

# Medieval Philosophy

Spring 2018

James Blair Hall, room 221  
MWF 12-12:50pm

## Syllabus

### Instructor

Chad Vance  
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Office Hours: WF 1pm-2:30pm  
(and by appointment)  
James Blair Hall, room 124

### What Is This Class About?

This is a course on philosophical thought during the medieval period (roughly, 400-1400 AD), designed to give you a basic understanding of the sorts of things that philosophers were thinking about during that time, as well as a familiarity with the works of some of the great medieval thinkers, such as Augustine, Anselm, Avicenna, and Aquinas. We'll explore the following topics together:

- What is truth?
- What is time? What is eternity?
- Did the universe have a beginning?
- Do we have free will? What is free will?
- Do we have souls? What is a soul?
- What is morality? Where does it come from? How can we know about it?
- Is morality about my actions, or my intentions?
- Is there any evidence for the existence of God?
- What is God like? How can we know?
- If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world?
- Can God know everything? Can God do anything?

Throughout our investigation of these questions, my ultimate goal more broadly will be to help you to (i) be able to think more carefully and critically, (ii) be able to identify and supply good reasons for your beliefs, and (iii) acquire the necessary tools to continue exploring philosophical issues on your own.

### Required Texts

- (1) Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will* (Hackett, 1993, ISBN: 978-0872201880)
- (2) Anselm, *Three Philosophical Dialogues* (Hackett, 2002, ISBN: 978-0872206113)
- (3) Abelard, *Ethical Writings* (Hackett, 1995, ISBN: 978-0872203228)
- (4) All additional assigned texts will be provided as pdf files, accessible under "Assigned Readings" on our course website, here:

<http://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil232/phil232.html>

## Course Requirements

1. *Exams (40%)*. You will take a mid-term exam (20%) and a final exam (20%).
2. *Paper (20%)*. You will write one paper, 1500-1800 words in length (i.e., 5 - 6 pages), arguing for or against some philosophical view that we have studied. *More info: TBA.*
3. *Group Video Project (10%)*. In small groups, you will produce a short video about the life, ideas, and historical context of a single Medieval philosopher. *More info: TBA.*
4. *Informal Writing (10%)*. You will write 11 informal response papers of 200-300 words each (~1 page). Your lowest score will be dropped; i.e., your 10 best scores will constitute your informal writing assignment grade (1% each). *More info: TBA.*
5. *Quizzes (10%)*. You will take a total of 11 short reading quizzes. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped; i.e., your 10 best scores will constitute your quiz grade (1% each).
6. *Participation (10%)*. A portion of your grade will depend on your ability to come to class (on time and prepared), participate in class discussion, and refrain from being disruptive, falling asleep, sending text messages, or surfing the internet.

## Course Policies

### Academic Integrity

All students of the College of William & Mary are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity honor code policy of this institution. Violations of this policy include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, and stealing. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Council. More information about the honor code can be found at: [wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/studenthandbook/honor\\_system/index.php](http://wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/studenthandbook/honor_system/index.php)

NOTE: *Students who are found to be in violation of the honor code will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member (i.e., you will automatically receive an F for the course) as well as non-academic sanctions (which include academic probation, suspension, or expulsion).*

### Student Conduct

Students and faculty each have a responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to the code of conduct may be subject to discipline. More information at: [wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/studenthandbook/student\\_code\\_of\\_conduct/index.php](http://wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/studenthandbook/student_code_of_conduct/index.php)

### Disability & Accessibility Services

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability or any issue affecting accessibility, please submit to me a letter from Accessibility Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. More information can be found in the Campus Center (room 109), 757-221-2510, or at: [wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentaccessibilityservices/](http://wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentaccessibilityservices/).

### Religious Observances

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. Please let me know by the end of the drop/add period about any such conflicts, so that we can resolve them. More information at: [wm.edu/about/administration/provost/forfacstaff/holidays/religiousguidelines/index.php](http://wm.edu/about/administration/provost/forfacstaff/holidays/religiousguidelines/index.php).

### Discrimination and Harassment

The College of William & Mary policies on Discrimination and Sexual Harassment apply to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff, or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of sexual harassment and/or discrimination based upon race, sex, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, religious belief, political belief, disability, veteran status, age, or any other category protected by the Commonwealth or by federal law should contact the Office of Compliance and Equity on the first floor of James Blair Hall. More information about discrimination and harassment can be found at: [wm.edu/offices/compliance/policies/student\\_discim\\_policies/index.php](http://wm.edu/offices/compliance/policies/student_discim_policies/index.php)

## Course Schedule

Below is a schedule of the topics that we will cover, along with list of the reading(s) which you should complete before each class meeting. Please note the dates for **exams days**, **papers due dates**, and **presentation days** in bold.

