

Introduction to Medieval Philosophy
Dr. Michelle Panchuk
Thursdays 6:00 pm-9:30 pm

Office: Malloy 419

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-2; Wednesdays 10-11; by appointment

Email: mpanchuk@nd.edu

Course Description:

This is a history of philosophy course designed to explore central themes, philosophers, and texts in the Medieval Philosophical tradition. We will read primary and secondary texts on Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Ethics, and identify the connections that were believed to exist among the three in the Latin Middle Ages. We will specifically look at the relationship between God and the problem of universals, God and the Good, and nature and happiness.

Course Objectives:

The successful student will be able to:

1. Identify key Medieval philosophers and locate them in their historical context.
2. Identify key philosophical issues of concern to each of these philosophers and describe the philosopher's contribution to the understanding of these issues.
3. Formulate, write, and defend an argumentative thesis in essay form.
4. Understand and use key terms relevant to competent discourse in Ancient and Medieval philosophy.
5. Identify connections between the course material and current issues.

Required Texts:

1. Joseph W. Koterski, *An Introduction to Medieval Philosophy: Basic Concepts*. (Malden, Ma: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).
2. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. (London: Penguin Classics, 1999).

3. Spade, Paul Vincent. *Five Texts on the Medieval Problem of Universals* (Hackett Publishing, 1994)

Course Requirements:

A. Philosophy Café (10%)

On blackboard, I have set up a “Philosophy Café,” where students may ask questions and discuss aspects of the readings with their classmates. Each question or observation is rated on a scale of 1-3. A question like, “What does Boethius mean by happiness?” will receive 1 point, because the answer can be found easily in the text, while a question like, “On Boethius’s view of the Good, how does anyone ever knowingly choose what is not good?” would receive a 3. Responses to question are graded on a scale of 1-2. Students must post at least one question and one response to a fellow student’s question each week. Students may post more in order to earn extra credit, but may not earn more than 8 points per week. I will address topics raised in the Café during weekly lectures.

B. Timeline (10%)

Students will produce an abbreviated historical timeline including major events in Europe and central philosophers covered in this course from the time of Boethius to Ockham. Students may be as creative as they like with this project. In fact, the student with the most creative design will receive 5 bonus points (thus, the outlines will be prepared for anonymous review).

C. Writing Assignments (60%)

- “Boethius and I on Happiness” (10%) Students will write 1 paragraph summarizing the student’s own understanding of happiness; 1 paragraph summarizing Boethius’s understanding of happiness; 1 paragraph discussing the comparative strengths and weakness of each view.
- Compare and Contrast Theories of Divine Ideas (20%). Students choose two of the three primary readings on Divine Ideas, summarize the main points of each theory of Divine Ideas, and identify and discuss the primary assumptions about the nature of God, the nature of human knowledge, and the nature of created things that lead the philosophers to hold different views.
- Research Paper (30%). Students choose one topic or issue from one of the primary texts on which to write an extended research paper. Students meet with the instructor to discuss secondary literature to consider (Koterski and at least two others). Students present the philosopher’s view and critically evaluate it in light of the secondary literature and their own insights.

D. TED Talk (10%)

Students will sign up to present a TED-style talk. The talk should be 5-7 minutes long and should make a philosophical claim related to a topic discussed in the course. Students should present it in a way that an average person can understand and demonstrate how this topic is relevant to an average person (or some subset of average people).

E. Attendance and Participation (10%)

Because this course is largely discussion based, student attendance and participation is critical, not only for each individual student's progress, but for the progress of the entire class. Students are expected to come to class each week having read the material carefully and having prepared comments and questions to share. Students are allowed one absence without penalty regardless of academic privilege. Exceptions to this policy will be made only in cases in which students have a documented good reason for missing class (Examples of good reasons are: serious illness, death in family etc. Examples of bad reasons are: over-sleeping, planned events, trips that are not sponsored by the university, etc.)

Late Policy:

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated in the schedule.

Assignments will be counted late 15 minutes after the beginning of class time on that day. Papers will be marked down 5 points for each day past the due date. Students may turn in papers at the professor's office prior to the date due. Exceptions to this policy will be made only in the case of a documented good reason.

Academic Integrity and Classroom Decorum:

Plagiarism and cheating of any kind will not be tolerated in this class. Students found engaging in these activities will receive an automatic 0 on the assignment, possibly an F for the course, and will be reported to the Dean.

A second aspect of academic integrity is respect for both the instructor and fellow students. Ideas may be evaluated and criticized, but the character of the individual defending those ideas may not. Students engaging in this, or any other form of disruption, will be asked to leave the class for the day.

Please turn off all cell phones during class. Lap top computers may be used for note-taking; however, if it becomes clear that they are being used for other purposes that distract from classroom discussion, the instructor may ask that the device be turned off.

8/21	Introduction to the course. Review of Syllabus. Topic: God and Medieval Philosophy
8/28	Reading: Boethius, <i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i> Book I - II
9/4	Reading: Boethius, <i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i> Book III
9/11	Reading: Boethius, <i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i> Book IV
9/18	Reading: Boethius, <i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i> Book V DUE: Paper 1
God	
9/25	Reading: Koterski 37-60
10/2	Reading: Selections from Anselm's <i>Proslogion</i> (on Blackboard)
10/9	Reading: Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> , Prima Pars, Q. 25, articles 1-4 Due: Timeline
Divine Ideas	
10/16	Reading: Koterski 61-86
10/23	Reading: Augustine, 'On the Ideas'
11/30	Reading: Selections from Abelard's 'Glosses on Porphyry'
11/6	Reading: Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> , Prima Pars, Q.15 DUE: Paper 2
The Problem of Universals	
11/13	Reading: Koterski 87-110
11/20	Reading: Porphyry, <i>Isagoge</i>
11/27	Reading: Boethius's ' <i>Second Commentary on the Isagoge of Porphyry</i> '
12/4	Abelard, 'Glosses on Porphyry' DUE: Research Paper