

## FINAL PAPER PROMPT – MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

Your final paper should be a research paper, which means you will need to find and consult at least *one* (but possibly more) secondary source that we did not read in class. You may choose a topic based on any text or topic that we have discussed during the semester. Here are a few examples (but feel free to choose your own): Why does Augustine think we have free will, what does he mean by it, and do you agree with his account? How does Anselm account for the first evil choice, and do you think this account is successful? Can we not will happiness, for Duns Scotus, and what implications does this have with respect to the notion of free will?

A few things to keep in mind:

- Your topic should be well defined, which means it should not be too broad. The broader your topic is, the harder it will be to write a good paper on it.
- You may write a comparative paper (comparing two or more authors on the same topic).
- Even historical papers need to have a thesis, which is clearly stated. This may be an interpretative thesis (you provide a non-trivial interpretation of an author on a certain topic), or a systematic thesis (you defend an author against some common criticism, or you criticize the author's view). In either case, the thesis must be clearly argued for in the paper.
- The overall argument of your paper is stronger if you consider some objections.
- As always, you must cite your sources, both the primary and the secondary ones, and cite them properly. The format does not matter, but you must provide page numbers, and should try to be consistent throughout your paper.
- The importance of editing cannot be overstated.
- Maximum length is 3000 words, and the standard penalties apply for overstepping it.

There are some recommended intermediate steps in the process of writing your final paper. None of these are mandatory, but they may help you in the process, and if you would like me to check any of them, I'm happy to do so.

- **Preliminary topic.** You need to decide and discuss with me a well-defined topic. At this point, you do not need to quite know the thesis of your paper yet, and if your topic is a bit too broad at this point, that should be fine. But you should be able to explain why you find that topic interesting, and what you are expecting to find out about it.
- **Annotated bibliography.** You should prepare an annotated bibliography for all your sources you are planning to use in your paper, both primary and secondary. An annotated bibliography consists of proper bibliographical data, and a (short) one-paragraph summary of the paper or primary source, clearly stating the thesis and the main argument of the text. You do not necessary need to know (yet) what the given source will be doing in your paper.
- **Outline and abstract.** You should have the basic structure of your paper ready, with the main claim and the main parts of the argument. This means you should know what sections your paper will consist in, and (more or less) what you are going to do in each

paragraph. The outline should be in a list format. You should also write an abstract of your paper, in which you summarize your paper in 100–200 words (it is what you would have in an annotated bibliography containing your paper).