams," each having learning goals, and are encouraged to achieve those goals through cooperation with their teammates and a certain measure of competition with the other teams. He concludes his paper with student handouts that convey the general rules they must follow as they learn but from which has been abstracted any specific content. Readers may therefore adapt and apply the general structure of the course to whatever standard undergraduate philosophy courses they may be teaching.

We encourage our readers to suggest themselves as reviewers of books and other material (including technological innovations) that they think may be especially good for classroom use. Reviewers are welcome to suggest material for review that they have used in the classroom and found useful. However, please remember that our publication is devoted to pedagogy and not to theoretical discussions of philosophical issues. This should be borne in mind not only when writing articles for our publication but also when reviewing material for our publication.

Those of our readers who would like to write of their experience as teachers for our publication are welcome to do so. We are also glad to consider articles that respond,

comment on, or take issue with any of the material that appears within our pages.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All papers should be sent to the editors electronically. The author's name, the title of the paper and full mailing address should appear on a separate page. *Nothing that identifies the author or his or her institution should appear in the body or the footnotes of the paper.* The title of the paper should appear on the top of the paper itself.

Authors should adhere to the production guidelines that are available from the APA. For example, in writing your paper to disk, *please do not use your word processor's footnote or endnote function; all notes must be added manually at the end of the paper.* This rule is extremely important, for it makes formatting the papers for publication much easier.

All articles submitted to *APA Studies* undergo anonymous review by the members of the editorial committee:

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ARTICLE

Generating Ownership of Learning and Community in the Classroom through an Interconnected Sequence of Assignments

Benjamin Mitchell-Yellin
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Here I describe a course structure I've been developing and refining over the past several years that has engendered robust student ownership of learning in my classes and, as a result, promoted collaborative, engaged classrooms and increased student success. My plan is to describe

the course structure, explain some of the key motivations behind the various interlocking elements, and share some anecdotal evidence of its effectiveness as well as comments about modifications and challenges. My aim is to share with others something that has worked incredibly well for me and my students; my hope is that something in here will work for you and your students.

I will be describing the course structure as it has applied to my own face-to-face courses, so I'll begin with some brief comments about context. I regularly teach several writing-enhanced philosophy courses at Sam Houston State University, a regional state university about an hour north of Houston, in Huntsville, TX. Some of these courses are upper-division, such as Philosophy of Crime & Justice and Philosophy of Death & Dying, while others are lower-level core curriculum courses, such as Contemporary Moral Issues and Introduction to Philosophy. All these courses have caps of thirty-five students, though the upper-division courses often have enrollments of around twenty-five students. None of these courses requires or presumes previous coursework in philosophy, and the students come from a wide variety of majors. My Crime & Justice course, for instance, is cross-listed with a Philosophy section and a Criminal Justice (CJ) section and serves mainly as a writing-enhanced, upper-division elective for CJ students. We cover philosophical concepts and methodology, but it's aptly thought of as an applied philosophy course, as opposed to a course intended to introduce students to the discipline, such as Introduction to Philosophy. I typically teach these courses on a MWF schedule, where we meet for fifty-minute sessions each day, but I have taught them on a TTH schedule with seventy-five-minute sessions. My classrooms reflect my university's demographics more broadly: majority first-generation, majority woman-identifying, majority identifying as members of races/ethnicities underrepresented in philosophy, many students coming straight out of high school and also many returning to their education after some time off, and almost everyone working full time in addition to taking a heavy course load and having various family obligations. My students are, overall, great! They're intellectually curious and hungry to learn. When things go well, they feed off each other's enthusiasm; the rising tide really can lift all boats. My aim in designing this course structure has been to leverage my students' curiosity and enthusiasm to benefit their learning.

Most courses have several learning objectives. In philosophy courses, in particular, these typically involve some mix of identifying arguments in often difficult texts, critically assessing those arguments, and communicating all of this orally and in writing. Anyone who has taught philosophy knows this is a tall order—and not just for introductory students. As many of us have discovered, the development of these overlapping skills often goes more smoothly when the subject matter is gripping. A spoonful of interest helps the argument go down. It goes down even more smoothly when the audience—the ones for whom you're articulating the arguments and voicing the critiques—is made up of one's student-peers. And the real magic happens when the (primary) goal is not a high grade, but rather making sure you don't let down your classmates or yourself.

