Medieval Philosophy

University of St. Thomas, Houston, TX
Spring 2017
Monday/Wednesday 1:40 PM to 2:55 PM
Classroom: Strake 101

Francisco E. Plaza, Adjunct Professor of Philosophy
E-mail: plazaf@stthom.edu; fcoedoplaza@gmail.com

Office:
Office Phone:
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays from 1 PM to 1:30 PM, or by appointment.

Course Summary:

This course will serve primarily as an overview of the medieval period in the history of philosophy, from St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas. We shall be utilizing primary as well as secondary sources in our study. More specifically, the primary texts considered will be those of: St. Augustine, Boethius, and St. Thomas Aquinas. The secondary source will be by Josef Pieper. Generally speaking, we will be exploring various themes in metaphysics and ethics as they arise in the text. Our endeavor will also be to show how these thinkers dialogue with our contemporary state of affairs.

Primary Objectives:

The primary aim of the course is to gain an overall understanding of the history of medieval philosophy. Moreover, our goal is to intersect our present study of philosophy to our contemporary lives. Students will learn how to analyze philosophical texts directly, as well how to express themselves critically through articulating philosophical positions in writing.

Required Texts:


Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, translated and edited by Scott Goins and Barbara H. Wyman (Ignatius).

Josef Pieper, Scholasticism: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy (St. Augustine’s Press).


Note: this syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the professor.
Classroom Expectations:

Philosophy cannot only be studied passively (through readings or lectures); it must be actively engaged. Accordingly, classes will consist in lectures and seminar style discussions. **Students are expected to participate in class dialogue by asking questions and posing solutions to philosophical inquiries.** Obviously, this will require regular classroom attendance.

If help is needed in further understanding the class, or in preparing for the exam, or in writing the papers, please do not hesitate to contact me during office hours, or by appointment. Students can also find help at the Tutoring Center, on the second floor of the Crooker center; they have a tutor specifically for Philosophy.

Assignments and Examinations:

**Check class schedule page for assignment dates.**

**Reading Assignments:** Reading assignments of primary texts are mandatory. If a student does not complete the assigned reading for a particular day, this will severely impact their ability to understand the class lecture or discussion.

**Quizzes:** Apart from classroom discussion, class readings will also be evaluated through the use of quizzes over that particular day’s reading. Quizzes will consist of three brief questions regarding the reading. They will take place at the beginning of class.

**Research papers:** There will be two papers throughout the semester, the topics of which will be discussed in class at the appropriate time. These papers should be approximately **1500 words** (about 5 pages), double spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12. The format of these papers should be in Chicago, MLA, or APA style.

They should be turned in electronically (via email) with the student’s name in the document’s filename.

**Students will need to submit a paper proposal by email at least 2 weeks before the paper is due. The paper proposal should consist of a thesis statement for the paper (i.e., what the paper is about), and expected sources to be used. The professor’s approval of the topic, as well as the sources, is required before the paper can be turned in.**

**The cover page and works cited page are not part of the expected page count.**

**Examinations:** There will be a **mid-term** and **final** exam consisting of multiple-choice, along with short essay questions. The final exam will be cumulative.

Note: this syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the professor.
Missing the final exam will result in failure of the final exam. If you cannot take the exam on the scheduled date, you are responsible for scheduling an alternate time to take the final before the end of the final exam period.

Grade Distribution and Scale:

- Quizzes: 10%
- 1st Research Paper: 15%
- 2nd Research Paper: 30%
- Mid-Term Exam: 15%
- Final Exam: 30%

A: 93-100  
A-: 90-92  
B+: 87-89  
B: 83-86  
B-: 80-82  
C+: 77-79  
C: 73-76  
C-: 70-72  
D+: 67-69  
D: 63-66  
D-: 60-62  
F: 59 or below

Attendance:

Students are required to attend class. Moreover, examination questions on the final will follow from what is dealt with in class. If you have a good reason for being absent, please let me know ahead of time if possible. An unexcused absence will result in failure for that day’s quiz.

Suggestions for Class Readings:

Students are encouraged to take careful notes on each of the reading assignments. Clear, slow, patient reading is necessary to accomplish this. Students will find that their work in this regard will be indispensable for them for the mid-term and final exams. There will not be enough time to re-read texts; students will have to rely primarily on their notes (both class notes, as well as textual notes) for the purpose of study.

Academic Dishonesty:

Note: this syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the professor.
Plagiarism and cheating in any form will result in failure of the assignment. All plagiarism will be reported. If a student is caught plagiarizing twice in his or her academic career, they will be expelled from the university.

Plagiarism means using another author’s work in part or in whole without attributing it to that author. This includes not quoting the author when using his words, or paraphrasing the author without proper citation. Another form of cheating is to copy another student’s work (be it in a paper or during the exam), or to have another person do your work.

If you are worried about inadvertent plagiarism, please visit http://campusguides.stthom.edu/plagiarism for suggestions about paraphrasing and when to cite a text to which you are referring.

Do not copy and paste from Wikipedia articles or other similar kinds of on-line summaries, or from papers posted by other students on-line. Wikipedia is not an academic source, SparkNotes is not one either, and neither are other students. Aside from the universally accessible tool of Google, your professor also has easy access to “Turn-it-in.”

Disability Statement:

Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to speak with me as early as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact Counseling and Disability Services Office in Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-6953 or 2169. If you have questions or concerns regarding the accommodation process, please call Debby Jones or Rose Signorello at ext. 6953 or 3162 at Counseling and Disability Services.