

Medieval Philosophy

PHIL 301W
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MWF 1–1:50



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AN INTRODUCTION to major thinkers from late antiquity, the Carolingian renaissance, the 12th-century renaissance, and the 13th century. Throughout, we will observe the relation of medieval to ancient thinkers, noting the continuity, the development, and the fruitful interplay of the Platonic and the Aristotelian traditions; we will also weigh the difficulty of assimilating this complex pagan heritage in the context of revealed religion, and consider how medieval thinkers worked toward a solution. Such themes as knowledge, the existence of God, the problem of evil, the relation between divine and natural causes, and the soul will receive our special attention.

This course fulfills the Faith & Reason Theme Area requirement.

PREREQUISITES

Basic Philosophical Questions. Ancient Philosophy is good but not necessary background: because medieval thinkers focused on different ancient texts than we do, I introduce those texts as needed.

READINGS

- Plato *Timaeus* 17a–53c
- Tertullian *On Prescription against Heretics* 7 (faith, not philosophy)
- Augustine *Confessions* 7.9, ‘On Ideas’ (integrating Platonism and faith)
- Augustine *On the Teacher* (how we acquire knowledge)
- Boethius *The Consolation of Philosophy* (why bad things happen to good people, written as Boethius awaited execution)
- Eriugena *On the Division of Nature* (selections exploring how language can be stretched to talk about the ineffable)
- Anselm *Proslogion*, Gaunilo *Reply to the Foregoing on Behalf of the Fool*, and Anselm *Reply to the Foregoing by the Author* (existence and nature of God)
- Ibn Sīnā, selected texts on essence and existence
- Siger of Brabant *On the Intellective Soul* 7 (whether immortality is personal)
- Thomas Aquinas, selections