The trick is to structure classes so students step up to the plate, not because they have to, but because they want to. As with so much else that goes into teaching a good course, one key to pulling off the trick is to have a clear structure that is appropriately attuned to relevant goals. Students need to know what you're asking them to do and why you're asking them to do it. And the reason should never be simply because that's what the rubric requires. You want your students to take ownership of their learning. This involves self-motivation, goal-setting, confidence-building, metacognition, and persistence.¹ It pushes the envelope at the intersection of active learning—where knowledge is attained through participation and contribution,² where students are “doing things and thinking about what they are doing”³—and student-centered learning—where students have some control over the content, manner, and pace of learning.⁴ A class that engenders student ownership of learning is one in which students are invested in what they're learning, why they're learning it, how they're learning it, and how well they're learning it.

This article seeks to describe one way of facilitating all of this that centers, in particular, on the intentional construction of an intellectual community of peers. I will describe a way of structuring a philosophy course that provides students with the freedom to pursue their own interests, asks them to be accountable to each other, and provides them with a range of activities and assignments that serve familiar learning objectives.

The first step is to split the class into three “teams.” I suggest posting the team assignments on the class site (my university uses Blackboard as its web-based instructional platform, and I use this as the course site) as well as sending it out to students through a mass email and/or announcement. The idea is to have the same number of students on each team (or roughly the same number, since some class sizes don't divide evenly by three), to have rough equality between teams in terms of demographics (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, major, standing, etc.), and to have rough equality in terms of personality (e.g., talkativeness, shyness, etc.). Since the groupings are not random and it takes some time to get to know students in all these respects, I have found it best to wait until a few weeks into the course to create the teams. This has the added benefits of allowing all students in the class to get some basic course material under their belts and of creating a cohesive classroom atmosphere. Basic trust and understanding will be important underpinnings of the rotating activities these teams will go on to perform.

The second step is to distribute clear descriptions of the three assignments students will perform as members of their teams. Again, I suggest posting these to the course site and sending them out electronically to all students. (Passing out printed copies is good, but electronic copies are less wasteful and harder to lose.) Typically, I include short descriptions of the assignments in the course syllabus, along with a schedule that lists their due dates. The separately distributed descriptions, however, give much more detail, including clear grading criteria (see appendix for samples). I also typically spend most or all of a class period walking through the three assignment

descriptions with the entire class, making sure students have time to ask questions. And I explain that all students will complete each assignment, since the teams rotate through them. Every student is invested in learning the details of each assignment, even though not all students will complete them in the same order.

The three assignments are (1) the *supplementary readings* assignment, (2) the *in-class debate*, and (3) the *position paper*. It's possible to use just one or two of them in a class, but the combination of all three is designed to enhance peer accountability and class cohesiveness; it also provides students with a scaffolded series of lower-stakes assignments that introduce them to the elements that go into writing a polished research paper of the sort that is often a staple of, especially, upper-division philosophy courses. Indeed, this sequence of assignments can be coupled with a final term paper, making explicit to students that the earlier assignments are preparation for the later one. The discrete assignments in the sequence can also work on their own, independently of the others—though, I'll say something below about limits to this. Flexibility is the theme. Here, I'll describe each assignment in some detail and as part of an interconnected sequence. But all of this really is ripe for modification.

(1) The *supplementary readings* assignment asks students to find two readings from outside the course syllabus on the topic of that unit and then distribute and summarize them, both orally and in writing, for their classmates. The objectives for this assignment include learning how to find appropriate scholarly sources, identify the author's thesis and argument, write an article summary that resembles an academic abstract, orally communicate the main ideas to an interested peer, and confidently answer questions. The assignment requires research and writing time outside of class, as well as participation in a highly engaging in-class activity. Depending on how prepared one's students are, it may be important to provide them with explicit instruction on how to find scholarly resources. At the very least, I suggest requiring that students clear their resources with you before distributing them to the class. This step allows for targeted instruction on how to conduct research for those who need it. And it's essential that students be provided with examples of the sort of write-up you're asking them to produce. As I go on to mention below, I do this by providing them with write-ups in this style for the readings I have chosen to assign to the class, which I call “core readings.”

