

MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY (PHL-3530)

MWF 9:30–10:22 AND 2:40–3:32, SPRING 2018

Instructor: Dr. Zita Toth

Office: St. Maur, room A 002

Office hours: MW 4:00–5:00 p.m., and by appointment. To make an appointment, please go to <http://zitavtoth.com/2016/01/19/Officehours/> and click on the desired slot.

Phone: 2924 (office extension); 917-544-3364 (cell; please use it with consideration).

E-mail: ztoth@conception.edu.

Expected time required outside class: Approximately 2 hours for every class hour.

REQUIRED TEXTS

There is one required book for the course, a collection of primary texts. There will be some additional primary and secondary material posted on Moodle.

- Gyula Klima, ed. *Medieval Philosophy*. Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-4051-3565-8.

DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

In this course, we will look at philosophy from around the 4th to the 14th centuries. Although this is a broad time-period that resists general claims about its philosophical tendencies, most authors we will consider were primarily concerned with the question how to fit Christianity 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, Averroes, Siger of Brabant, Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, Ockham, Nicholas of Autrecourt, and John Buridan.

- Students will learn how to read and decipher the meaning of medieval philosophical texts;
- will familiarize themselves with various medieval currents of thoughts and discover how these currents influenced later figures;
- and will develop their philosophical speaking and writing abilities.

GRADING

Grading scale:

Grade	GPA	Description
A	4.00	excellent, outstanding
A-	3.67	still excellent
B+	3.33	very good
B	3.00	good; solid, and above average
B-	2.67	good; still above average
C+	2.33	average
C	2.00	acceptable
C-	1.67	minimally acceptable
D	1.00	passing but unsatisfactory
F	0.00	failure

Grade break-down:

Component	Percentage
In-class participation	20%
Notecards	20%
Short papers total	30%
Final paper	20%
Final exam	10%

Participation: Conversation is essential to Philosophy. Everyone, even if they are bored or shy or anxious is expected to participate in class. Here are a few suggestions with regard to class discussion:

- Charity is very important in every engaging discussion. You should answer to your peers' suggestion according to the best interpretation you can give them.
- Criticism can be very useful, but be careful not to direct it towards the person instead of the idea.
- Please be willing to change your mind if the evidence so dictates.
- To prepare for class participation: You will see that readings in medieval philosophy can be quite technical and hence difficult. Be sure to make notes about: (1) the main thesis or idea of the reading; (2) important terminology and concepts; (3) the main argument (if any); (4) the main examples the reading uses to illustrate the point; and any questions or remarks you have about the reading.

Notecards: The notecards require that you show that you put effort into the readings and are prepared to participate well. After completing the reading for each class, write down *either* a short summary *or* two or three questions on a 3×5 notecard. The summary should be the kind of summary that you would write for an annotated bibliography; it should not be just an abbreviated version of the text but demonstrate understanding of the main problems the text discusses. The questions should be the major questions that the author of the text is attempting to answer or problems that

you see in the reading. You will need to put your notecard on my desk before the beginning of class. Notecards are graded on 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.

Short papers: There will be three short papers due during the semester. In these papers, you will be asked to select a single argument from the topic we discussed, and reconstruct it step by step. In this assignment, you do not need to be original; you need to demonstrate that you understood the main terms, concepts, and logical steps of the argument presented in the readings, and that you can explain these to someone who does not know the topic.

Final paper: You will have to write a paper on a topic of your choice. You will need to prepare an annotated bibliography and an outline in advance. Details will follow. Here are the standards for distinguishing between Excellent, Good, Average and Poor papers:

- **Writing Quality:** Papers should demonstrate good grammar as well as good spelling. They should also be copy-edited to reduce or eliminate typos. Writing should be clear and exhibit good structure. Paragraphs should be cohesive and build towards a complete essay with a substantial thesis (as opposed to a string of disconnected thoughts).
- **Accuracy and Understanding:** Papers should be able accurately to recreate an argument or a position. They should find the relevant issues and argument(s) worthy of analysis.
- **Argument:** Papers should argue for or against a position rather than merely exchange opinions. Is the argument for or against a position constructed persuasively within the confines of the paper?

Final exam: Details will follow; the final exam will cover all the material assigned throughout the course.

