

Rhodes College Digital Archives - DLynx

PHIL 202-01, Medieval Philosophy, Spring 2005

Item Type	Syllabus
Authors	Shade, Patrick A.
Publisher	Memphis, Tenn. : Rhodes College
Rights	Rhodes College owns the rights to the archival digital images in this repository. Images are made available for educational use only and may not be used for any non-educational or commercial purpose. Approved educational uses include private research and scholarship, teaching, and student projects. For additional information please contact archives@rhodes.edu . Fees may apply.
Download date	2026-06-16 15:09:18
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10267/3494

SPRING 2005

PHIL 202: MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

Pat Shade
402 Clough

Hours: WF 11:00-12:00, TR 10-10:50 & by appt.
Unofficial Office Hours: I'm typically in my office MW 3-4

Office: 3935; Home: 272-0401
Email: shade@rhodes.edu

SYLLABUS AT A GLANCE:

I. Goal: To explore Medieval responses to the question: *What is our proper orientation towards divinity?* and related questions (e.g., how do we attain this orientation in the 1st place, how do we sustain it in the face of challenges and temptations, and how does this fulfill us or promise a positive end?).

II. Course Outline: Selections on Christianity (from Augustine, Boethius, Anselm), Judaism (Maimonides), Islam (al Ghazālī, Averroës), and a final synthesis by Aquinas

III. Course Requirements:

20%= **Participation** (Prompt, Discussion Participation & Normal Class Work)

40%= 2 **Exams** (1 midterm and 1 final, with a cumulative essay question)

40%= 2 **Papers**

IV. Course Resources: Successful classroom, Websites, Computer Communication, Honor Code

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:

General Description: This course focuses on the human-divine relationship which lies at the heart of Medieval thought. Thematically, Medieval thought tends to involve a modification of the Greek philosophies of Plato and Aquinas as thinkers attempt to integrate reason with faith (philosophy with the traditions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam).

Our exploration of these philosophies is structured around the central question: *What is our proper orientation towards divinity?* Related questions include:

- Why should we believe there is divinity (or a divine being)?
- What things help us develop and maintain our orientation to the divine?
- What things impede our orientation to the divine?

Related issues concern:

- God's existence and nature
- human nature (especially the relevance of free will & an immortal soul)
- the relation of reason (argumentation & dispute) and faith (and/or revelation)
- the problem of evil & suffering (and their effect on faith)

Through the lens of each philosophy, we will look carefully at these questions, analyzing their **religious**, **metaphysical**, **epistemological**, **ethical**, and (to a lesser degree) **political** dimensions. In the process, we will grapple with the controversial wedding of Athens (reason) and Jerusalem (faith).

General Ends: The general ends of the course concern developing mastery of skills and content:

- To develop and improve fundamental philosophical skills, especially *identifying* and *making clear and precise distinctions*, whether in reading, writing, or discussing.
- To understand ways of thinking: in particular to understand the "*vision*" or worldview which results from and reveals distinctive values and beliefs of a philosophical position.
- To understand the relation between the *values* and *beliefs* of a philosophical position and its particular *methods* (e.g., question-answer, use of myth and analogy, causal analysis, development of hierarchies, synthesis of different perspectives) and *content*.

General Means:

- Careful *reading* and *preparation* for class (especially in Normal Class Work and Student Prompt).
- Clear, creative and insightful *analysis* and *exploration* of a particular issue (especially in Papers).
- Developing the ability to thoughtfully *present* and *relate* the different styles and positions of philosophers studied (especially in Exams).

II. REQUIRED TEXTS: All are available at the bookstore

- Augustine: *On Free Choice of the Will*, Hackett Publ.
- Boethius: *Consolation of Philosophy*, Bobbs-Merrill.
- Anselm: *Proslogion*, Hackett Pub.
- Moses Maimonides: *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Hackett Pub.
- al Ghazālī, *On Hope and Fear*, Kazi Pub.
- Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*
- Aquinas: *Summa Contra Gentiles* (God, Creation, Providence Parts I & II)

COURSE OUTLINE:**I. Introduction:** Course Questions & Issues, and the challenge of Bertrand Russell**Christian Responses****II. Augustine (354-430 CE)**

1. The life of a rebel (selections from *Confessions*)
2. “Faith Seeking Understanding:” Christian Theodicy (*On Free Choice of the Will*)
3. Selections from “On Grace and Free Will”

III. Boethius (480-524)

1. Philosophy’s “Consolation”

IV. Anselm (1033-1109)

1. Ontological Argument for God’s existence

Jewish Responses**V. Moses Maimonides (1135-1204)**

1. *The Guide of the Perplexed*

Muslim Responses**VI. al Ghazālī (1058-1111)**

1. Selections from *Foundations of Islamic Belief*
2. *On Hope and Fear*

VII. Averroës (1126-1198)

1. *The Decisive Treatise*

The Grand Synthesis**VIII. St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)**

1. Selected readings on faith, God’s existence & nature, human nature & happiness, justice

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 20% Preparation/Participation (Prompt, Discussion Participation, and Normal Class Work)
- 40% 2 Papers (@ 20%)
- 40% 2 Exams(@ 20%)

A. PARTICIPATION: Philosophical thinking requires active engagement in learning and testing key ideas and methodologies. The following are designed to promote this. Your overall participation grade will be the average of items 1 and 2, with serious consideration also given to item 3.