Here is an example of how this might go. In my Contemporary Moral Issues course, we might have a unit on the permissibility of vaccine mandates. For the first two weeks of the unit, I provide the class with some core readings on the topic (e.g., the chapter on immunity passports from Bramble's *Pandemic Ethics*), which we all read and discuss together. This provides us with a common foundation. Then, those students in the group of students completing this assignment, call them Team A, find two readings that are both distinct from the core readings and also distinct from each other's. They can find op-eds, scholarly articles, and so on, just so long as they address the ethics of vaccine mandates. Members of Team A must

clear their proposed supplementary readings with me by a certain date, so I can make sure none of them duplicates each other's and also that they are all appropriate (e.g., on topic and from a reputable source). They are also asked to produce a short, structured summary of each of their readings and print a copy of each summary for each member of the class, including me. (The printed copies are important, as they allow their classmates to make notes during the presentation activity.) I provide examples of these summaries for each core reading, and the specifics of the structure are included in the assignment description and rubric (see appendix). On a particular class day listed on the syllabus schedule, students come prepared to distribute their summaries to their classmates in a very lively manner that leverages short, repeated interactions with a rotating cast of people.

Here's how that looks. Before class begins, students in Team A are to email their readings to the entire class (typically, we use the email all users function on Blackboard for this.) When the students show up to class on sharing day, the desks in the room are arranged such that there is a circle of "pods," with each pod consisting of one desk facing two others. The presenters sit in the single desk, and their classmates (those on the debate and paper teams, Team B and Team C) pair up. Each pair then travels around to each group of three desks to hear a short pitch from each presenter. The activity is highly structured and timed. For each segment, the presenter has one minute to pitch the two readings they've found to classmates. Since the classmates that are being addressed are themselves preparing to either engage in a debate or write a short paper on the topic, they are motivated to find resources to help them in their own assignments. Calling this a "pitch" gamifies the activity a bit, suggesting that the presenters are eager to have their readings included as sources in the papers and debate. And it works! Students are often very excited to see their classmates using the readings they've provided in the debate and paper assignments; sometimes, students even compete with each other to see whose readings are used more by their classmates in the debate. After the pitch, the paper writers/debaters have two minutes to ask questions about the readings—such as whether they are for or against mandates, whether their arguments are convincing, etc. I keep time for the class, and after the pitch and Q&A are through, the traveling pairs switch to the next pod. (Typically, I have them travel clockwise around the circle, so there's a clear pattern and no one gets confused.) We repeat this until every traveling pair has had a chance to talk with every presenter.

There are a number of benefits that come from this activity. All of the students in the class have the chance to meet each other in small groups, really learn each other's names, and get a chance to interact in a manner that fosters familiarity and facilitates dialogue throughout the rest of the term. There are several added benefits for those on Team A. Through repetition, students gain confidence in their ability to succinctly summarize their readings. One minute goes by fast. But they get repeated practice, and they can see their improvement. Typically, the students present ten or eleven times during one class period, and there is often a break time during the session, where they

have no one at their pod for one of the rotations. This is a great time to check in with the students and ask how it's going, prompting them to explicitly reflect on the exercise. They also gain confidence speaking with their classmates. They learn they can answer questions and come to see themselves as experts on the readings they're presenting. This helps them gain confidence to ask questions during the debate, provide feedback during the essay workshop (more on this soon), and even chime in more during whole-class discussions on this and other topics. Finally, this activity helps to bring the entire class together. It's a class meeting during which I, the instructor, say almost nothing while my students talk constantly. I have found that our class sessions take on a different character after our first time going through this activity. They become more lively, previously quiet students speak up more, they all know each other's names, and they look to me much less to carry on dialogue, feeling more comfortable in their own ability to do so.

(2) The *in-class debate* typically follows the supplementary readings assignment after we have met a few times as a class to integrate the fruits of our classmates' research into our discussions of that unit's topic. Students are instructed to use only the sources provided to them in this class (i.e., my core readings and their classmates' supplementary readings) in preparing for the debate. I intentionally wait until one or two class periods before the debate is scheduled to take place to let members of Team B know which side of the debate they'll be on. Continuing with the vaccinations example, I split the students on Team B into two sides: (a) vaccine mandates are impermissible or (b) vaccine mandates are permissible. Since they don't know until late in the unit which side they'll be on, all students on Team B will have prepared some arguments for *both* sides. This helps them to sympathetically inhabit the opposing point of view. But it's also important that they have some time in class to prepare for the debate, exchange contact information, and formulate a plan to meet outside of class to prepare some more. Students are to come to class on debate day prepared to begin right away, as the debate itself takes the entire class period.

