

Rhodes College  
**MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY**  
PHIL 202: MWF 10:00 – 10:50  
Palmer 210

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Office Hours: MW 3:00 – 4:30

Medieval philosophy is concerned with European philosophy during the historical period often referred to as the *middle* or *dark ages*. It should be noted that Christianity is not a philosophy, but a revealed religion. Nevertheless, during Christianity's early stages religious intellectuals felt compelled to respond to challenges from pagan and scientific authorities. In order to accomplish this goal, Christian thinkers adopted the tools of philosophy to defend Christian doctrines against such challenges. Furthermore Christian intellectuals were called upon to interpret scripture for believers. Medieval philosophy is generally concerned with God's existence and nature, human nature, and the relationship between God and humanity. This course focuses on arguments for the existence of God, the role of reason, belief and faith, and the problem of evil. Reading material from the Judeo-Christian tradition includes selections from Boethius, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas and Maimonides.

**COURSE TEXTS**

Boethius: *The Consolation of Philosophy*  
0140447806 Penguin

Augustine: *On the Free Choice of the Will*  
0872201880 Hackett

Maimonides: *The Guide of the Perplexed*  
0872203247 Hackett

Anselm: *The Prayers and Meditations with the Proslogion*  
0140442782 Penguin

Aquinas: *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 1: God  
026801678X Univ. of Notre Dame

Aquinas: *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 2: Creation  
0268016801 Univ. of Notre Dame

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Gain factual knowledge

Learn fundamental principles

Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view

Develop skill in expressing oneself orally and in writing

Gain a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity\*

### GRADING

- 15%: Quizzes, homework
- 15%: Attendance, participation
- 15%: Team debates (6)
- 25%: Mid-term exam
- 30%: Final exam (includes one cumulative question)

### QUIZZES AND HOMEWORK

There will be a quiz each week. Quizzes are intended to motivate students to keep current with reading assignments. If the class demonstrates superior knowledge of the material through class discussion, this measure may be reduced or eliminated.

Homework will mainly consist of provocative questions intended to stimulate thought about ideas and arguments raised by our thinkers.

### ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

You *are* required to attend class. Rhodes administration does not make a distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Excessive absence will adversely affect your grade. Each absence in excess of three (3) may result in a one-step grade reduction. Missed quizzes can be made up before the next class period. Missed exams cannot be made up unless special circumstances warrant such considerations.

Discussion and exchange of ideas are essential components of learning, particularly in philosophy courses, so these factors are deemed important to your grade for the course. You are cordially invited to participate in the great intellectual conversation. In other words, you are expected to attend class prepared to intelligently discuss assigned reading and class topics. If you are unusually shy about speaking in class, please see me and some reasonable accommodation can be made.

### DEBATES

Students will be assembled into teams for the purpose of challenging and defending arguments explicitly or implicitly offered by the thinkers for the course. I will solicit volunteers, but each student is required to participate in at least two debates. You are encouraged to select topics that you find enlightening, appealing, intriguing, frustrating or inflammatory. Each debate topic will be selected at the end of the section devoted to that thinker. (See debate format below.)

### CLASS RULES for writing and class discussion

1. Always answer the question you are asked.
2. Do not evade the spirit or letter of the question.
3. Do not assert or deny premises insincerely, unless you acknowledge that you are doing so. Avoid engaging in sophistry.
4. Avoid using “I believe,” or “In my opinion.”
5. Do not emote; offer reasons for your position.
6. All written assignments are due in class on the required date, and are to be delivered in hard copy, unless specific permission is granted to do otherwise.

### **Debate format**

The class will receive an affirmative statement, and teams will be solicited to defend and challenge the claim. A member of the affirmative team will offer a brief summary of the team's argument, a member of the opposing team will do likewise. A member of the opposing team will pose a challenging question, and a member of the defending team will respond. A member of the defending team will pose a challenging question, and a member of the opposing team will respond. These rounds will continue as time permits, and may include questions from the class. Finally, one member from each team will offer closing remarks.