

Medieval Philosophy
MR 12:30-1:50, Library 250
Christopher P. Noble, Ph.D.
Office: Palmer E 221
cnoble@ncf.edu

Office Hours: R 10:00-12:00 or by appointment

Course Description:

This course introduces students to Medieval philosophy, a period of intellectual ferment characterized by the synthesis of Greek, Roman, and Late Antique philosophical ideas with teachings from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In examining works from authors including Boethius, Avicenna, Al-Ghāzālī, Maimonides, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus, we will consider their approaches to philosophical questions such as the metaphysical and causal structure of reality, the nature and limits of human reason, the relation between philosophy and religion, and the nature of free will. In examining these topics, students will also gain insight into the way that Medieval debates paved the way for later discussions in Renaissance and Early Modern philosophy. This course satisfies the requirement in classical or medieval philosophy for the Philosophy AOC, and the requirement in philosophy or religion for the Medieval & Renaissance Studies AOC. There are no prerequisites for participation in this course, though some knowledge of Ancient philosophy will be of help.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

An understanding of major themes from Medieval Philosophy

An understanding of forms of philosophical evidence and modes of argumentation prevalent during the Medieval Period.

Have ability to analyze philosophical arguments and conduct original research in the history of philosophy/history of Medieval Philosophy.

Students may use any skills in Arabic or Latin to read primary sources in the original languages.

Course Evaluation Criteria

Expectations for a “satisfactory” evaluation include regular attendance (no more than 3 absences during the semester), exhibition of an understanding of course material, participation in class discussion, and on-time completion of assignments.

Assignments:

Short written reflections upon reading material (one per week).

1 short paper (5-6 pages) involving a thorough analysis of an argument or passage.

1 longer research paper (8-10 pages) that engages secondary literature and defends an interpretation of a particular philosopher or text. Students will develop their projects on the basis of feedback from both peers and the instructor.

Disability Services:

New College of Florida is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its student body. Students are welcome to privately discuss any concerns related to barriers to both fully participating and learning in this course. I highly encourage students with accommodations to meet with me as soon as possible.

If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, you may contact the office of Student Disability Services (SDS) in order to request official accommodation(s). Students may contact SDS in-person (HCL3), at 941-487-4496 OR disabilityservices@ncf.edu. Additional information regarding SDS can be accessed here: <https://www.ncf.edu/student-disability-services/>

Academic Dishonesty Policy:

"Students are expected to be familiar with the college's academic dishonesty policy, as described in the General Catalog. Any violation of this policy may result in academic sanctions, up to and including dismissal from the college."

Required Books:

1. *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals*. Translated and Edited by Paul Vincent Spade. Indianapolis, Hackett 1994 ISBN-13: 978-0872202498 [Abbreviated as "MPoU" below]
2. *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*. Translated by John McGinnis & David C. Reisman. Indianapolis, Hackett 2007 ISBN-13: 978-0872208711 [Abbreviated as "CAP" below]
3. Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Translated by Joel C. Relihan. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0872205833.
4. Anselm. *Proslogion: with the Replies of Guanilo and Anselm*. Translated by Thomas Williams. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0872205659
5. Aquinas. *A Summary of Philosophy*. Translated and Edited by Richard J. Regan. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003. ISBN-13: 978-0872206571 [Abbreviated as "Summary" below]

Additional course materials will be posted in PDF form on the course Canvas page.

Schedule of Readings (Tentative):

Monday 8/27 Introductions and Syllabus Review

Thursday 8/30 Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.): Selections from *Physics*: Canvas)

Monday 9/3 No Class – Labor Day

Thursday 9/6 Porphyry (234-305 C.E.): *Isagoge*, MPoU pp 1-19

Monday 9/10 Boethius (477-524 C.E.): *Consolation of Philosophy*, Books I-II 1-48

Thursday 9/13 Boethius (477-524 C.E.): *Consolation of Philosophy*, Book III 49-90

Monday 9/17 Boethius (477-524 C.E.): *Consolation of Philosophy*, Book IV-V 91-150

Thursday 9/20 Al-Kindī: *On the Means of Dispelling Sorrows*, CAP 23-35; Ar-Rāzī *The Philosopher's Way of Life*, CAP 36-43

Monday 9/24 Al-Fārābī (872-950/1 C.E.): *On the Intellect*, CAP 68-78, *The Aims of Aristotle's Metaphysics*, CAP 78-81

Thursday 9/27 Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 980-1037 C.E.): *On the Soul*, CAP pp. 175-209

Monday 10/1 Avicenna: selections from *Metaphysics*, CAP 209-224

Thursday 10/4 Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 C.E.): *Concerning That on Which True Demonstration is Based*, CAP 239-241, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, CAP 241-254

Monday 10/8 Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126-1198 C.E.): Selections from *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, CAP 295-308

Thursday 10/11 Averroes: *The Decisive Treatise*, CAP 309-330

10/15-10/19: Fall Break

Monday 10/22 St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033/34-1109 C.E.): *Proslogion/Replies*

Thursday 10/25 Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179): Selections from *Scivias* (Canvas)

Monday 10/29 Maimonides (1135/38-1204 C.E.): Selections from *Guide for the Perplexed* (Canvas)

Thursday 11/1 St. Thomas Aquinas: Selections on God and Creation, *Summary* 1-45

Monday 11/5 St. Thomas Aquinas: Selections on the Soul, *Summary* 61-104

Thursday 11/8 St. Thomas Aquinas: Selections on Human Activity and Morality, *Summary* 105-148

Monday 11/12 No Class – Veteran’s Day

Thursday 11/15 John Duns Scotus (1266-1308 C.E.): *Concerning Metaphysics, Man’s Natural Knowledge of God*, Canvas

Monday 11/19 John Duns Scotus MPoU *Six Questions on Individuation, Questions 1, 5, and 6*, MPoU 57-68, 93-113

Thursday 11/22 No Class -- Thanksgiving

Monday 11/26 William of Ockham (1287-1347 C.E.): *Five Questions on Universals, Questions 4 and 5*, MPoU 114-152

Thursday 11/29 William of Ockham: *The Possibility of a Natural Theology*, Canvas

Monday 12/3 William of Ockham: Selections from *Quodlibetal Questions*, Canvas

Final Paper Due Wednesday of Exam Week (12/12)

Resources/Further Reading

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Features thorough entries with bibliographies on many of the philosophers and philosophical themes that we will study in this course.

History of Philosophy Podcast/History of Philosophy Without any Gaps

Extensive podcast hosted by Peter Adamson featuring numerous episodes on Medieval Islamic, Jewish, and Christian philosophers as well as their Ancient Greek and Late Antique predecessors

Rules for Studying the History of Philosophy:

Guidelines on how to read/conduct research in the history of philosophy from Peter Adamson: <https://historyofphilosophy.net/rules-history-philosophy>