The description of the assignment posted to the course site (see appendix) has clear instructions regarding the format the debate will take, including descriptions of the formal speaking roles (e.g., opener, interrogator, respondent, closer) and comments about how students who do not perform one of these roles can earn full credit on the assignment (e.g., take notes and confer with the team during conference periods). Each student is evaluated individually, and though the members of Team A and Team C will each vote on a winner, this does not factor into anyone's individual grade on the assignment. I also leave plenty of time towards the end of the debate for the audience to ask questions. This is always the liveliest part, and it increases the sense of accountability of each student to another. I've seen folks get called out for misrepresenting one of their classmates' supplementary readings! Towards the end of class, I pass out ballots on which members of the audience indicate which side they think won the debate and why. I then have a volunteer tally the votes on the whiteboard. The justifications students give for their votes are an important

aspect of the exercise, and I always point out that many students state that they voted against their own opinion because the other side had the better arguments.

The objectives for this assignment include improving (i) one's skill at working on a team; (ii) succinct oral communication of ideas and arguments; (iii) anticipation of objections and impromptu responses to them; and (iv) sympathetic understanding of opposing points of view. Many of these same skills are required to write a good position paper or final essay, but embedding one's practice in the context of an engaging team competition, such as a debate, can lead to less anxiety and increased peer-to-peer engagement with each other as resources. The result is often greater personal growth and learning through a structured collaborative activity.

(3) The *position paper* is perhaps the one of these three assignments that is most familiar to philosophy instructors (though debates are also a disciplinary mainstay). The assignment is to write a four- or five-page paper arguing, essentially, for one side of the debate over the other. Students are to argue for a thesis that takes a stand on the topic of that unit (e.g., whether vaccine mandates are morally permissible). I require that students consider at least one objection and respond to it, and they can only use sources from the core and supplementary readings. It is a nice capstone assignment for the unit, and I typically set a due date of a few days after the debate. The objectives for this assignment include improving (i) one's skill at succinct written communication of ideas and arguments; (ii) anticipation of objections and responses to them; (iii) sympathetic understanding of opposing points of view; and (iv) execution of citation practices and other elements of formal academic writing.

One important part of the position paper assignment is the essay workshop that occurs, typically, one or two class periods before the due date. The workshop serves two important functions, in addition to allowing members of Team C to receive feedback. The first is that it affords an opportunity to clearly demonstrate to students that writing is a process. Members of Team C are required to come to the essay workshop with an outline of their essay. Since an outline is not the same as a rough draft, students get a concrete demonstration of discrete stages in the process of writing a paper; requiring students to construct an outline also scaffolds the assignment in a manner that precludes them banging out their papers the night before they're due. During the in-class workshop, they engage in a number of activities individually and in a small group (e.g., a one-minute summary of their thesis and argument, a brainstorming session on potential objections, drafting and sharing aloud an introductory paragraph). The groups typically include one member from each team, and this serves the second function of creating an atmosphere of teamwork and collaboration among members of the class. Those students who found supplementary readings and debated on the topic provide feedback on the work of those crafting written defenses of one or the other position. This benefits the members of Team C, as the students on that team get a range of peer feedback on their ideas, the structure of their papers, writing mechanics, etc. It also

benefits the members of Teams A and B. They improve their own skill set as writers by providing feedback to those of their peers who are completing the writing assignment.

