

HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY (PHIL-3140)

SPRING 2020

Instructor:	Dr. Zita Toth	Office:	Levering Hall, 210
Time:	TTh, 9:30–10:45	Office hrs:	MTh, 3:30–5 & by appt.
Place:	New Cabell Hall, 309	E-mail:	zvt5f@virginia.edu

Required Texts. There is no required textbook. Readings will be made available for the students, once enrolled.

Course Description. In this course, we will look at philosophy from around the 4th to the 14th centuries. Although this is a long time-period that resists general claims about its philosophical tendencies, most authors we will consider were primarily concerned with the question of how to fit religion (whether Muslim, Jewish, or Christian) into a broadly speaking Aristotelian, scientific world-view — or on the converse, how to fit a scientific world-view into a broadly speaking theological framework. Topics of discussion will include, among others, questions concerning faith and reason, knowledge and skepticism, causation, and human nature. Representative figures include Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Avicenna, Averroes, Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, William Ockham, Nicholas of Autrecourt, and John Buridan.

Expectations and Assignments. Here is a breakdown of your final grade in this course.

Attendance and in-class participation, 15%: Conversation is essential to Philosophy. Everyone, even if they are bored or shy or anxious is expected to participate in class. Make sure you answer to your peers' suggestion according to the best interpretation you can give them, and that your criticism is directed towards the idea instead of the person. Be willing to change your mind if the evidence so dictates. **To prepare for class participation:** readings in philosophy tend to be difficult, and the our period is no exception. When you do the assigned readings, make notes about: (1) the main thesis or idea of the reading; (2) the main argument (if any); (3) the main examples the reading uses to illustrate the point; and any questions or remarks you have about the reading.

Notecards, 15%: The notecards require that you show that you put effort into the readings and are prepared to participate well. After completing the readings for each class, write down *either* a short summary of the reading *or* at least two or three major questions that the authors of the texts are attempting to answer or problems that you see in the readings. You will hand these to me on a 3 × 5 notecard that you will put on my desk before the beginning of class. Strive to be clear and to ask challenging, puzzling questions. Notecards are graded on a × (D), ✓- (C), ✓ (B), ✓+ (A) scale. A ✓+ is reserved for incisive, well-articulated summaries and questions. Because notecards are part of the preparatory work for class discussions, notecards

cannot be turned in late. If you have an excused absence, that day will simply not count toward your average.

First short paper, 10%: . Details will follow.

Response paper, 20%: A response paper to one of the readings. Details will follow.

Final paper, 30%: A research paper on a topic of your choice. Detailed prompt will follow.

Final exam, 10%: In class test. The final exam covers all the material discussed during the semester.

Course Policies.

Attendance: Attendance in class is mandatory, and every unexcused absence will affect your notecards grade as explained above. You also must come on time; I will not accept notecards from habitually tardy people. **If you have more than 4 unexcused absences, you will not be able to pass this class unless I get a note from your dean.**

Analog classroom: Electronic devices are not allowed in class. They can be very distracting, and research shows that even when computers are used solely for taking notes, learning is impaired. Everyone is expected to leave their devices at home or keep them turned off and out of sight during class time. If you need special accommodation, or have any special concerns about this policy, please ask me directly.

E-mail: There may be some official communication via e-mail, and everyone is expected to check their e-mail accounts regularly and read their e-mails carefully. You can expect me to read and answer my e-mails within 24 hours; please do not send me e-mails at midnight expecting a response before the morning.

Outside resources: With the exception of the final paper, you will not have to do outside research beyond the assigned readings. If you feel you must read more than what is assigned, please do not rely on wikipedia (which tends to be rather unreliable in philosophy). Instead, I recommend the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: plato.stanford.edu. An up-to-date, reliable catalogue of philosophy papers can be found at philpapers.org (but please note that they do not store the papers; you will still have to find them in the library).

Plagiarism: If you use or copy a source without properly citing it, whether this act is intentional or not, you commit plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of stealing. It is very easy to detect, and will result in your automatic failure of the course.

Lateness: Late assignments will not be considered unless for very serious reasons. If you have such reasons, please let me know as soon as you can. I will not accept excuses related to technology (“my e-mail address wasn’t working,” “it remained in my Draft folder,” etc.) unless it is a major technical issue that affects the campus. Assignments for other courses due at the same time also do not count as very serious reasons.

Special Accommodations: Students with special needs requiring accommodations should please (the sooner the better!) coordinate with the Student Disability Access Center (SDAC: 243-5180/5181) and follow up with me.

Tentative Schedule of Readings. The schedule is tentative, which means it might change at any point during the semester. I will post any changes and will call your attention to it in advance.

Faith and Reason		
Jan 14	Introduction	(1–11)
16	Augustine on Christian Doctrine	(12–33)
21	Al-Ghazali against philosophy	(34–53)
23	The Parisian condemnations	(54–70)
28	Aquinas on Faith and Reason	(71–78)
30	Writing class	DUE: First short paper
Soul and Knowledge		
Feb 4	Avicenna’s Flying Man	(79–87)
6	Aquinas on the soul	(88–95)
11	Aquinas on the intellect	(95–106)
13	Aquinas on abstraction	(107–115)
18	Henry of Ghent on illumination	(116–119)
20	Ockham on intuitive knowledge	(120–125)
25	Autrecourt and Buridan on skepticism	(126–135)
27	Writing class	DUE: Second short paper
Free Will and Foreknowledge		
Mar 3	Scotus on the will	(136–143)
5	Boethius on foreknowledge	(144–156)
17	Gersonides on foreknowledge	(157–167)
19	Crescas on foreknowledge	(168–179)
24	Scotus on foreknowledge	(180–191)
26	Writing class	
Metaphysics and Natural Theology		
31	Aquinas on Essence and Existence	(192–203)
Apr 2	Buridan on Essence and Existence	(204–206)
7	Anselm on God’s existence	(207–217)
9	Aquinas on God’s existence	(218–222)
14	Maimonides on talking about God	(223–230)
16	Aquinas on talking about God	(231–239)
21	Scotus on talking about God	(240–261)
23	Writing class	DUE: Final paper
28	Continuity	(262–267)
May 4	FINAL EXAM, 2–5 p.m.	