PH 1200 Philosophy for Theology

Fall, 2014
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This course meets on Friday, 2:10-5:00 DSPT 1

This syllabus and related documents are posted at http://moodle.gtu.edu If you are not already registered for Moodle, go to the GTU Moodle page and register for this class. Your username and password are the same as for Colleague.

Goals of the Course
This course is designed for students studying theology and who desire some additional background in philosophy. The selection of topics is based on the most common philosophical issues that students may encounter in their study of theology.

The student will acquire:
1. Knowledge of the central issues philosophers deal with and the variety of ways they have done that historically.
2. The variety of ways that philosophers and theologians have historically dealt with one another’s disciplines.
3. Acquaintance with basic philosophical vocabulary, particularly that of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition.

The readings for this course are of three types.
1. Classical philosophical texts which are the common inheritance of Jewish, Christian and Islamic theologians.
2. Classical theological texts where philosophical terminology and assumptions are required for proper comprehension.
3. Texts illustrative specifically of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition.

The first part of the course looks at the material historically but we will be concerned as much with the history of philosophers and theologians as with the history of philosophy and theology. The second part of the course will look at the material thematically but we will continue to look at the historical unfolding of the philosophical discussion.

How rapidly we move through the material will depend on the number in the class and the backgrounds they bring. We will adjust as we need to.
Class Outline

Sep. 5

Topic: Introduction
Orientation to the course and our methods
A recurring question: Who is a philosopher, who is a theologian, and why does that matter?
How to read an article of the Summa
Identifying recurring themes:
  Human identity within the world: Cosmology
  Human social identity: Social and Political Philosophy
  Human responsibility: Ethics
  Human well being: Soteriology

Preparation: Read the first question of St. Thomas’ Summa:
http://dhspriory.org/thomas/summa/FP/FP001.html#FPQ1OUTP1

Assignment: St. Thomas says that theology begins with the literal meaning of Scripture, so now read the first three chapters of Genesis. Come to class with a page or two of written text that addresses the following questions.
  1) What is the literal meaning of Gn. 1:1-2:3?
  2) What is the literal meaning of Gn. 2:4-24?
  3) What is the literal meaning of Gn. 1-2?
  4) What is the literal meaning of Gn. 1-3?
  5) How many of the recurring themes listed above did you find?

Sep. 12

Topic: The Created World
Biblical, philosophic and theological accounts of creation
Identifying scholastic vocabulary
Identifying the recurring themes

Preparation: Allen and Springsted, Primary Readings, Republic, 505-518, Timaeus, 27-53
St. Thomas, Summa, On Creation: I. 44 and I.45
http://dhspriory.org/thomas/summa/FP/FP044.html#FPQ44OUTP1
http://dhspriory.org/thomas/summa/FP/FP045.html#FPQ45OUTP1
(There is an important omission in 1.45.2 at “I respond…” It should read “Not only is it not impossible …”)

Assignment: 1. While Plato and St. Thomas both speak of a creation, their modes of discourse are very different. The issues they want to address are also very different. Try to identify some of the differences and agreements about basic issues.
  2. How useful is a distinction between philosophy and theology for understanding these texts?
  3. Make a list of the technical terms you came across in reading St. Thomas that you are unsure of. Don’t throw away the list; keep adding to it.
Sep. 19

**Topic:** The Hellenic Philosophical Tradition

A recurring question: Who is a philosopher, who is a theologian, and why does that matter?

The Pre-Socratics

Socrates, the prototypical philosopher

Plato

Aristotle

Identifying recurring themes


**Assignment:** Read carefully *Phaedo* 94-99 where Socrates talks about his philosophical development and the section of the *Metaphysics* where Aristotle talks about his predecessors. How do they use their sources, i.e. how does each of them see himself in relation to his past?

Sep. 26

**Topic:** Jews and Christians in the Hellenistic World

Hellenistic Platonists and Stoics

A recurring question: Who is a philosopher, who is a theologian, and why does that matter?

Jewish and Christian Cosmology

Jewish and Christian Exegesis

Stoic Values and Christian Spirituality

Identifying recurring themes


**Assignment:** 1. When Origen says philosophy, what does he mean?

2. How does Origen use his sources, i.e. how does he see himself in relation to a philosophical and a Jewish past?

Basil’s *Letter 2* is very Stoic. What does that suggest about how fourth century Christians fit into their contemporary culture?
Oct. 3
Topic: The Era of the Ecumenical Councils and the Entry of Philosophical Language into Christian Theology
Sorting through Trinitarian and Christological issues without trying to do it all
The importance of St. Paul

Preparation: Basil of Caesarea, *Letter 38 to Gregory Nazianzus*,
http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202038.htm, Gregory the Theologian (of Nazienzen), *First and Second Theological Orations*,
http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-07/TOC.htm
Creed of the First Council of Nicaca (325),
http://www.piar.hu/councils/ecum01.htm
Creed of the First Council of Constantinople (381),
http://www.piar.hu/councils/ecum02.htm
Definition of faith of the Council of Chalcedon (451),
http://www.piar.hu/councils/ecum04.htm - Definition of the faith