Once members of Team C turn in their papers, they receive written feedback from me. Some of this is summative, including both comments and scores on a rubric. But this is also an opportunity for formative feedback, especially as it comes to their ideas. And this brings me to a final comment about this sequence of assignments. They are interconnected in a manner that helps students to appreciate the relationship between (1) research, (2) dialogue, and (3) writing. By assigning different groups of students to perform these different tasks all on the same topic, the stakes for any particular student are lowered for that unit. I'm not throwing them in the deep end and asking them to research, rehearse, and write a paper on the topic of that unit. Instead, I'm asking them to perform one of these functions. And the neat trick is that by distributing the workload in this way, I'm asking the class as a whole to collaborate. Team A is doing the research, Team B the dialogue, and Team C the writing. Then, for the next unit, they rotate roles. And they do so again for a third unit. By the end of the term, everyone has had a chance to perform each role. For lower-level courses, I often leave it at this. For upper-division courses, I may ask each of them to pull it all together and write a thought-out research paper as a capstone assignment. Of course, this assignment sequence is compatible, also, with a final exam or experiential capstone project to round out the term (e.g., one could pair it with a service-learning project that asks students to engage with community members outside of the classroom and university).

I'll close with some brief reflections on benefits and challenges I've experienced in classes where I've utilized this sequence of assignments. I'll begin with the benefits, which run along a number of dimensions. For one, it has increased student engagement and student ownership of learning. This has led to improved class discussion—more people speaking more often and at greater depth—as well as improved written work. It is also evident that students enjoy the collaborative atmosphere this creates in the classroom; many of them have said so in their course evaluations. Once we get through the first supplementary readings presentation, the tenor of the class noticeably changes. More people show up more of the time excited to learn together. They feel like they don't want to let their classmates down, so they do more of the reading ahead of time. In general, they take ownership of the class and their own learning, and they support each other in ways big and small. It can seem like a lot of work, especially up front, to set up a sequence of interconnected assignments like this. But it's well worth the effort.

And that leads me to two challenges worth reflecting on, especially as you think about the suitability of something like this for your own courses. One challenge is that it takes some time to get a handle on how this is supposed to go. Students aren't sure what to expect, and they end up feeling much more at home once they've been through a round of supplementary readings, debate, and position paper. This can be a teachable moment, where I point

out their growth to them. But it can also be a source of frustration, especially for those students in Team C, who write the position paper in the first go-round. I've had students tell me that they wished they'd been able to write their papers in the second or third round, because they felt more prepared after seeing how things went. Oftentimes, they're voicing frustration about their grade; they feel they would've scored higher had they been assigned to a different team. This raises issues of fairness.

There are two things to say in response. One is that, in my experience, students tend to score higher on all three of these assignments in the second and third rounds. So, it's not as if members of Team C are uniquely disadvantaged. But since I often make the position paper worth a bit more than the debate or supplementary readings assignments, concerns about fairness remain. This brings me to a second point, which is that, in my experience, students tend to score highest on the debate assignment. And this is especially true for high-achieving and highly motivated students who didn't do as well as they'd hoped on the position paper. The end result is that they tend to "make up points" on the debate assignment (and, to a lesser extent, the supplementary readings assignment, too).

One way to obviate these concerns about fairness is to structure the course so that students are split into two teams, where Team A does the supplementary readings assignment and Team B the debate assignment, and then they switch. The position paper assignment may then be assigned either as a capstone for the course, say, in finals week, or it may be that students can choose whether to write a position paper on unit 1 or on unit 2, but they must choose one. Either way, all students complete each of the three assignments, just not in the rotating fashion I've been describing. This has the advantage of making it so that no students are assigned a position paper at a time when they feel it may be unfair to have them complete it. But there is a trade-off involved. One key benefit of the course structure I've described is that it promotes student ownership of and collaboration in producing and sharing knowledge. The entire class comes to function as a team; they are all helping each other learn. It's a special dynamic fed by the fact that each is playing a different role in relation to others' exploration of a shared topic. In my experience, this dynamic is more robust when the course is structured around all three assignments, but it can work when just two are involved (something I've done several times, mostly in upper-division courses). It's difficult, though, to develop the same sense of intellectual community when just one of these assignments is used in a class. This is something to keep in mind as you think of potential ways to adapt this course structure for your own purposes.

My hope is that by describing this sequence of assignments I have provided you with some food for thought. Perhaps you've found something in here that is directly applicable to your own courses; perhaps you've found a useful tidbit or two among other elements that won't work for you; or perhaps, though nothing described here will translate directly to your own teaching, it has generated some thoughts about ways your own assignments can evolve. For what it's worth, this way of structuring a course is a result

of trial and (repeated) error. I don't do things the same way each time and in every course. I hope you feel motivated to try some of this out and that it works well for you too.

