

FINAL EXAM ESSAY QUESTIONS: Study List

The final examination will be held on **Tuesday, December 11 (2:30-4:20 p.m.)**. No books or notes are permitted during the examination. Be sure to bring your own exam book. The exam will consist of three parts: (1) **Quotations** (30 points): ten passages to identify and explain; (2) **Terms and Concepts** (30 points): ten concepts or technical terms to define or explain; (3) **Essays** (50 points): this portion of the exam will include **three** of the following questions. You will be asked to write on **two** of them.

1. What is “Meno’s paradox” (*Meno* 80d-e)? What conclusion does it purport to establish? Does it succeed? If not, why not? Expound and evaluate Socrates’ response to it.
2. Present, as clearly and completely as you can, and critically evaluate, Plato’s “Imperfection Argument” at *Phaedo* 73-76. What is Plato trying to prove? How successful is the argument?
3. Present, as clearly and completely as you can, Plato’s “Argument from Knowledge” in *Republic* 476-480. What is Plato trying to prove? What assumptions does he make in the argument? Critically evaluate the argument.
4. In what ways are Plato’s Forms like standards of weight or measurement? In what ways are they different? Is it helpful, in understanding Plato’s theory of Forms, to think of Forms as standards? If so, how? If not, why not?
5. Explain what the Third Man Argument (TMA) in Plato’s *Parmenides* (132a–b) purports to prove about the Theory of Forms. Is the TMA’s conclusion damaging to the Theory? Why (or, why not)? What assumptions about the Forms are used (explicitly or implicitly) as the premises of the TMA? To what extent is the Theory committed to each of these assumptions?
6. What is Plato’s theory of the structure of the four elements, as it is developed in the *Timaeus* (53-58)? Compare Plato’s theory with the theories of Empedocles and Democritus, stressing points of agreement as well as points of disagreement.
7. Sophie is a cat, and Sophie is gray — these are facts. How, according to Plato’s Theory of Forms, are these two facts to be analyzed? How would Aristotle, in the *Categories*, analyze them? Use this example to set out the main differences between the ontology of Plato’s Theory of Forms and the ontology of Aristotle’s *Categories*.
8. Explain Aristotle’s account of **change** in *Physics* I, 7-8 and *Generation & Corruption* I, 3-4. How does Aristotle deal with Parmenides’ claim that “coming into being” is impossible?
9. Explain Aristotle’s doctrine (*Phys.* II) of the four causes (*aitia*). Explain why Aristotle thinks that natural objects, as well as artifacts, have final causes. Critically discuss his position on this point.
10. Aristotle says (a) “there is a science that studies being in so far as it is being” (1003^a21). But he also insists (b) “being is spoken of in many ways” (1003^a34, 1028^a10). (b) seems to mean that ‘being’ is ambiguous, but if so there does not seem to be any **one** thing for the science mentioned in (a) to study. So (a) and (b) seem to be inconsistent. How does Aristotle manage to consistently maintain both (a) and (b)?
11. The concept of matter, which did not appear in the *Categories*, plays an important role in Aristotle’s *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. What is that role? What difficulties does the concept of matter raise for the doctrine of primary substance that Aristotle presented in the *Categories*? What does the *Metaphysics* tell us about primary substance?
12. Give a brief exposition of the theory of soul that Aristotle sets out in *De Anima* II, 1-3. What is a soul, according to Aristotle? How does his conception of the soul compare to Plato’s in the *Phaedo*? Which theory seems more plausible to you, and why?