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## PHIL 215.001 – Medieval Philosophy

UNC Chapel Hill | Spring 2019

TuTh 8AM – 9:15AM, Bingham 101

Instructor: Alfredo Watkins, [watkins6@live.unc.edu](mailto:watkins6@live.unc.edu)

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday: 9:30AM-10:30AM (Caldwell 210D)

Thursday: 3PM-4PM (Caldwell 210D)

Friday: (Group Study) 12:30PM – 1:30PM (Alpine Bagel in Carolina Union)

**Course Description:** This course will provide a broad overview of medieval philosophy, with a focus on medieval metaphysics. Topics discussed will include the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, free will, the nature of causation, the ontology of matter and the physical world, and the nature of existence. We will read primary texts taken directly from classic medieval authors. Authors we read will include Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham, Suarez, and Descartes. (**Note:** No prerequisites are required for this course.)

**Warning:** This course will be **very heavily reading-based**. (See the reading schedule below for details.) While the exact amount of pages per week varies, some readings are denser than others, and understanding philosophical texts often requires you to read them multiple times. (To help you with this, I have designated some pages as “**Focus**” sections, where some of the main ideas come up and it will help you to read these parts especially closely. However, you will be tested on the whole reading, and must read **all assigned pages**.) In general, you should expect to spend about **six (6) uninterrupted hours per week** on the reading alone. If you are not able to make this commitment, you should not take the course.

### Course Goals:

1. You will gain a broad knowledge of the ideas of Western medieval philosophy, and learn some of the most influential concepts to have shaped human history. More importantly, you will also grapple on a personal level with some of the deepest questions of human existence.
2. You will learn to **read**: Unlike many other courses, we will use only *primary sources* for our readings. This will teach you how to extract the main ideas out of what are often dense and unfamiliar texts. In doing so, you will learn how to think *for yourself* by engaging with authors *directly* (as opposed to *other peoples' summaries* of those authors, which are sometimes mixed with biases, oversimplifications, etc.).
3. You will learn to **write**: A good philosophy paper is clear, easy to follow, and straight to the point. Thus, in this class, you will learn to phrase your ideas as clearly as possible, structure your paper coherently, and avoid unnecessarily complicated and confusing language. This will be very helpful for you in the future.
4. Most importantly, you will learn to **think**: You will learn how to raise questions about views you are unfamiliar with or disagree with. You will also be confronted with

challenging and interesting questions that require you to think critically about your *own* views and argue rigorously for those views based on *reasons* and *evidence*. Finally, you will be taught how to communicate those views clearly and persuasively to others.

This class is not just for philosophy students; being able to **read, write, speak** and **think** *logically* and *clearly* are skills that transfer to almost any part of life and any academic field. (That is why philosophy majors are among the very highest scorers on the LSAT, GRE, GMAT, and in med-school admissions.) If you put in the effort, then by the end of this class you'll be better prepared for these sorts of examinations.

**Textbooks and Readings:** The following textbooks are **required** and can be found in the campus bookstore or on Amazon (you must have **these specific editions/translations**):

- Boethius: [The Consolation of Philosophy](#) (Ignatius Critical Editions)
- Anselm: [Basic Writings](#) (Hackett Classics)
- Scotus: [Philosophical Writings](#) (Hackett; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)
- Suarez: [On the Formal Cause of Substance](#) (Marquette University Press)
- Descartes: [Meditations on First Philosophy](#) (Hackett Classics)

The rest of the readings will be available online on Sakai. Online readings are marked with an asterisk (\*) in the reading schedule below. (To find them, go to our class in Sakai then go to Resources>>Course Readings.) If you choose to use the electronic versions I put up then I highly recommend you print them so you can have a physical copy to read, highlight, take notes, etc.

### Classroom Policies:

1. **No laptops or electronics (e.g. phones) of any sort** (*except* during in-class exams, which are explained below, or if you have an official medical accommodation). If you break this rule, I will call you out and **you will lose 2% of your total course grade**.
2. If you have a question or comment, raise your hand. Please be courteous and do not interrupt someone else who is speaking. If you want to raise a point directly in response to a comment another classmate has just made, hold up your index finger and I'll call on you either next or soon after.
3. In general, please exercise basic decency and respect toward your classmates.

**Attendance:** Attendance is required and will be taken daily. However, students have exactly **five (5) "free" absences**, which you can use whenever you like. (You do not need to let me know when or why you were/are/will be absent.) However, if you have **more than 5 absences**, you will **automatically lose 8% of your entire grade**. If you have **more than 7 absences**, you will automatically lose **15% of your grade**. (See participation breakdown below.) So use your absences wisely – I highly recommend you save them for an emergency or illness.