NOTES

1. David T. Conley and Elizabeth M. French, "Student Ownership of Learning as a Key Component of College Readiness," *American Behavioral Scientist* 58, no. 8 (2014): 1018–34.
2. John W. Collins III and Nancy Patricia O'Brien, eds., *Greenwood Dictionary of Education* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2003), 5.
3. Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison, *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports (Washington, DC: School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University, 1991), iii.
4. Collins and O'Brien, *Greenwood Dictionary of Education*, 338–39.

Appendix

(1) SUPPLEMENTARY READING WRITE-UPS RUBRIC

You will find *two* outside readings and provide a one-paragraph write-up to the class for each one—due by the beginning of class on the due date in the schedule.

Finding your materials: The readings must be cleared with me first, and the process is first come first served (i.e., if two people propose to provide the same reading, I will give preference to the one who contacted me first). In order to propose a reading, you need to email me a *link* to the reading (e.g., for web articles) or attach a *pdf* (e.g., for journal articles or print magazine articles/book chapters). I will respond as soon as I can.

Some research tips: You may want to chase down footnotes from our core readings or search for pieces that cite them. You may also want to look for other pieces by these same authors.

When searching for appropriate readings, you may want to utilize scholarly databases (e.g., the SHSU library's article database) or else restrict your search (i.e., on Google) to scholarly articles on the relevant topic.

Reasons your proposal of a reading may be denied: I will be looking for scholarly comments on the relevant topics we are discussing in class. Thus, personal opinion pieces (e.g., blog posts) by nonexperts are not suitable. Neither are pieces with inflammatory language or without any argument whatsoever (even if these are written by experts!). Also, if you are not the first person to propose the reading, then you will need to find something else.

Length: Your supplementary readings need to be substantive enough to contribute to our investigation of the topic, but they also need to be short enough for others to profitably read them in conjunction with the other supplementary readings. Thus, I think a reasonable target is anywhere from approx. 800–10,000 words (approx. 3–30 pages).

Write-ups: You must produce ONE paragraph on each supplementary reading you provide. Your paragraph must contain the following:

- (1) Full bibliographic information in Chicago Style (see here: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). (2 points)
- (2) A single sentence stating the main thesis of the article (e.g., the conclusion of the argument the author is making). (3 points)
- (3) The main reasons the author gives in support of her/his thesis (e.g., the premises of her/his argument). (5 points)

Disseminating your materials: You need to provide each member of class with (i) a printed copy of each reading and (ii) a single page that contains both of your write-ups.

(2) DEBATE RUBRIC

As one of your graded assignments in this course, you will participate in a *50-minute in-class debate*. What follows is a description of the structure of that debate, the roles that need to be assigned for each side, and grading criteria for each individual completing the assignment.

Note: It may be a good idea for the debate teams to plan a meeting outside of class time to determine who will be playing which roles and so on. If a meeting is not possible, then an online chat may be a good idea. Please let me know if you need assistance.

Structure: The debate time will be structured as follows—time limits will be strictly enforced.

Team 1: *Opener* presents Team 1's opening argument. (3 min. max)

Team 2: *Opener* presents Team 2's opening argument. (3 min. max)

Two-minute break for both teams to prepare

Team 2: *Examiner* asks critical questions of Team 1. (2 min. max)

Team 1: Team can confer together and then *Respondent* answers for the team. (5 min. max)

Team 1: *Examiner* asks critical questions of Team 2. (2 min. max)

Team 2: Team can confer together and then *Respondent* answers for the team. (5 min. max)

Team 1: *Closer* presents Team 1's closing arguments. (4 min. max)

Team 2: *Closer* presents Team 2's closing arguments. (4 min. max)

Open question period: The class, professor, and either team can ask questions of either side; anyone on the team may respond. (10 min. max)

Determining the winner: Those students not on Team 1 or Team 2 will vote on the winner. (8 min. max) (*No one's grade will be affected by the outcome of this vote.*)

Roles: As you can see from the above, there are *four* distinct roles on each debate team.

Opener: This person will provide the opening argument for the team. This will consist in (a) a *clear statement* of the team's position on the relevant topic (e.g., the retributive model is preferable to the restorative model) and (b) one or more *arguments* in support of this position.

