

PHI 342: Medieval Philosophy

11-12:15pm TR, SCI 31

Fall 2016

Professor: Jennifer Kling, PhD

Office Hours: MWF 1-3pm; available by appointment (Sacred Heart Hall 312C)

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Course Description:

The medieval period—also called the Middle Ages—is the name for the span of time between the fall of Rome (roughly 400-500 C.E.) and the European Renaissance (roughly 1400-1600 C.E.). During this millennia, there was considerable intellectual activity; medieval philosophy seeks to explore and evaluate the philosophical aspects of that activity. Many medieval thinkers were persons of faith (Christian, Jewish, Muslim), and their philosophical writings reflect this. These thinkers, following St. Augustine of Hippo, took their project to be one of faith seeking understanding, and so their work focuses on topics that have interested people throughout time. Such topics include the relationship between faith and reason, the existence and nature of God, the problem of evil (and associated questions about free will, responsibility, and divine knowledge), the structure of the universe and our place in it, and the nature of humans and our interpersonal relationships.

In this course, we will acquaint ourselves with some of the major thinkers and philosophical schools of the medieval period, in an effort to grasp how, why, and to what extent medieval thinkers approached the major, timeless issues listed above. Throughout this process, you will learn how to read and critically analyze philosophical texts from the Middle Ages, with an eye to understanding not only their historical value, but also how the ideas contained therein continue to influence our contemporary geopolitical and social world. In addition, we will destroy some myths about the medieval period (i.e., that philosophical thought did not occur at all, that the medieval period was “dark” in regards to the depth and sophistication of philosophical thought, that rationality was subordinated to faith, etc), and will also make an effort to learn how to communicate ideas and concepts of a high intellectual order clearly, vigorously, and creatively.

This course is targeted towards high-level undergraduate students; no general or specific philosophical expertise is assumed or required, but you will need to be able to read carefully, discuss critically, and write insightfully about (what can be) difficult and oblique texts. In this class, you will have to struggle with big concepts that you may not have engaged before, and you will have to work hard to succeed. Along the way you will come to better understand the content and import of medieval philosophy, and its implications for our world today. In other words, in this course you are going to learn how to *do* analytic philosophy, which is both difficult and rewarding.

Course Requirements:

Participation (10%): You will need to both do the readings and come to class in order to be successful in this course. If you don't do the readings, you'll be lost in class; if you don't come to class, you'll be lost in the readings and the assignments. While **excessive** participation is not required, some willingness to engage with both me and your fellow classmates is necessary— without this willingness on your part, we won't be able to have the sort of productive class discussions that will enable you to successfully engage in the course. So, while a lack of participation won't harm your grade very much, participation can significantly *help* your grade.

I appreciate that speaking to a classroom full of your peers can be difficult; so, there are a number of other ways to participate in class. You may speak in class, you may engage in small group work, you may visit my

office hours, you may send me emails with questions, comments, and concerns, you may start online discussion threads, you may post relevant outside documents/videos/blogs, etc. to the course website, you may tweet and/or blog and/or journal about issues raised in class, etc. If you're unsure of whether some action counts as participation, please see me, and we'll discuss it.

Argument Reconstructions (5% each): You are required to submit **four** argument reconstructions throughout the semester. Argument reconstructions are due by the start of the class period on the due date. **Late argument reconstructions will not be accepted.** They should be roughly ½-1 page in length, and should reconstruct the relevant argument. Argument reconstructions may take the form of a detailed bulleted outline or a detailed conceptual map (hand-drawn or computer-generated are both fine). If you wish to submit an argument reconstruction in some other form, please see me, and we'll discuss it.
Collaboration is encouraged but not required.

Papers (15% each): There are **three** required academic papers for this course. Each paper should be 2 pages long, and should *critically engage* with some issue brought up in the course readings and class discussions. I will provide a list of topics one week in advance of each paper's due date. If you wish to write on a topic not on the list, please come see me to discuss your proposed topic. If you wish to submit a paper in some other form (podcast, video, tumblr, etc), please see me, and we'll discuss it.

Papers are due by the start of the class period on the due date. For every 24-hour period that a paper is late, I will take 5 points off. That said, I am aware that life happens; if you feel you need an extension, please ask me as soon as possible. The earlier you ask, the more likely I am to give you an extension. Failure to turn in any one of the papers will result in failing the course.

In-class Presentation (15%): Each student must do an in-class presentation, either by themselves or with a partner. Each presentation should be 5-10 minutes long, and should present and critically engage with the main points from the assigned text for the day. We will pick presentation dates a few weeks into the semester, so that students have a feel for the text on which they would like to present. If you wish to present on a topic/issue that is not covered by an assigned reading, please see me, and we'll discuss it. Failure to do an in-class presentation will result in failing the course.

Final (10%): There is a required final exam for this course. The exam will consist of a series of short answers as well as one longer essay. Failure to take the final exam will result in failing the course.

Grading Scale:

A: An 'A' denotes exceptional skill and ability. An 'A' student demonstrates an excellent grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the material enough to explain it succinctly and well), and also displays the ability to engage thoughtfully with both the broad issues and finer points under discussion.

B: A 'B' denotes solid-to-impressive skill and ability. A 'B' student demonstrates a good grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the material well enough to explain it with few mistakes), and also displays the ability to engage thoughtfully with most, if not all, of the issues and points under discussion.

C: A 'C' denotes adequate skill and ability. A 'C' student demonstrates a fair grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the big picture, but makes some serious errors in presentation), and also displays the ability to engage thoughtfully with at least some of the issues under discussion.