### Grade Breakdown:

- **Participation:** 15%
- **Pop Quizzes:** 15%
- **Paper 1:** 10% [3-4 pages; due via Dropbox on 2/7 at 11:59PM]
- **Exam 1:** 15% [In class, 3/5]
- **Paper 2 :** 15% [4-5 pages; due via Dropbox on 3/31 at 11:59PM]
- **Exam 2:** 15% [In class, 4/11]
- **Final Paper:** 15% [4-6 pages; printed copy due in my office on 5/2 at 8AM]

**Participation Breakdown:** Participation in class is a huge part of your grade, so it is very important that you actively participate. This means attending class regularly, having done the readings for the day, and joining in the discussion (for example, by raising a question, or making a point about the issue we're discussing, responding to another student, etc.).

The policy for participation is very simple, and if you keep track of yourself you can calculate it precisely. All you have to do is keep track of which dates you participated and your absences.

**There are only four possible participation grades:** A+, C+, F+, and F-, computed as follows:

- A+ (100%):
  1. Student **participated well** at least 10 times (i.e., *during at least 10 sessions*); AND
  2. Student did not miss more than 5 sessions.
- C+ (77%):
  1. Student participated well 5-9 times; AND
  2. Student did not miss more than 5 sessions.
- F+ (50%):
  1. Student participated well 1-4 times; AND/OR
  2. Student missed 5-7 sessions.
- F- (0%):
  1. Student participated well 0 times; AND/OR
  2. Student missed more than 7 sessions.

Note that I say **you must participate well**: You must raise questions or comments that show you have done the reading and are actively engaging with the problem we are discussing. (I *do* track participation after every session, by check-marking on my roster those who have participated.)

**Pop Quizzes:** There will be 16 pop quizzes throughout the semester (you are allowed **one "freebie"**; so if you miss one, you can still get 100% on the pop quizzes portion of the grade, and if you get all of them you will get extra credit). They will be given at a random time during lecture (**not necessarily at the beginning of class**). They will be multiple choice, and will be based on the readings of the day. They will be straightforward questions that you should have no problem answering **so long as you do all the reading**.

**Exams:** You will have two (2) in-class exams that will involve some multiple choice and some short answer questions. You will be allowed to use either a bluebook or your laptop (though both exams will be closed-book and closed-note). Details of the exams and study guides will be given as we get closer to the exam. **Please include only your PID and no names.**

**Papers:** Please read the following closely:

- Instructions for the papers will be passed out in class on the days indicated on the reading schedule below. The due dates are also indicated on the reading schedule.
- So as to make grading as fair as possible, grading will be blind. Thus, **no names are allowed on your papers; include only your PID.**
- In general, **late papers** will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for every day (or part of a day) after they are due. However, you are allowed **one (1) “free” late day**, where you can turn a paper in up to 24 hours after the time it is due. Which paper you use it on is up to you. If and when you choose to use this, you must let me know via e-mail.
- **You must use citations:** You **must cite** sources in your papers, especially when you are quoting or attributing a view to an author. Citations serve the purposes of (a) protecting you from allegations of plagiarism (see below), and (b) proving to me that what you attribute to an author is what the author actually says. I don’t care what format you use, so long as I can easily find the place you are referencing. Citations do not count toward the word count. **Failure to cite will result in loss of points.**

**Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism and Honor Code:** The UNC Instrument of Student Governance defines plagiarism as “deliberate or reckless representation of another’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own without attribution [i.e., citations] in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise.” Note that **it is also unacceptable to re-use your own work**, including submitting old papers. It is your responsibility to be familiar with university policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty (see, e.g., page 5 [here](#)) and with the [Honor Code](#). It is my responsibility to report any instances of academic dishonesty. If you have any questions about anything on this topic please come talk to me.

**Group Study:** Friday office hours will be a “group study” where I will meet with 3-5 students and we can discuss as a group any problems or questions you have. There will be coffee and pastries provided (free!). I will send a sign-up sheet each week for those who want to come.

**Accessibility Resources & Service (ARS):** UNC-Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations for students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health struggles, chronic medical conditions, temporary disability, or pregnancy complications, all of which can impair student success. See the ARS website for contact and registration information: <https://ars.unc.edu/about-ars/contact-us>

**Counseling and Psychological Services:** CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short- or long-term needs: [www.caps.unc.edu](http://www.caps.unc.edu)

## Reading & Assignment Schedule

(Readings will be covered in lecture on the dates listed. This schedule may change.)