[1] **Discussion Participation:** *Qualitative* participation is vital to your learning and is expected throughout the semester. First, you should carefully prepare for class; this means actively reading (see “Reading Philosophy” handout) and reflect on the day’s assignment (by noting key definitions and arguments and by formulating questions) *prior* to class. This will prepare you to listen with understanding and to actively participate in class discussion. Discussion participation involves (i) contributing your own views, questions, and reactions to the readings and class discussion, and (ii) carefully listening to, questioning, and responding to the views of others. Aim to participate regularly, but avoid dominating class discussion.

When determining your discussion participation grade, I will look at the *quality* and *pattern* of your participation over the course of the semester. The *quality* of your work is gauged in terms of its (i) **clarity**, (ii) **insight**, and (iii) **sophistication**. In assessing the *pattern* of your work, I will look at (i) **consistency**, (ii) **effort**, and (iii) **improvement and progress** (or regress) you have made in critically discussing materials throughout the semester.

Minimal participation, low attendance, inattention, and disruptive or dominating class-room behavior will result in a low participation grade. If you are concerned about your participation performance, please don’t hesitate to talk with me.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for all material covered and assignments distributed or collected. Since I consider attendance a factor of participation, I don’t distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. (If you’re not present, you can’t contribute.) If you miss more than 4 classes, your prep/participation grade will drop 1/3 letter grade per missed day. *Also*, you are expected to contact me so we can discuss your attendance.

[2] **Student Prompt and Follow-up Assessment:**

(a) The Prompt: Each of you will prepare a prompt for class discussion **once** during the semester. Your assignment is to prepare a prompt that *explores a key idea, issue, or argument* in terms of *at least one* of the following:

- A **question** of significance that arose from your reading of the day’s assignment.
- An **interpretation** of a baffling or controversial passage or point from the day’s reading.
- An **objection** to an important point from the day’s reading.
- **Additional support** (an important consequence or additional argument) for an important point from the day’s reading.

While you briefly explain the relevant passage to set the context, prompts are intended as *philosophical responses* to (and *not summaries* of) the readings. There are **two extremes to avoid**: (1) having a clear focus without much substance, and (2) having a lot of material without much focus. The first case arises when you pose a simple question/interpretation/objection without explaining (and exploring) its significance (to you and/or to class issues). The second occurs when you *either* ramble on without stating your central point *or* raise lots of points whose connection remains unclear.

(b) Follow-up Assessment of your Prompt: After prompting, write an assessment that reflects how your understanding of the prompt’s issue has changed or grown.

Fuller details of the prompt and follow-up assessment will be discussed in class with complete details distributed in a handout.

[3] **Periodic Homework, Quizzes, In-class Writing, or Group Work:** To gauge your **preparation** and understanding of material, I will occasionally give *homework* and *quizzes*, most of which will be designed to (i) test your understanding of the reading, or (ii) help you crystallize your thinking on a relevant class issue. In addition, there may be some *in-class writing* or *group work*. The chief criteria used in

evaluating this work will be **clarity** and **accuracy**. I will comment on this work but typically *not* assign a numerical grade; instead I will assign a + (excellent work), √ (good work), – (problematic work), or 0 (no work) to indicate the quality of your work. These exercises are an important part of your ongoing work. Use them to test your understanding and recognize them as a valuable source of feedback from me. At the end of the semester, I will consider the profile of your work in this area. If your final course grade is borderline, and if you did good work on these exercises, your efforts here can push your grade up (e.g., from an 89% to a 90%).

Missed work in this category can be made up *only* when you have discussed the matter with me *prior* to the beginning of the class you miss. Each student is allowed *one* make-up, but make-up material must be completed *by the beginning of the next class meeting*.

If you are concerned about your performance in any of these areas, please don't hesitate to talk with me.

B. PAPERS: There will be 2 papers (5-7 pages; more details later), the first tentatively scheduled for **February 21** & the second for **April 20**. Their goal is to provide you the opportunity to develop your *understanding* of course material as well as your ability to *critically assess* it – but in greater detail than you can do in any of the other course components. There is no rewrite option, but I'm happy to discuss your paper with you in advance. Topics will be suggested but you may select your own.

C. EXAMS: There will be 2 exams consisting of a mix of objective, short-answer, and essay questions. The first exam will cover the Augustine through Maimonides. The final will cover the remainder of the semester's material; it will also include at least one comprehensive question.

V. MISCELLANEOUS:

• **Grading Criteria:** See “Grading Criteria for Written Work” handout for specifics.

A	94 and up	B+	87-89	C+	77-79
A-	90-93	B	84-86	C	74-76
		B-	80-83	C-	70-73 etc.