<b>UNIT ONE</b>	<b>God, Freedom, &amp; Evil (388 – 1140 AD: Augustine, Anselm, Abelard)</b>	
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Plato &amp; Aristotle</b>
Wed 1/17	Syllabus / Project Assignment	No readings
Fri 1/19	From Athens to Jerusalem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave" (pdf)</li> <li>• Dupré, "Plato's Cave" (pdf)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Aristotle vs. Plato (stop at 4:57)</a></li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Truth, God, Freedom, &amp; Evil</b>	<b>Augustine</b>
Mon 1/22	Perception, Being, Truth <b>PRESENTATION: AUGUSTINE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>On Free Choice of the Will</i>, 2.3 - 2.15 (33-60)</li> </ul>
Wed 1/24	The Argument from Truth for God's Existence	No new readings
Fri 1/26	God, Freedom, Evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>On Free Choice of the Will</i>, 2.16 - 3.1 (60-73)</li> <li>• <i>Confessions</i> 7.12-13 &amp; <i>Enchiridion</i> 3-4 (pdf)</li> <li>• <i>Reconsiderations</i>, book 1, ch. 9 (124-129)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Freedom &amp; Foreknowledge</b>	<b>Aristotle &amp; Augustine</b>
Mon 1/29	Logical Fatalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aristotle, <i>On Interpretation</i>, ch. 9 (pdf)</li> </ul>
Wed 1/31	Freedom vs. Foreknowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Augustine on Free Will</a></li> <li>• <i>On Free Choice of the Will</i>, 3.2 - 3.4 (73-78)</li> </ul>
Fri 2/2	On Time and Eternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Augustine on Time (14:03 – 18:59)</a></li> <li>• Augustine, <i>Confessions</i>, book 11 (pdf)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Freedom, Foreknowledge, God</b>	<b>Boethius &amp; Anselm</b>
Mon 2/5	Freedom vs. Foreknowledge <b>PRESENTATION: BOETHIUS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Boethius on Foreknowledge</a></li> <li>• Boethius, <i>Consolation</i>, book 5 (pdf)</li> </ul>
Wed 2/7	The Ontological Argument for God's Existence <b>PRESENTATION: ANSELM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Anselm's Proof for God</a></li> <li>• Anselm, <i>Proslogion</i>, chs. 2-5, <i>Gaunilo's Reply</i>, &amp; <i>Anselm's Reply</i> (pdf)</li> </ul>
Fri 2/9	No new topics	No new readings
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Truth, Freedom, Sin</b>	<b>Anselm</b>
Mon 2/12	Truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Anselm on Truth &amp; Free Will</a></li> <li>• Anselm, <i>On Truth</i> (1-30)</li> </ul>
Wed 2/14	Free Will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anselm, <i>On Freedom of Choice</i> (31-51)</li> </ul>
Fri 2/16	Free Will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anselm, <i>On the Fall of the Devil</i> (52-100)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>The Nature of Sin, part 1</b>	<b>Augustine, Abelard, &amp; Aquinas</b>
Mon 2/19	No new topics	No new readings
Wed 2/21	The Ethics of Intentions <b>PRESENTATION: ABELARD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> 2.4 - 2.10 (pdf)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Abelard's Ethics</a></li> <li>• Abelard, <i>Ethics</i>, 1 - 73 (1-16)</li> </ul>
Fri 2/23	The Ethics of Intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Aquinas on Intent (15:29 – 20:54)</a></li> <li>• Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>, II-II.64.7 (pdf)</li> <li>• Abelard, <i>Ethics</i>, 77 - 100, 106 - 131 (17-29)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>The Nature of Sin, part 2</b>	<b>Abelard</b>
Mon 2/26	The Ethics of Intentions	No new readings
Wed 2/28	Review: Unit One Exam	No readings
Fri 3/2	<b>UNIT ONE EXAM</b>	No readings
<b>Spring Break</b>		
3/3-3/11	<b>Spring Break</b>	No readings