### 1. Early Medieval Philosophy: Ontology, God, and the Soul

(1/10) **NO READING** – Problems of Medieval Philosophy; Platonism; Augustine

(1/15) Read the Course Syllabus (!!!)

Augustine: *On Free Choice of the Will* (Selections online)\*

(1/17) Boethius: *Consolation* Book 1 (pp. 3-30)

(1/22) Boethius: *Consolation* Book 2 (pp. 31-62)

(1/24) Boethius: *Consolation* Book 3 (pp. 63-108)

(1/29) Boethius: *Consolation* Book 4 (pp. 109-145)

(1/29) **Paper 1 prompt will be passed out**

(1/31) Boethius: *Consolation* Book 5 (pp. 146-173)

(2/5) Anselm: *Proslogion* (pp. 75-89)

(2/7) Anselm: *Proslogion* (pp. 89-98); *Gaunilo's Reply on behalf of the Fool* (pp. 99-103)

(2/7) **PAPER – Paper 1 due** at 11:59PM (via Dropbox on Sakai)

(2/12) Anselm: *Reply to Gaunilo* (pp. 105-113)

### 2. The Revival of Aristotelianism: Thomism

(2/14) Aquinas: *Principles*\* (Secs. 1-17) – Actuality & Potentiality; Matter & Form

Focus: Sections 1-10; 14-15; 17

(2/19) Aquinas: *Principles*\* (Secs. 18-36) – Causation; The “Four Causes”; Necessity

(2/21) Aquinas: *Principles*\* (Secs. 37-49) – Per se/Per accidens; Act/Potency; Analogy

Aquinas: *Summa Theologica*\* – “The Five Ways” for proving God’s existence

(2/26) Aquinas: *Summa Theologica*\* – “The Five Ways” (cont.)

(2/28) **Exam Review Session**

### **3. Late Medieval Philosophy: Ontology, God, and the Soul**

- (3/5) Scotus: *Philosophical Writings* (pp. 13-28) – Our Knowledge and Concept of God  
**EXAM** – In-Class Exam 1
- (3/7) No Additional Readings (Though please look over the ‘Fundamentals of Scotism’ handout on Sakai.)
- (3/9-3/18) NO CLASS – Spring Break
- (3/19) Scotus: *Philosophical Writings* (pp. 96-115) – Knowledge, Certainty and Skepticism
- (3/21) Ockham: “Ockham 1”: Ockham’s Metaphysics; Intuitive Cognition
- (3/21) **Paper 2 prompt will be passed out in class**
- (3/26) Ockham: “Ockham 2”: Ockham on Universals; Nominalism
- (3/28) Ockham: “Ockham 3”: Ockham on matter and quantity; the soul; God and ethics
- (3/31) **PAPER – Paper 2 due** at 11:59PM (via Dropbox on Sakai)
- (4/2) Suarez: *MD XV*: pp. 7-8, 19-21, 77-87 – The Nature of Substantial Forms
- (4/4) Suarez: *MD XV*: pp. 89-110 – The Relation Between Form and Matter
- (4/9) Suarez: *MD XV*: pp. 115-122; 130-131; 161-163 – The Separability of Matter from Form; Against Scotus on the Plurality of Substantial Forms

### **4. Descartes and the Legacy of Scholasticism**

- (4/11) **EXAM – In-Class Exam 2**  
 Descartes: Dedication/Preface/Synopsis; Meditation 1 (pp. 1-17) –  
 Seeking certainty; Descartes’ method of doubt; Three Stages of Doubt  
Focus: Dedication; Meditation 1
- (4/16) Descartes: Meditation 1 (cont.); Meditation 2 (pp. 13-24) –  
 “Cogito, ergo sum”; the “Wax Argument”
- (4/18) Descartes: Meditation 3 (pp. 24-35) – God’s Existence: The “Idea of God” Proof
- (4/23) Descartes: Meditation 4 (pp. 35-42) – Intellect & Will; Truth & Falsehood

Descartes: Meditation 5 (pp. 42-47) – God’s Existence: The Ontological Argument

(4/23) **Final Paper prompt will be passed out in class**

(4/25) Descartes: Meditation 6 (pp. 47-59) – The external world; mind v. body; evil

(5/2) **FINAL PAPER – *Printed final paper due* at 8AM (in my office, Caldwell 210D)**