• **Successful Classroom:** In our class everyone has a right to express a genuine observation, curiosity or criticism, but no one has a right to put one down. Respect towards all members of the class and to course content is the key. I work hard to generate a setting in which we can be honest and critical, but my efforts are futile without your individual contributions. Impediments to a successful classroom include tardiness, lethargy, excessive absences, ringing cell-phones, and leaving the classroom before the end of the hour. We are biological creatures, but since we also have a certain mastery over our bodies, please take care of your biological needs before class.

• **Computer Component:** You are responsible for any notes, assignments, etc. that I send out via e-mail. In addition, you will be expected to check documents left on the Academic Server (Philosophy → Shade → Public → PHIL 202). I will announce new documents which need to be read; if you are absent, you are responsible for reading these. If you're unfamiliar with computer use, please check with one of the computer staff; they'll be happy to help you.

• **Honor Code:** The Honor Code stipulates that all the work you submit is to be your own. You are encouraged to discuss topics and assignments with your colleagues, but the work you hand in must be your own, i.e., it must be formulated and written in your own words and style reflecting your own thoughtful treatment. If you have any questions about the Honor Code, please ask me.

This syllabus is subject to revision (but don't worry; I'll discuss any changes with the class before I make them).

COURSE CALENDAR

(R): materials available in our folder on the Academic Server (or, in some cases, distributed in class)

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
	1/12 Introduction, and the Challenge of Russell	1/14 Augustine the Rebel • Medieval Timeline (R) • Augustine Biography (R) • “On the Good” (R) • Myth of the Cave (R)
1/17 MLK	1/19 Augustine • <i>Free Choice</i> , Intro & Bk I (pp. xi-xix, 1-28)	1/21 Augustine • <i>Free Choice</i> , Bk II.1-12 (pp. 29-55)
1/24 Augustine • <i>Free Choice</i> , Bk II.13-20 (pp. 55-69)	1/26 Augustine • <i>Free Choice</i> , Bk III.1-8 (pp. 70-87)	1/28 Augustine • <i>Free Choice</i> , Bk III.9-25 (pp. 87-123) • “On Grace and Free Will” (R)
1/31 Boethius • Boethius Biography (pp. ix-xiv) • <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i> , Bk I (pp. 3-20)	2/2 Boethius • <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i> , Bk II (pp. 21-41)	2/4 Boethius • <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i> , Bk III (pp. 42-74)
2/7 Boethius • <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i> , Bk IV (pp. 75-100)	2/9 Boethius • <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i> , Bk V (pp. 101-119)	2/11 Anselm • Anselm Biography (R) • <i>Proslogion</i> : Prologue, Chpts 1-26
2/14 Anselm • <i>Proslogion</i> : Gaunilo’s reply, Anselm’s reply	2/16 Maimonides • <i>Guide of the Perplexed</i> , Intro pp. 1-7, pp. 41-49, Bk I pp. 51-77	2/18 Maimonides • <i>Guide of the Perplexed</i> , Bk I pp. 77-82, Bk II pp. 89–126 (you may skip Chpts XIV [pp. 99-101] & XXII [110-4])
2/21 Maimonides • <i>Guide of the Perplexed</i> , No new reading Paper 1 due	2/23 Maimonides • <i>Guide of the Perplexed</i> , Bk II pp. 126-147	2/25 Maimonides • <i>Guide of the Perplexed</i> , Bk III pp. 149-165
2/28 Maimonides • <i>Guide of the Perplexed</i> , Bk III pp. 165–202	3/2 Review	3/4 Midterm
3/7 SPRING BREAK	3/9 SPRING BREAK	3/11 SPRING BREAK
3/14 Introducing Islam (likely evening meeting for a guest lecture, with reading from the Koran)	3/16 al Ghazālī • al Ghazālī Biography • <i>Foundations of Islamic Belief</i> (R)	3/18 al Ghazālī <i>Foundations of Islamic Belief</i> (R)
3/21 al Ghazālī <i>On Hope and Fear</i> : Hope	3/23 al Ghazālī <i>On Hope and Fear</i> : Fear	3/25 EASTER
3/28 al Ghazālī <i>On Hope and Fear</i> : Evil	3/30 Averroës • Averroës Biography • <i>Decisive Treatise</i>	4/1 Islam Wrap-up
4/4 Aquinas • Aquinas Biography • Aquinas’ Project (selections)	4/6 Aquinas On Faith (selections)	4/8 Aquinas on God’s existence: the Five Ways (selections)
4/11 Aquinas on God’s existence: the Five Ways (selections)	4/13 Aquinas on God’s Nature (selections)	4/15 Aquinas on Human Nature & the Immortal Soul (selections)
4/18 Aquinas on Justice (selections) (R)	4/20 Aquinas on Justice (selections) (R) Paper 2 Due	4/22 Aquinas on Happiness (selections)
4/25 Aquinas on Happiness (selections)	4/27 Review	4/29 URCAS (no class)