

**Book to buy:**

Forrest E. Baird. *Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*, **Sixth Edition**. Pearson Prentice Hall.

**Course Description**

For centuries referring to the Middle Ages was a way of building a frame, more than a frame, it was a way of throwing shame into exile. Historians used to refer to the Middle Ages as an exercise of chronological confinement, something that, after the glorious pagan past, was there as a dissonant interlude for an even more glorious future, the Renaissance.

It is only recently that contemporary historians have started to look back at this period as one of the most compelling ways of facing the burden of civilization, and, with civilization, of knowledge. The Classic tradition had dwelled extensively on this latter concept. The Greek tradition is the one that asks “Why?” and “What?”, thus manifesting an insatiable hunger for the beginning of knowledge, for its very origin. Socrates inaugurated a way of arguing that will remain with us until today, Aristotle found in reason the most intimately human of all powers, Herodotus, the Greek historian, taught modernity how to engage in what we call etiology, the study of causes, of aitiai. The word oida, the past of the verb orao, “to see”, is translated “I know”, in the present tense. Having seen things was a way of knowing, of acquiring certainty, and that was, to borrow an expression from Berger, a way of seeing. The Middle Ages changed precisely this; as an epoch it changed the ways of seeing.

In this course we will be dealing with some of the main elements that have been capable of shaping a specific vision of human thought and culture. Medieval philosophy is profoundly influenced by religious issues but it is nonetheless far from being exclusively a reflection on faith, or, more broadly, on religious issues. What is often framed in a religious context easily becomes a reflection on the ways in which a culture felt itself, starting from issues related to the importance of thought, reason, and logic, to the attention paid to time and memory, to a specific conception of morality and metaphysics. We will consider these themes extensively working on a comparison between traditions –Christian, Islamic, and Jewish- that, although often similar, have found, in the course of the years, different responses to equally different and challenging questions.

As always in philosophy, the main attention will be given not to the answers we will be able to find, but on the debate that these readings have generated. Finding connections and common themes will provide us with the possibility of engaging in a dialogue with a past that does not cease to be contemporary.

**Course Schedule****I. Early Christianity****WEEK 1** Introduction

Prologue 1: Early Christianity pp. 1-10; and brief introduction to Plato  
Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen pp. 11-18

**WEEK 2**

Prologue II: Other Foundational Documents; Philo of Alexandria pp. 19-22

**WEEK 3**

Plotinus pp. 27-35; Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite pp. 36-45 Augustine pp. 43-73

**II. Augustine****WEEK 4**

Augustine pp. 74-116

### **III. Early Medieval Philosophy**

#### **WEEK 5**

Aristotle (discussion); Boethius pp. 117-133

#### **WEEK 6**

John Scotus Eriugena pp. 134-142

Anselm and Gaunilo pp. 143-150

#### **WEEK 7**

Peter Abelard pp. 151-172

### **IV. Islamic and Jewish Philosophy**

#### **WEEK 8**

Avicenna pp. 189-205

Al-Ghazali pp. 206-209; Averroes pp. 210-231

#### **WEEK 9**

Maimonides pp. 232-252

### **V. Thirteenth-Century Philosophy**

#### **WEEK 10**

Thirteenth-Century Philosophy pp. 253-254; Bonaventure pp. 274-294

### **VI. St. Thomas Aquinas**

#### **WEEK 11**

Thomas Aquinas pp. 307-332

Aquinas pp. 338-356

#### **WEEK 12**

Aquinas pp. 321-332

Aquinas pp. 357-367

Aquinas pp. 367-392

### **VII. Late Medieval Philosophy**

#### **WEEK 13**

Duns Scotus pp. 409-439

#### **WEEK 14**

William of Ockham pp. 440-447; pp. 453-463.