Assignment: 1. Come prepared to share your reflections on Gregory’s understanding of the theologian.
2. How does the sense of Tradition develop between the time of Nicaea and the time of Chalcedon? (Look for things like “following in all things the holy Fathers”)

Oct. 10
Topic: Philosophy in the West: St. Augustine and Some of His Followers
A few samples of an extensive body of work
Identifying recurring themes

Preparation: Allen and Springsted, *Primary Readings*, St. Anselm, *Proslogium*;
http://people.uvawise.edu/philosophy/phil205/Bonaventure.html
Oct. 17
Topic: The New Schools and the Schoolmen
A recurring question: Who is a philosopher, who is a theologian, and why does that matter?
How the medieval educational system worked
The common tradition: what everyone was reading


Oct. 24
No Class—Reading Week

Oct. 31
Topic: Thomas Aquinas and the University of Paris
Identifying recurring themes
This section is deliberately left small to allow for expansion of material we may not have covered in the previous class.


Nov. 7 Topic: Unity, Plurality, Identity and Change
Theories of Causality
Modernity and Romanticism
Preparation: Allen and Springsted, Primary Readings, Descartes, Certainty of Self and God

Nov. 14
Topic: Ethical and Social Theories: Questions of Freedom and Responsibility
[http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.1.i.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.1.i.html);
Thomas Aquinas, *De rationibus fidei*, Ch. 10 *That Divine Predestination Does Not Impose Necessity on Human Acts*. [http://dhspriory.org/thomas/Rationes.htm](http://dhspriory.org/thomas/Rationes.htm);
Allen and Springsted, *Primary Readings*, Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit, Lordship and Bondage*

Assignment: If you accept Plato’s Aristotle’s positions, what motivates your ethical behavior?

Nov. 21
**Topic:** The Structure and Comprehensibility of the World  
**Preparation:** Allen and Springsted, *Primary Readings*, Heidegger, *The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics*; Gadamer, *The Examplary Significane of Legal Hermeneutics*; Flew, *The University Discussion*

Nov. 28
**Thanksgiving—No Class**

Dec. 5
**Topic:** Summing Up: Philosophy and Theological Discipline  
Identifying recurring themes  
**Preparation:** Allen and Springsted, *Primary Readings*, Kant, *Pure Reason and the Question of God*; Kirkegaard, *Objective and Subjective Christianity*; Wittgenstein, *Lectures on Religious Belief*;  
Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica I q.3 a. 3, Whether God is the Same as His Essence or Nature?* [http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1003.htm#article3](http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1003.htm#article3)
Required Text

Course Requirements

1. Attend class and do the designated preparation.

2. When there is an Assignment listed, come to class prepared to read a two-page (maximum) response to the assignment. I will call on one or two students read their papers. All students must be prepared to question and/or discuss the assigned readings.

3. Prepare four five-page papers. The limitation to five pages is deliberate. If you can’t demonstrate that you have a basic grasp within five pages, ten won’t help you. Paper 1. Demonstrate that you understand the differences in the cosmological and anthropological presuppositions between pre-modern and modern philosophy. Paper 2. Demonstrate that you understand the difference between virtue ethics and duty ethics and the strengths and challenges of both. Paper 3. Demonstrate that you can write an expository paper on a theological topic of your choice and use scholastic terminology in appropriate ways as part of your exposition. Paper 4. What is your area of academic interest? Please tell me how philosophy and theology relate to one another in that area.
Grading Criteria

Grading in this class is based on three criteria. Work should be:
1. Complete
2. Correct
3. Clearly and effectively presented

A Work is complete. Errors or miscomprehensions, if any, are few and minor. Clear and
effective presentation. Work shows a significant depth and breadth of critical understanding.

A- Slightly less than the above

B+ Work is complete. Errors or miscomprehensions, if any, are few and minor. Clear and
effective presentation.

B Work is complete or nearly so and with some minor errors or miscomprehensions. Minor
lapses in clear and effective presentation.

B- Some gaps in completeness. Errors or miscomprehensions are few but significant. Lapses in
clear and effective presentation. (Marginally acceptable as graduate/professional quality work.)

C+ Work is incomplete. Errors or miscomprehensions are numerous and/or significant.
Presentation lacks clarity and effectiveness.

C Work is significantly incomplete. Errors or miscomprehensions are numerous and/or
substantial. Presentation lacks clarity and effectiveness.

C- Work is significantly incomplete. Quantity and quality of errors or miscomprehensions
suggest a serious lack of understanding. Presentation lacks clarity and effectiveness.

D Work is minimal and indicates little understanding of the material. Presentation is sloppy and
ineffective.

F Less than minimal work done.