D: A 'D' denotes inadequate skill and ability. A 'D' student has serious problems with grasping the material, and fails to engage thoughtfully with any of the issues under discussion.

E: An 'E' denotes catastrophic problems in fulfilling the requirements of the course. An 'E' student neither grasps the material nor engages with it critically at any level.

While hard work is correlated with success, it is not sufficient for success. To get a good grade in this course, you need to not only understand and engage with the material, but also communicate your understanding and engagement to me via your participation, projects, and papers. If you sense that you are heading towards a grade you do not want, please come see me as soon as possible (if you wait until the end of the semester, it will be too late).

Assignments:

All readings, videos, podcasts, etc can be found on this course's website.

Date	Topic	Assignment
8/30	Introduction to the Course	
9/1		Steven P. Marrone, “Medieval philosophy in context”
9/6		
9/8	Early Medievals	St. Augustine of Hippo, <i>On the Free Choice of Will</i> , 43-74
9/13		
9/15 No Class: Professor Out		
9/20		Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> , 79-88
9/22 Argument Reconstruction #1 Due		Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , 108-116
9/27 No Class: Common Dialogue Day		
9/29		Boethius, <i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i> , 119-20, 125-33
10/4 Paper #1 Due		Al-Farabi, selections from <i>The Attainment of Happiness</i> WP
10/6	Middle Period	Avicenna (Ibn Sina), <i>On the Nature of God</i> , 544 WP
10/11		Anselm, <i>Proslogion</i> , 143-50
10/13 Argument Reconstruction #2 Due		Abelard, <i>On Universals</i> , 151-61
10/18		Abelard, “Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian”
10/20		
10/25 Paper #2 Due		Al-Ghazali, <i>The Incoherence of the Philosophers</i> , 207-209
10/27		Averroes, <i>The Decisive Treatise</i> , 210-31
11/1		

11/3 Argument Reconstruction #3 Due		Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> , 307-21
11/8		Thomas Aquinas, <i>The Principles of Nature</i> , 399-412
11/10		Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> , 321-26
11/15 Paper #3 Due		Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> , 326-32
11/17		Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> , 332-41
11/22	Late Medievals	St. Catherine of Siena, <i>The Paradoxes of Wisdom</i> WP
11/24 No Class: Thanksgiving Break		
11/29		St. Teresa of Ávila, selections from <i>The Ways of Perfection</i> WP
12/1 Argument Reconstruction #4 Due		William of Ockham, <i>On Universals/On Being</i> , 440-52
12/6		William of Ockham, <i>On Knowledge/On God</i> , 453-63
12/8		Meister Eckhart, 467-73
Finals Week 12/12— 12/16		Final Exam

Code of Student Conduct:

All students at Siena Heights University are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. For more information, please see the [Code of Student Conduct](#). Please obey the spirit as well as the law of SHU's Code of Student Conduct. If you think that something is in violation of the Code, it probably is, so check before doing it. Please remember that unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism, and that **you must cite all of your sources** for papers!

Please note: every assignment turned in for this class must be your own original work, produced specifically *for this class*. You may not turn in an assignment written for a previous and/or different class. To do so would constitute (self) plagiarism, and will be treated as such.

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center at Siena Heights University is a free resource available to all CAS students. Students are encouraged to visit the writing center for writing feedback at any stage in the writing process. For information regarding their tutors, hours, location, or to utilize their online links and resources, please visit writingcenter.sienaheights.edu.

Diversity and Disability Statement:

Our institution values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students with disabilities are also welcome to contact the Office of Accessibility (517) 264-7683 or Laura Lyall (coordinator) at lyall@sienaheights.edu to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in the course,

including accommodations. This process is initiated and driven by the student. It is to your advantage to begin the process in a timely manner, since accommodations are not retroactive. Grades earned before verification of a disability by the Office of Accessibility will not be changed.

Academic Engagement Policy:

In response to federal regulations governing financial aid, faculty will report students who are absent from class for one week without explanation. These students will be contacted to determine their current status. Students who are disengaged from a class for two weeks will be administratively withdrawn from that class and given a withdrawal grade equivalent to an E in grade point calculations. In order to avoid an administrative withdrawal, students can initiate a withdrawal themselves before the deadline (November 5) and avoid negative consequences to their grade points.

Sex- and Gender-based Violence and Harassment:

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted for **any** reason, you can find the appropriate resources here:

- The SHU Counseling Center, directed by Sandy Morley, is open M-F from 8 am to 5 pm or by appointment. Sandy Morley is a confidential resource. You can reach her at 517-264-7193 or smorley@sienaheights.edu, or stop by Ledwidge Hall 195-197. Counseling services are offered at no charge to University students.
- The SHU Public Safety Department can be reached at 517-264-7800 or by dialing 0 on campus. They are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and they offer 24-hour escort service to any location on campus. Cindy Birdwell is the Chief Public Safety Officer and she is also SHU's Title IX Coordinator. She can be reached at 517-264-7194 or cbirdwel@sienaheights.edu and her office is in Ledwidge 179.
- Campus Ministry is another valuable resource for students, no matter their faith tradition. Father John Grace is a confidential resource on campus. He can be reached at 517-264-7198 or jgrace@sienaheights.edu, and his office is located in the Campus Ministry Lounge in Ledwidge.

Syllabus Changes:

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as appropriate. The odds that I'll do so during the semester are small, but if I do, I will inform you as soon as possible.