Important Information:
Lecture: Monday and Wednesday 10:00 – 11:00, Emerson 104
Professor: Jeffrey McDonough
Office Hours: 314 Emerson Hall, TBA
E-mail: jkmcdon@fas.harvard.edu
Course Web Page: http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~phil117/

Texts:
Required:

The only required text for the undergraduate section of this course is a large reader. There are two copies of the reader on reserve at Robbins Library. You are welcome to do the readings there, but you may also check the reader out and photocopy it either in Emerson or somewhere less expensive. (I actually recommend doing this in small groups.)

Graduate students will want to purchase a copy of the following text.
Note a copy of the first chapter has been placed on reserve in the green hanging folder in the box labeled “Phil 117: Medievals” in Robbins Library.

Optional:

On the course website students can find a bibliography that includes general studies relevant to the material we will be studying. You may, however, find the following texts particularly helpful and therefore worth purchasing.


Peter King, ed. and trans., Augustine: Against the Academicians and The Teacher (Indianapolis: Hackett).


Course Description:

This course is an investigation into some central metaphysical and epistemological themes of the medieval period. In order to get some feel for the development of philosophy during the Middle Ages without sacrificing the opportunity to engage in some depth with important philosophical issues, we will focus on three leading figures of the period. We will begin with Augustine (354 CE to 450 CE) and consider his attempt to bring together a broadly Platonic philosophical outlook and emerging Christian theology. We will then turn to Aquinas (1225 CE to 1274 CE) and his attempt to reconcile the Christian tradition with a broadly Aristotelian philosophy made possible in the West by newly available Latin translations of “The Philosopher’s” works. Finally, we will turn our attention to William of Ockham (1287 CE to 1347) and some central themes of the nominalist/conceptualist tradition.

Requirements and Grading:

1. Reading
   The ability to read texts carefully and thoughtfully is one of the most important skills the study of philosophy can help to foster. In order to better understand what is being taught, and to promote informed classroom discussions, required readings should be completed before lecture. Those readings are typically very short, but also very difficult, and students who wish to do well in the course are advised to read assigned texts several times. They may also wish to read primary texts listed under “optional reading,” or some of the secondary texts listed in the “supplemental reading” bibliography (posted on the web site) in order to further improve comprehension. Readings listed as “optional” or “supplemental” are not required for the course.

2. Exams
   One of the aims of this course is to help students to gain an overview of some central themes in medieval philosophy. To promote that aim, as well as to provide students with an alternative means of being evaluated, three exams will be administered over the course of the term. They are intended to test comprehension of the material covered in required readings, lectures, and discussion section, and will not require outside reading or research. Furthermore, exams will be primarily non-cumulative and designed to test material in association with one of the three philosophers that we are studying (although comparison questions – especially where those comparisons have been highlighted in lecture – will be fair game).
3. Term Paper
In order to give students a chance to explore a topic in greater depth, and to improve upon their skills in writing philosophical essays, a term paper has been assigned. Undergraduates should produce a 12-15 page essay, while graduate students should write between 20 and 30 pages. All students are encouraged to talk with me and their fellow students about their topics, and undergraduates are encouraged to also discuss their papers with the teaching fellow (if one is assigned to the course).

4. Grading
Grades for undergraduates will be determined by their performance on their exams, final papers, and participation in classroom discussions according to the following percentages (the exams have been weighted because the second exam will cover more material):

- Exam 1: 20%
- Exam 2: 35%
- Exam 3: 20%
- Term Paper: 25%

Regular attendance and participation is expected, and grades for most students will not be affected by these considerations. Exceptionally helpful contributions to discussion, or conversely failure to regularly attend class or become productively involved in discussion, may result in the raising or lowering of a student’s final grade by up to a third of a full letter (e.g. from a B+ to an A- or from a B+ to a B). Graduate students have the option of having their grade determined either by (a) exams and the term paper or (b) the term paper alone.

5. Special Needs and Emergencies
Students requiring special assistance are encouraged to inform either the professor or teaching fellow. We will do everything we can to help. Absences from class or exam periods, and late papers, will be dealt with in accordance with the policies described in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences handbooks. Students should expect that failure to attend an exam without an excuse deemed legitimate by those policies will result in a score of zero for that exam, and under the same circumstances, late papers will be marked down a third of a letter grade for each day that they are late and not in the hands of the person who will be grading it. Requests made to the professor or teaching fellow prior to an absence or due date may result in special accommodation – if something is coming up, let us know ahead of time; we must be fair, but we want to help.
Tentative Schedule

Week 1

(1) Wednesday, February 1: Introduction to Medieval Philosophy
*Required reading:* Syllabus

---AUGUSTINE---

Note: The readings are indicated using the standard apparatus for Augustine’s works (typically book, chapter, section) which is (supposed to be) helpful for locating the appropriate passages in different translations. Since it can also be confusing, however, I have put in brackets the page numbers corresponding to the translations placed in the reader on reserve.

Week 2

(2) Monday, February 6: Augustine’s Life and Works/Augustinian Themes
*Required reading:* *Confessions* II.vi (12) – II.x.(18); VII.i (1) – vi (8);
VII.viii(12) – XVII(23) [pp. 30-34; 111-116; 120-127]

Optional reading: *Confessions*, Books I – IX (on reserve); “Notes on Three Heresies” available on the course web site through the lectures link.

