

MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY (PHL-3530)

SPRING 2019

Instructor: Dr. Zita Toth, Department of Philosophy

Prerequisites: PHL-3510 (Ancient Philosophy)

Meeting times: Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:30–9:23 a.m.

Credit hours: 3 credits

Office: St. Maur, room A 002

Office hours: MW 10–11:30 a.m., and by appointment. To make an appointment, please go to http://zitavtoth.com/2_teaching/ 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.

Tutoring: Please inquire with Fiona Holly in the library.

REQUIRED TEXTS

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

DESCRIPTION FROM THE CATALOG

This course surveys philosophy from the 4th to 14th century. Representative figures include St. Augustine, St. Anselm, Avicenna, Averroes, St. Thomas, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, and John Buridan.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn how to read and decipher the meaning of medieval philosophical texts;
- will familiarize themselves with various medieval currents of thoughts (both Christian and Islamic), 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	15%
Notecards	20%
Presentations and papers	30%
Final paper	25%
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 a short summary 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. You might also raise questions or offer comments about the reading. You will need to put your notecard on my desk before the beginning

of class. Notecards are graded on a \times (D), \checkmark - (C), \checkmark (B), \checkmark + (A) scale. A \checkmark + is reserved for incisive, well-articulated summaries. 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.

Presentations and papers: You will be asked to give two presentations during the semester, based on the reading assigned for that meeting. The aim of the presentation is *not* to give a summary of the reading (since presumably everyone will have read it) but to generate discussion. You should give some context to the reading, choose one or two of the main points of it, and explain them in greater detail. You will turn in a written version of your presentation, in which you will be asked to select a single argument from the topic we discussed, and reconstruct it step by step. In this written 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.

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

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. Every unexcused absence will affect your participation grade by third of a letter grade. After your first excused absence, I will only consider an absence excused *either* if you have a green sheet for me to sign in advance, *or* if I get a note from your chaplain explaining your absence.

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. Failing to do so will result in the confiscation of the device for the class period. For any special concerns about this policy, please ask me directly.

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.

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](#).

Outside resources: Apart from the research paper, you will not have to do outside research beyond the assigned readings. 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. Having another assignment due on the same day also does not count as a serious reason.

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.

Preliminary matters; the role of philosophy

- Jan 8 Introduction; Lewis, *Discarded image*, ch. 2
- 10 Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* (sel.)
- 15 Al-Ghazali, *The Rescuer from Error*, pp. 1–17
- 17 Al-Ghazali cont., pp. 17–27

The soul

- 22 Avicenna, *al-Shifa* (sel.), pp. 175–188
- 24 Avicenna cont., pp. 188–202, 205–209
- 29 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 75
- 31 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 76

Ethics

- Feb 5 Abelard, *Ethics*
- 7 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* II.6.2, III.34
- 12 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III.37

God

- 19 Anselm, *Monologion*, chs. 1–4
- 21 Anselm, *Proslogion*, chs. 1–5 and correspondance with Gaunilo
- 26 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 2
- 28 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 3

Mar 5 Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (sel.)

- 12 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 13
- 14 Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, I.3.1

Freedom

- 19 Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* (sel.)

Due: final paper topics

- 21 Gersonides, *Wars of the Lord* III (sel.)
- 28 Crescas, *Light of the Lord* (sel.)

Due: annotated bibliography

- Apr 2 Duns Scotus, *Questions on the Metaphysics*, IX.15
- 4 Duns Scotus, *Reportatio* IA, dd. 39–40, qq. 1–3

Metaphysics

- 9 Ockham, *Summa philosophiae naturalis*, chs. 12, 9–14 (matter)
- 11 Ockham cont., chs. 15–20 (form)
- 16 Autrecourt, *Tractatus*, ch. 1 (sel.)

Due: final paper outline

- 23 Buridan, *Questions on Physics*, I.10

Knowledge and skepticism

- 25 Autrecourt, *Two letters to Bernard*
- 30 Buridan, *Questions on Metaphysics*, II.1

May 2 Final review

Due: final paper final draft

TBA Final exam