COURSE POLICIES

Electronic Devices: Electronic devices are not allowed in class. They can be very distracting, and new research shows that even when computers are used solely for taking notes, learning is impaired, because the keyboard encourages taking verbatim notes while the pen requires you to process as you take notes.¹ Apparently, we even retain the content of texts much better when we read them on paper.² Everyone is expected to leave their devices (phones, laptops, tablets, etc.) at home or keep them turned off and out of sight during class time. For any special concerns about this policy, please ask me directly.

1. Pam A Mueller and Daniel M Oppenheimer, "The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking," *Psychological Science*, 2014,

2. Patricia A Alexander and Lauren M Singer, "A new study shows that students learn way more effectively from print textbooks than screens," *Business Insider*, [October 15, 2017](#).

E-mail: There will 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 by the next morning class.

Outside resources: Apart from the research paper, you will not have to do outside research beyond the assigned books. If you feel you must read more than what is assigned, there is an abundance of great medieval philosophy resources on the web nowadays (but note that Wikipedia is *not* one of them). Some of these are collected on Sydney Penner’s useful and mostly up-to-date website (www.sydneypenner.ca/scholastics.shtml). Of course, you can also always rely on the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: plato.stanford.edu, and on philpapers.org, although the latter is sometimes surprisingly lacking in the field of medieval philosophy.

Plagiarism: If you use or copy a source without properly citing it, you commit plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of stealing, whether it is intentional or not. 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 them 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 and the IT department knows about it.

This course complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written request for accommodation to me and the Academic Dean before the fourth day of class.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

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.

Abbreviations: M = on Moodle; KMP = Klima, ed., *Medieval Philosophy*

Preliminary matters; methodology of medieval philosophy		
Jan 8	Introduction	Lewis, <i>Discarded image</i> , ch. 2.
10	Historical context	Cahill 2008 (M)
12	Augustine on Ancient philosophy	KMP, ch. 1
15	The division of sciences	KMP, ch. 2; Boethius (M)
17	Censorship	Putallaz 2010 (M)
19	Philosophy and theology	Stone 2010 (M)
22	Augustine on faith and reason	Augustine (M)
24	Aquinas on faith and reason	KMP, ch. 3

Knowledge and divine illumination		
26	Active and passive intellect	Kuskewicz 1988 (M)
29	The theory of <i>species</i>	Spruit 1994 (M)

		Due: first short paper
	31 Scientific knowledge	Toth 2010 (M)
Feb 5	Intro to divine illumination	Noone 2010 (M)
	7 Augustine on illumination	KMP chs. 9 and 10
	9 Aquinas on abstraction	KMP, ch. 11
	12 Henry of Ghent on illumination	KMP, ch. 12
	19 Scotus on illumination	KMP, ch. 13
<hr/> Skepticism <hr/>		
	21 Aquinas on skepticism	KMP, ch. 15
	23 class cancelled	
	26 Henry of Ghent on skepticism	KMP, ch. 16
		Due: second short paper
	28 Intuitive and abstractive knowledge	Ockham (M)
March 2	Ockham the skeptic?	Ockham (M)
	5 William Crathorn	Crathorn (M)
	7 Skepticism: summary	Perler 2010 (M)
<hr/> Natural philosophy <hr/>		
	9 Introduction	KMP, ch. 19
	12 Aquinas on the principles of nature	KMP, ch. 20
		Due: third short paper
	14 Giles of Rome	KMP, ch. 21
	16 Parisian condemnations	KMP, ch. 22
	19 Condemnations cont.	Lindberg 2007 (M)
		Due: final paper topics
	23 The principle <i>omne quod movetur</i>	Aquinas (M)
	26 Buridan: impetus theory	KMP, ch. 23
	28 Medieval and early modern science	Lindberg 2007 (M)
		Due: annotated bibliography
<hr/> Metaphysics <hr/>		
Apr 9	Avicenna on common nature	KMP, ch. 29
	11 Essence and existence	KMP, ch. 30
	13 Essence and existence cont.	Wippel 2010 (M)
		Due: final paper outline
	18 Buridan on essence and existence	KMP, ch. 31
	20 The ontological argument	KMP, ch. 33
	23 The Five Ways	KMP, ch. 34
	25 Divine simplicity	KMP, ch. 34 cont.
	27 Medieval and early modern philosophy	Garber 1988 (M)
	30 Writing workshop	Due: final paper first draft
May 2	Final review	Due: final paper final draft
	TBA Final exam	