PL 4407 — HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY
Spring 2015

DAY / TIME: T & Th 12:00 - 1:15 P.M.
PROFESSOR: J.-L. SOLÈRE

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Far from being monolithic and repetitive, the Middle Ages were a creative period during which different solutions were proposed to make sense of the world and of human life. The legacy of Antiquity, the philosophic and ‘scientific’ knowledge of the time, and religious views were combined in original syntheses. The aim of the course is to provide an accurate image of the resulting diversity of theories. We will study the main topics that were strenuously debated during a good thousand years through a wide range of authors (Christian thinkers from St. Augustine to Ockham, but also Islamic and Jewish philosophers). Medieval philosophy was an important step in the development of human thought. Discovering it will be essential to your philosophical education. This course will especially highlight the essential concepts that were formed in the Middle Ages and that have been transmitted to modern philosophy, in metaphysics, theory of knowledge and mind, ethics, etc. In addition, analysis of texts, debates and writing assignments will help you to develop rigorous argumentation and expression skills.

READINGS:

Some other primary sources will be photocopied or digitized.

The course has a Canvas site which provides various complementary information and materials.

As Medieval authors very often refer to Ancient authors, studying philosophy in Middle Ages will be easier if you have some knowledge of philosophy in Antiquity. I thus very strongly advise you to consult:

— the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, online version in the library databases, or printed: O'Neill B51.R68 1998,
— and/or the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online and free)
when you need some information about Ancient philosophy: authors, e.g. Aristotle, Plotinus or Porphyry; topics, e.g. “Immortality” or “Substance”; concepts, e.g. “Nous” or “Pneuma”, etc. Besides, as you will see in the syllabus the reading of some articles in these encyclopedias is required.

**Office Hours**
Stokes N219, TH 5:30-7:00, or by appointment.
I can’t discuss by email course topics, but I’ll be glad to talk with you.

**Class Policy**
Readings assigned in the syllabus should be studied before the class, with the help of the study questions at the end of each selection in the textbook. Two hours of preparation for each hour in class is a minimum. Texts must be brought in class.

Attendance: “Students are expected to attend classes regularly, take tests, and submit papers and other work at the times specified by the professor on the course syllabus. Students who are absent repeatedly from class or practica will be evaluated by faculty responsible for the course to ascertain their ability to achieve the course objectives and to continue in the course” (from BC Academic Regulations). Students will take responsibility for catching up on missed classes.

As a matter of courtesy for the instructor, of respect for other students’ involvement, and for maintaining a studious environment, please do not leave the room without absolute necessity (rule of thumb: a serious medical reason); do not arrive late; do not use computers, tablets or phones other than for taking notes or looking up information relevant to the course.

Academic integrity: see [www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html](http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html). Plagiarism is a form of fraud and will be punished as such. The definition of plagiarism includes not only turning in someone else's work as your own or copying sentences without the appropriate quotation conventions, but also paraphrasing (that is, changing the words while reproducing the sentence structure or the ideas of someone else) without giving credit to the source. This applies to any material found on the Internet. For the appropriate forms of quotation, see [www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org).

**Course Credit**
Four papers (after parts I, II, III-IV, and V of the course).
Class participation: bonus added to the average resulting from the papers (4 pts maximum).

Grades in this course mean the following:
A: Exceptional work, unusual in how well it fulfills the assignment *
B: Strong work that fulfills the assignment
C: Good work that adequately fulfills most of the assignment
D: Work that inadequately addresses much of the assignment
F: Work that fails to address most of the assignment

Numerical scale:  D- 60-63  D 64-67  D+ 68-69  C- 70-73  C 74-76  C+ 77-79  B- 80-83  B 84-87  B+ 88-90  A- 91-95*  A 96-100*

* “I urge you to … use these top grades only for truly outstanding work” (BC A&S Dean to the faculty).

SYLLABUS

Abbreviations:
LS = The Longman Standard History of Medieval Philosophy (textbook)
Maurer = Armand Maurer, Medieval Philosophy (textbook)
phot. = photocopies
REP = Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online, library database)
SEP = Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online, free)
Req. = required readings
Opt.* = optional but strongly recommended readings
Opt. = optional readings

Jan. 19 – Class 1:   Introduction

Jan. 21 – Class 2:   Historical background, part 1

Req.: “Aristotle” #7-19 in REP. Opt.*: “Aristotle Commentators”, “Forms, platonic”, “Neoplatonism”, “Platonism (Early & Middle)”, “Plotinus” in REP.
Jan. 26 – Class 3:  **Historical background, part 2**

Req.: P.V. Spade, “The Greek background” (phot.).

Opt.: “Greek Philosophy: impact on Islamic Philosophy”, “Islamic philosophy: transmission into Western Europe” in REP.

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I – **DEBATES ON REVELATION AND REASON**

Jan. 28 – Class 4:


Opt.: “Patristic Philosophy” in REP.

Feb. 2 – Class 5:


Opt.*: “Causality and necessity in Islamic thought” in REP.

Opt.: “Ash’اريyya and Mu'tazila”, “Neoplatonism in Islamic Philosophy” in REP.

Feb. 4 – Class 6:


Opt.*: “Natural philosophy, medieval”, #6: The Aristotelian Cosmos, in REP.

Feb. 9 – Class 7:


Opt.: “Condemnation of 1277” in SEP.

Feb. 11 – Class 8: Dispute.

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II – **DEBATES ON HUMAN NATURE**

II.1 – **THE SOUL**
Feb. 16 – Class 9:
Opt.: “Soul in Islamic philosophy” in REP.

Feb. 18 – Class 10:

Feb. 23 – Class 11:

II.2 – THE INTELLECT

Feb. 25 – Class 12:

March 1 – Class 13:
Opt.*: “Averroism” in REP.

March 3 – Class 14:
Opt.*: “Illumination” in REP; “Divine illumination” in SEP.

SPRING BREAK
March 15 – Class 15:
Dispute

III – Debates on Human Knowledge of Things

March 17 – Class 16:

Opt.*: “Medieval Problem of Universals” in SEP.

March 22 – Class 17:

Opt.*: “Duns Scotus, #12”, in REP.
Opt.: “Medieval Theories of Haecceity” in SEP.

March 24 – no class (Easter)

March 29 – Class 18:

Opt.*: “Nominalism, #2” in REP.

IV – Debates on Human Knowledge of God

March 31 – Class 19:

Opt.: “Ontological arguments” in SEP.

April 5 – Class 20:

Opt.: “God, arguments for the existence of” in REP.
April 7 – Class 21:

Opt.*: “Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite” in SEP.
Opt.: “Negative theology” in REP.

April 12 – Class 23: Dispute.

April 14 – Class cancelled (conference)

V – Debates on God and Creation

V.1 – Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will

April 19 – Class 24:

Opt.: “Free will” in SEP.

April 21 – Class 25:
Req.: Boethius *Consolation of Philosophy*, V (LS pp. 88-97); Luis de Molina, *Concordia*, IV (phot.). – Maurer pp. 32-33; “Foreknowledge and Free Will” in SEP.

Opt.: “Medieval Theories of Future Contingents” in SEP.

April 26 – Class 26:

Opt.: “Omnipotence” in REP.
V.2 – DID THE WORLD HAVE A BEGINNING?

April 28 – Class 27:
Opt.*: “Eternity of the world, medieval views of” in REP.

May 3 – Class 28:

May 5 – Class 29: Dispute.