(3) Wednesday, February 8: Skepticism and Its Refutation
*Required reading:* *City of God* 11.26; *Against the Academicians* 1.2.5 – 1.4.10; 2.6.14 – 2.11.24; 3.3.5 - 3.12.26; *[City of God*, p. 370; *Against the Academicians* pp. 5-12; 39-48; 55-77;]

Optional Reading: *Against the Academicians* (all)

Week 3

(4) Monday, February 13: Philosophy of Language
*Required reading:* *The Teacher* 1.1 – 4.7, 10.31-13.46; *Confessions* 1.6.8, 1.8.13
[The Teacher 94-104, 133-146; *Confessions* p. 7 and 10-11]

Optional reading: *The Teacher* (all)

(5) Wednesday, February 15: Theory of Knowledge
*Required reading:* *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book XII, Chapters 6-12, 14, 16, 23-25 [pp. 185-195, 196-198, 199-201, 211-216]

Optional reading: *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book XII (all)

Week 4

(6) Monday, February 20: Presidents’ Day – No Class!

(7) Wednesday, February 22: Evil, Freedom, and Foreknowledge
Required reading: On Free Choice of the Will I.1-I.2, I.16, II.1-II.2, II.18 – II.20, III.1 – III.5; City of God V.10, XI. 21 [On Free Choice, pp. 1-4, 27-28, 31-33, 64-69, 70-83; City of God, pp. 157, 363]
Optional reading: On Free Choice of the Will (all)

Week 5

(8) Monday, February 27: Exam on Augustine

(9) Wednesday, March 1: Aquinas’s Life and Works/Aquinas’s Explanatory Framework
Required reading: The Principles of Nature (all)
Optional reading: Aquinas’s Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics, Book I, Lectures 11-13; Book II, Lectures 12-14. (Aquinas’s Commentary is available in English translation through Harvard’s subscription to Past Masters – link available on the course web site.)

Week 6

(10) Monday, March 6: Aquinas’s Explanatory Framework
Required reading: The Principles of Nature (all)
Optional reading: Aquinas’s Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics, Book I, Lectures 11-13; Book II, Lectures 12-14. (Aquinas’s Commentary is available in English translation through Harvard’s subscription to Past Masters – link available on the course web site.)

--AQUINAS--

(11) Wednesday, March 8: Aquinas’s Metaphysical Framework
Required reading: On Being and Essence (all)
Optional reading: The Principles of Nature (reread)

Week 7

(12) Monday, March 13: Aquinas’s Metaphysical Framework
Required reading: On Being and Essence (all)
Optional reading: The Principles of Nature (reread)

(13) Wednesday, March 15: God’s Existence – The Proof From Motion
Required reading: Summa Contra Gentiles, Book I, Chapter 13 (i.e. SCG I.13)
Optional reading: Summa Theologica, Part I, Question 2, Articles 2-3 (i.e. ST Iq2aa2-3); SCG II.38
Week 8

14) Monday, March 20: Divine Nature
Required reading: SCG I.18; I.32-34; I.72
Optional reading: ST Iq3, Iq4a3, Iq19

15) Wednesday, March 22: Divine Nature
Required reading: SCG I.18; I.34; I.72
Optional reading: ST Iq3, Iq4a3, Iq19

Week 9

16) Monday, April 3: God and Creation
Required reading: SCG II.15, 28, 29, 45, 46; SCG III.64-65, 73
Optional reading: SCG II. 16-28, 39-44; SCG III.66-77

17) Wednesday, April 5: God and Creation
Required reading: SCG II.15, 28, 29, 45, 46; SCG III.64-65, 73
Optional reading: SCG II. 16-28, 39-44; SCG III.66-77

Week 10

18) Monday, April 10: Human Nature
Required reading: ST Iq75aa1-3; ST Iq76a1
Optional reading: ST Iq75-76

19) Wednesday, April 12: Human Nature
Required reading: ST Iq75aa1-3; ST Iq76a1
Optional reading: ST Iq75-76

Week 11

20) Monday, April 17: Human Cognition
Required reading: ST Iq78aa3-4; ST Iq85aa1-2
Optional reading: ST Iq78; ST Iq85

21) Wednesday, April 19: Human Cognition
Required reading: ST Iq78aa3-4; ST Iq85aa1-2
Optional reading: ST Iq78; ST Iq85

Week 12

22) Monday, April 24: Exam on Aquinas
(23) Wednesday, April 26: Life and Works/Ockham’s Methods
Required reading: none(!)

Week 13

(24) Monday, May 1: The Logic of Terms
Optional reading: Summa 1:2 (“The Various Meanings of ‘Term’”)

(25) Wednesday, May 3: Mental Language
Required reading: Summa I.3 “On the Correspondence between Vocal and Mental Terms”

Week 14

(26) Monday, May 8: Ockham’s Critique of Moderate Realism
Required reading: Selected passages from Ockham’s Ordinatio, d. 2, qq. 4-8 translated by Paul Vincent Spade (page numbers followed by paragraph numbers in parentheses): 115 (8, 9); 119 (34); 124 (67-72); 127 (83-85); 149-150 (6-10); 156 (25, 27, 28); 158 (39-40)

(27) Wednesday, 10: Ockham’s Conceptualist Account of Universals
Required reading: Selected passages from Ockham’s Ordinatio, d. 2, qq. 4-8 translated by Paul Vincent Spade (page numbers followed by paragraph numbers in parentheses): 217 (17-19); 218-224 (22-54); 229-231 (86-93)

Week 15

(28) Monday, 15: EXAM

All Term Papers Are Due May 17th by 12:00 p.m. in Jeff’s Mailbox, Second Floor, Emerson Hall