

## **Scientific explanation of living beings in Aristotelian natural philosophy and biology.**

### Summary

#### Course outline:

Aristotle's biological writings offer abundant evidence for the nature of some of the most basic philosophical distinctions introduced by the Stagirite philosopher, and offer a privileged standpoint for an overview of the explanatory work they are supposed to serve. Our meetings will address four general topics: (1) What type of causes enter, according to Aristotle, into the explanation of nature entities and biological kinds in particular, (2) How does Aristotle argue for the primacy of final causes and for the thesis of natural teleology as against materialist reductionist explanations of nature, (3) How do teleological and material explanations combine in actual zoological explanations in Aristotle's *Parts of Animals*, (4) Of what use or significance aristotelian teleological explanation might be for us today. We are going to examine these issues by going through passages of Aristotle's own texts and analysing the argument he offers and the way he employs the relevant distinctions to the study of living beings.

Requirements: No prior knowledge of Aristotle's natural philosophy is required, but the students are advised to read Aristotle's *Physics* book II chapters 1 & 3 & 8, and Aristotle's *Parts of Animals* book I chapter 1, so that they can make the most of the discussion time.