**Course Description for "Aristotle on the Soul"**

In this course we will pursue a careful reading of Aristotle's *De Anima*, his treatise on the soul. The ancient Greek conception of the soul applies broadly to all living things. Aristotle's discussion thus includes the life processes of plants and animals as well as humans, and it ranges over topics which are now studied in biology and psychology as well as philosophy. But his focus is on the philosophical aspects of these processes, not their physiology; for instance, his discussion of perception is more in line with contemporary philosophical discussions than with scientific treatments of perception in biology and psychology. An important and interesting aspect of Aristotle's discussion is his view of how the human soul (or mind) differs from that of other animals. And his account of the human capacity for thinking is highly relevant to contemporary discussions of the 'mind-body problem', i.e. the relationship between the mind and the body. We will devotes a good deal of time to these topics.

Our study of the *De Anima* will follow the order of the topics covered in the treatise. (i) Book I consists of an introductory discussion of methodological questions, followed by an extended critique of the views of Aristotle's predecessors regarding the nature of the soul; we will spend a couple of meetings on Book I. (ii) Aristotle begins Book II with his own account of the nature of the soul and its principal parts, and then turns to an extensive discussion of sense perception and the five sense modalities (vision, hearing, smell, touch and taste); we will spend 3 meetings on this material. (iii) Book III (the final book) is devoted mainly to the thinking capacity and its relationship to imagination and the body; the last three chapters of the book discuss the capacity for locomotion and the number of parts of the soul. We will spend 4 meetings on Book III.

The format of the course will be a combination of lectures and class discussion. Class discussions will be an important part of the course, and it is therefore necessary to keep up with the readings. Some in class presentations will be required, and (perhaps) some short writing assignments. A final paper will be required for those taking the course for credit.

**Instructor Bio**

I retired from the Philosophy Department of the University of Virginia a few years ago, but came out of retirement last year to teach the undergraduate course on Plato. My research and publications have focused on Plato and Aristotle; recently I have been working mainly on Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Politics*, and have a couple of research papers in the works.