Aims of the course

In this class, we aim to go through systematically the 17 chapters of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, book Z (sometimes called book VII), and chapter 1 of book H of the *Metaphysics* (the one immediately following Z), since we hold, as do many other scholars, that it is best read as a continuation of book Z.

The goal is to understand Aristotle’s famous theory of ‘substance’ as presented in book Z. Substances are the central items in Aristotle’s ontology, and there are a cluster of other notions in the vicinity of ‘substance’ which we will also be trying to clarify: ‘being’, ‘account’, ‘form’, ‘this’, ‘subject’, ‘matter’, ‘essence’ or ‘being what it is’, etc.

We also want to assess what kind of treatise *Metaphysics* Z is: its train of thought is notoriously hard to follow, with apparent digressions, or even insertions, so it might not even have been considered a unified treatise by Aristotle. There is also the question of its relation to the science of metaphysics: is it a preliminary contribution to it, or an actual exposition of (a fragment of) it? Is there even a science of metaphysics (in the sense of ‘science’ defined in the *Posterior Analytics*) to which it could be related?

Brief list of some themes of *Metaphysics* Z

Fall:

Z1: Being is said in many ways; the central one is being as substance; so the question ‘what is being’ is the question ‘what is substance?’;
Z2: Catalogue of some items which philosophers have thought count as substances;
Z4: what (1) essence is; definitions, accounts, and essence; per se predication;
Z5: complexity in definitions;
Z6: things that are identical with their essences, and things which are not;
   Z7: coming to be;
   Z8: which things come to be;
   Z9: under what conditions do things come to be;

Spring:

Z10: substances and their parts; accounts and their parts; forms;
Z11: forms and their parts; summary of what has gone before;
Z12: definition, division, and differentia;
Z13: return to the four candidates of Z3: (2) universal;
Z14: Platonic Forms – which are genera (3)? – are not substances;
Z15: individuals don’t have definitions;
Z16: neither the parts of substances nor the basic elements are substances;
Z17: New Beginning: forms/essences as substances;
H1: reminder of results from Z; attempted completion of the project of specifying what the substance of a perceptible object is.
Bibliography (items with a * are available on Blackboard)

**Greek Texts**


*O. Primavesi, M. Rashed, Metaphysik Z (unpublished)

W. D. Ross, Aristotle Metaphysics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary, 2 vols (Oxford, 1924)

**English Translations**

*M. Furth, Aristotle Metaphysics Books Eta, Theta, Iota (VII-X) (Indianapolis, 1985)


**Commentaries**

See Frede/Patzig above

See Ross above (under ‘Greek Texts’)

**Selected additional secondary literature**

M. Burnyeat, A Map of Metaphysics Zeta (Pittsburgh, 2001)


——— ‘Substance in Aristotle’s Metaphysics’, in his Essays in Ancient Philosophy (Oxford 1987), 72-80


J. Lear, ch. 6 of Aristotle; The Desire to Understand (Cambridge, 1988), esp. pp. 273-93