Examiner: This person will ask *specific questions* (at least *two*, preferably more) of the other team in response to their opening argument. These questions should target identifiable claims made by the other team and present critical challenges to these claims (e.g., "You say that the restorative justice conference has the potential to further harm victims, but why think this burden outweighs the benefits of this model?").

Respondent: This person will respond on behalf of their team to the questions asked by the opposing side's Examiner. These responses *must* target the questions asked, and the Respondent should try to cover all of the questions asked in the time allotted (this will require some discipline!).

Closer: This person will provide the closing argument for the team. This will consist in (a) a *clear restatement* of the team's position on the relevant topic, (b) a summary of the team's main argument for that position, (c) a recap of the team's rebuttal to the most serious objections offered by the other team (and audience).

Participation: As you can see, not everyone on the debate team will be playing a speaking role during the debate (though those who are not in one of the four speaking roles may speak up during the open question period). Thus, participation points will be awarded for things other than speaking during the actual debate. Some examples are as follows:

- You may show that you are participating by taking notes for the Respondent and Closer during the debate.
- You may actively engage in planning the team's deliberations during the break.
- You may actively participate during the Q&A by answering audience questions.

Grading: Each person will receive an individual grade on the assignment, out of a possible 20 points. The criteria will depend on what role, if any, they play. Grades will be posted to the Bb gradebook. *There is no way to make-up this assignment. An unexcused absence on your debate day*

will result in a zero for the assignment. Excused absences, after discussion with and at the discretion of the instructor, may result in alternative assignments.

(3) POSITION PAPER RUBRIC (CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES VERSION)

Assignment: Your paper should be between 4–5 pages (no shorter, no longer), double spaced, 12-point font. It may use any or all sources from the core and supplementary readings for this unit. Reference and/or title pages don't count towards the max/min page count.

Your paper should contain the following:

- (1) An introductory paragraph that summarizes the argument to come in approx. 2–3 sentences. (/2 points)
- (2) A concluding paragraph that summarizes the argument that preceded it in approx. 2–3 sentences. (/2 points)
- (3) An argument for a particular moral thesis related to the course topic (e.g., an argument for a claim of the form 'X is wrong' or 'X is permissible'). This will include (a) a clear conclusion and (b) a line of reasoning in support of that conclusion. (/12 points)
- (4) At least one objection to this argument. (/5 points)
- (5) At least one response to this objection. (/5 points)
- (6) A list of references taken *only* from the core course readings or the supplementary course readings (in Chicago Style: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) (/4 points)

Total points: /30

BOOK REVIEW

De Caelo

Aristotle. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Co., 2020).

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De Caelo is a 2020 entry in the New Hackett Aristotle series, translated by C. D. C. Reeve, which aims to enable "Anglophone readers to study Aristotle's work in a way previously not possible" (Hackett Publishing, back cover). On the whole, Reeve achieves this goal in this translation, and the text is a worthy adoption for any reader of *De Caelo*.

Reeve's translation of *De Caelo* comprises an introduction (37 pages); the translation itself (pp. 1–91) with superscript numerals indicating the corresponding notes; a

comprehensive Notes section (pp. 92–242); an appendix with an excerpt of Plato's *Timaeus* (pp. 243–53); and a thorough index (pp. 256–67). The translation includes both traditional sets of divisions of Aristotle: book-chapter divisions on the inside header and Bekker numbers on the outside header. In-line Bekker numbers are printed continuously on the outside of the text. As a minor criticism, the decision to print the letters in Bekker numbers as superscripts, e.g., 268^a1 rather than 268a1, sometimes makes passages rather difficult to locate. Otherwise, all commentary and discussion is limited to the Notes section, which leaves a clean, readable presentation of Aristotle's text in the main body of the work.

In evaluating this edition, it is worth considering who is likely to read this work, and Reeve does so in his Preface. *De Caelo* is an unlikely starting point in the study of Aristotle, and Reeve is right therefore to serve "the resolute reader that Aristotle most repays" (Reeve, xi). At the same time, the book's lucid organization should not scare off any reader and makes the text readily usable. In fact, this translation should increase the appeal of *De Caelo* among Anglophone readers and educators.