<b>UNIT TWO</b>		<b>God, Creation, &amp; Man (1020 – 1360: Avicenna, Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham)</b>
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Proofs for God, part 1</b>	<b>Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) &amp; Al-Ghazālī</b>
Mon 3/12	Argument from Contingency for God's Existence <b>PRESENTATION: AVICENNA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Avicenna on Essence &amp; Existence</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Avicenna's Proof for God</a></li> <li>• Avicenna, "The Necessary of Existence"</li> </ul>
Wed 3/14	No new topics	No new readings
Fri 3/16	The Argument Against Eternity for God's Existence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Al-Ghazali on Eternity</a></li> <li>• Al-Ghazālī, "Against the World's Eternity"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Proofs for God, part 2</b>	<b>Averroës (Ibn Rushd) &amp; Aquinas</b>
Mon 3/19	No new topics	No new readings
Wed 3/21	The Argument from Design for God's Existence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Averroës, "The Argument from Design"</li> </ul>
Fri 3/23	The Five Ways <b>PRESENTATION: AQUINAS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Aquinas on God</a></li> <li>• Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>, I.2</li> </ul>
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>The Divine Attributes</b>	<b>Aquinas, Eriugena, &amp; Maimonides</b>
Mon 3/26	The Divine Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>, I.3-11</li> </ul>
Wed 3/28	No new topics	No new readings
Fri 3/30	Describing God (against) <b>PRESENTATION: ERIUGENA</b> <b>PRESENTATION: MAIMONIDES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Eriugena (11:08 - 14:20)</a></li> <li>• Eriugena, <i>On the Division of Nature</i> (excerpt)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Maimonides (9:01 - 15:04)</a></li> <li>• Maimonides, <i>Guide for the Perplexed</i> (excerpt)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Universals &amp; Common Natures</b>	<b>Aquinas, Duns Scotus, &amp; Ockham</b>
Mon 4/2	Describing God (for) <b>PRESENTATION: DUNS SCOTUS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Aquinas &amp; Scotus on Predication</a></li> <li>• Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>, I.12-13</li> <li>• Duns Scotus, <i>Ordinatio</i>, II.3.1.1-2</li> </ul>
Wed 4/4	Individuation & Universals <b>PRESENTATION: OCKHAM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Scotus on Universals (stop at 18:25)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Ockham's Nominalism (stop at 9:03)</a></li> <li>• Aquinas, Scotus, &amp; Ockham, "On Universals"</li> </ul>
Fri 4/6	No new topics	No new readings
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Human Souls &amp; Happiness</b>	<b>Avicenna &amp; Aquinas</b>
Mon 4/9	The Human Soul (Avicenna)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Avicenna on the Soul</a></li> <li>• Avicenna, "The Floating Man"</li> </ul>
Wed 4/11	The Human Soul (Aquinas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Aquinas on the Soul</a></li> <li>• Aquinas, <i>Summa</i>, I.75-76, &amp; other excerpts</li> </ul>
Fri 4/13	On Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Aquinas on Happiness &amp; Virtue</a></li> <li>• Aquinas, <i>Summa</i>, I-II.1-5</li> </ul>
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>Divine Law, Power, &amp; Freedom</b>	<b>Anselm, Abelard, Aquinas, Scotus, &amp; Ockham</b>
Mon 4/16	On Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Aquinas on Natural Law</a></li> <li>• Aquinas, <i>Summa</i>, I-II.90-96</li> </ul>
Wed 4/18	Divine Command Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Duns Scotus on Ethics</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Ockham on Ethics (stop at 11:15)</a></li> <li>• Scotus &amp; Ockham, "On Divine Commands"</li> </ul>
Fri 4/20	Divine Power & Divine Freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Divine Freedom (17:15 – 19:13)</a></li> <li>• Anselm, Abelard, Aquinas, &amp; Scotus (excerpts)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Some Puzzles</b>	<b>Ockham &amp; Buridan</b>
Mon 4/23	Freedom vs. Foreknowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Ockham on Freedom (stop at 13:03)</a></li> <li>• Ockham, "Predestination, Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents" (excerpt)</li> </ul>
Wed 4/25	Paradoxes <b>PRESENTATION: BURIDAN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: 14<sup>th</sup> Century Logic (optional)</a></li> <li>• Buridan, <i>Sophismata</i> (excerpt)</li> </ul>
Fri 4/27	Review: Unit Two Exam <b>DUE: PAPER</b>	No new readings
Wed 5/9	<b>UNIT TWO EXAM: 9am – noon</b>	No readings