Reeve devotes the final six pages of his Introduction to the question of *De Caelo*'s audience. There he opens with the famous passage of *Nicomachean Ethics* which cautions that the inexperienced are not a suitable audience for an investigation of politics (1094b25–1095a4). *Metaphysics*, Reeve points out, offers a similar proviso in the case of science (995a12–16). While Aristotle makes no such comment in *De Caelo*, his reliance on arguments advanced in the *Physics* makes it clear that *De Caelo* is intended for an experienced audience. Reeve therefore acknowledges that he does not intend this translation for readers entirely new to Aristotle, but the New Hackett Aristotle series on the whole aims at a general audience, and Reeve serves such readers well.

The remainder of Reeve's Introduction (pp. xix–l), which explains the subject matter and types of argumentation employed in *De Caelo* and situates the text in the Aristotelian corpus, goes a long way to accommodating a general audience. Reeve includes generous quotations of relevant passages in other treatises and lays out the questions and assumptions that underlie the *De Caelo*. The introduction is no substitute for reading the *Physics* and other texts that come to bear in the *De Caelo*, but Reeve nonetheless acclimates his audience well enough to have a clear understanding of the ground *De Caelo* covers. Reeve's Notes likewise are not specifically aimed at the beginner but succeed in making the text's difficult passages comprehensible and citing key passages elsewhere in Aristotle and beyond.

De Caelo has been translated into English far less often than Aristotle's more popular works. Prior to Reeve's new edition for Hackett, three translations had been produced in the past century. J. L. Stocks's 1922 edition for Oxford has entered the public domain and is therefore freely available online. While scholars of Aristotle may find value in an open-source edition, however, students and readers new to the *De Caelo* will find such resources, which lack

an introduction and commentary, frustrating. The situation demonstrates why modern editions of the classics remain essential. Next came W. K. C. Guthrie's 1939 translation for the Loeb Classical Library. Like all Loeb editions, Guthrie's presents the reader with the Greek text and corresponding English translation on facing pages. Stuart Leggatt's 1995 edition for Aris and Phillips likewise provides the reader with the Greek text and facing translation. Leggatt's edition, meanwhile, contains only the first two of the *De Caelo's* four books. Leggatt justifies this division of the text because Books I and II deal more properly with cosmology while Books III and IV turn to terrestrial matters.

The use of the facing-pages translation format in both Guthrie and Leggatt again raises the question of audience. While students of Greek, or readers of Aristotle with a good command of Greek, will find these editions useful, a general audience will likely find that the Greek text (and, the case of Guthrie, accompanying notes of textual criticism) gets in the way of comprehension. Reeve, by contrast, chooses to restrict discussion of Greek to select technical terms, and even then acknowledges them only in the notes and index. Thus, for example, we read at 292a20 that "we should conceive of [stars] as participating in action and life" and are directed to note 327, which provides a thorough discussion of the Greek term *praxis*, which corresponds to "action." Without referring to the notes continuously, it can easily escape the reader's notice that "action" is a significant term. The use of asterisks could help call attention to these key terms without cluttering the pages.

One rather puzzling element of this book is the awkward way in which it incorporates an excerpt from Plato's *Timaeus* as an appendix. Throughout *De Caelo*, Aristotle refers to the *Timaeus* and offers direct critiques of its cosmology, so including relevant passages of it for comparison is a service to the reader. Reeve also points his reader to the appendix in the relevant notes. However, the omission of any contextualizing comments in the appendix itself may well leave the reader wondering why the particular passages are included and what their relationship to the *De Caelo* is. While this may be obvious to the advanced student the *De Caelo* assumes as its audience, a brief note would be helpful for Reeve's more novice readers.

At \$29 for the paperback, *De Caelo* is consistent with Hackett's affordable offerings in philosophy; Reeve's 2021 translation of *Eudemian Ethics*, for example, is priced at \$23. New copies of Guthrie and Leggatt are widely available at a similar price point and are a worthwhile purchase for those readers who want the Greek text at hand. English readers eager to engage with the entire *De Caelo*—which, I suspect, includes most students—will find the most value in this new offering from Reeve.

POEM

Thinking Time

Rich Eva

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

A question asked in ethics class;
They're champing at the bit.
To slow them down, to be profound,
I tell them, "Think, and sit."

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