

FAITH AND REASON IN THE MIDDLE AGES
(BLHS 105)

Professors Paasch, McNamer and Ray
Syllabus, Fall 2015

Wed., 6:00-9:35 p.m. New North 107	Prof. J.T. Paasch, Ph.D. Research Associate Philosophy Department Tel.: 864-504-4404 Email: jt.paasch@gmail.com	Prof. Sarah McNamer Ph.D. English Department Tel.: 687-7601 Email: mcnamer@georgetown.edu	Prof. Jonathan Ray, Ph.D. Theology Department Tel.: 687-4459 Email: jsr46@georgetown.edu
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Course Description:

The relation between faith and reason is one of the perennial issues in Western thought. With the renaissance of the twelfth century and the founding of universities throughout Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the question of faith and reason was dramatically recast. The rediscovery of Aristotle—and so, the use of Aristotelian logic, grammar, physics, and metaphysics—led to the development of new methods of inquiry, categories of thought, and modes of expression. This course begins with the twelfth-century renaissance; the cross-fertilization among Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scholars; the rise of the universities as important institutions; and the development of scholasticism. It focuses in particular on the development of the scholastic method, resistance to it, and, in particular, discussions and sometimes fierce debates about “faith and reason” in Christianity and Judaism. The course also looks at the issue of authority and alternative approaches to religious truth -- including imagination and feeling, creative expression, and meditative and visionary experience.

Course Goals:

1. To learn how to read a variety of medieval texts (monastic, scholastic, literary, devotional) on the topic of faith, reason, and religious experience.
2. To understand these difficult primary texts in historical/cultural context.
3. To deepen understanding of medieval European thought, life and culture.
4. To develop a sophisticated sense of all the main themes and sub-themes that are central to the BALS core, especially competing claims to authority, their interplay and repercussions.
5. To develop skills in analytical writing.
6. To gain an appreciation of long-standing debates about faith and reason and thereby gain further conceptual clarity when addressing contemporary debates.
7. To address issues of intellectual and religious pluralism.

Course Requirements:

1. **Attendance.** Each weekly class meeting is the equivalent of four 50” class hours. Missing a class *may*, and missing more than one entire class (or more than a total of four class hours) *will definitely*, result in a lowering of your final grade. Missing a third class may be grounds for failure or dismissal. Habitual tardiness will also lower your final grade.
2. **Close reading of all assigned texts and active class participation** (20%).
3. **Weekly written assignments on assigned texts** (35%). 1-2 pages, 500-750 words. Electronic submission of papers (to SafeAssign or TurnItIn via Blackboard) is due before the beginning of every class (6:00 p.m.). No late assignments accepted.
4. **Weekly quizzes** (20%).
5. **A final examination** on Monday, May 4, 2015, 7:00-9:00 p.m. (25%). There are no exceptions to this date and time for the final examination. *You must take the examination at the appointed time, or you will receive an “F” for the course.* Be sure to clear your calendar now.

Books To Purchase (in order of their place on the syllabus):

The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi, trans. Raphael Brown (ISBN 978-0385075442)

Julian of Norwich: Showings, trans. Colledge & Walsh (Paulist, ISBN 0-8091-2091-7)

The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy, ed. Frank, Daniel and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge, ISBN 9780521652070)

Other materials will be made available on Blackboard.

Some notes on integrity and responsibility

A Note on Academic Integrity: It is expected that all students are familiar with Georgetown's Honor System (see <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53516.html>) and that students abide by the Standard of Conduct outlined therein. Note especially the section on plagiarism, which is quoted here:

Plagiarism, in any of its forms, and whether intentional or unintentional, violates standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism is the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another. While different academic disciplines have different modes for attributing credit, all value the contributions of individuals to the general corpus of knowledge and expertise. Students are responsible for educating themselves as to the proper mode of attributing credit in any course or field. Note that plagiarism can be said to have occurred without any affirmative showing that a student's use of another's work was intentional.

It is also expected that you have already completed the online tutorial on scholarly research and academic integrity and that you are familiar with Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College*.

Keep in mind the Honor Pledge, which is as follows:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System:

To be honest in any academic endeavor, and

To conduct myself honorably,

as a responsible member of the Georgetown community,

as we live and work together.

A Note on Studying and Grading: It is the University's expectation that you will devote at least 8 hours per week to studying for each four-credit course such as this one. Each text should be read at least three times: once as preparation for class discussion; once as soon as possible after class discussion, while the ideas are still fresh in your mind; and again as review while writing a paper or preparing for an examination. We do not practice grade inflation.

A **superior** (94-100%)

A- (91-93)

B+ **very good** (88-90%)

B **good** (84-87%)

B- (81-83%)

C+ (78-80%)

C **adequate** (74-77%)

C- (71-73%)

D+ (68-70%)

D **poor**, minimum passing (64-67%)

F **Failing** (<64%)

(further notes and information on back page of syllabus)

Course Outline

Wednesday, September 2 = NO CLASS (Georgetown follows 'Monday' Schedule)

Week 1 (Wednesday, Sept. 9): Course Introduction and Overview

I. Scholasticism (Prof. Paasch)

Week 2 (Wednesday, Sept. 16): Early scholasticism

Topics:

1. The beginnings of institutionalized education; the rise of medieval universities; what it was like to be a student and a professor at a medieval university; the development of the scholastic method.
2. What “faith and reason” means in our own day, and what it means for medieval Latin scholastics.
3. A case study in “faith seeking understanding”: Anselm on the atonement.

Readings:

- “Anselm and Abelard” (Blackboard).

Week 3 (Sept. 23): Aquinas on Theology and Science

Topics:

1. The discovery of Aristotle and his Arabic commentators.
2. The nature of science according to Aristotle.
3. Thomas Aquinas on theology as a scientific discipline.

Readings:

- Thomas Aquinas, “Commentary on the *De Trinitate* of Boethius.” (Blackboard)

Week 4 (Sept. 30): John Duns Scotus on our natural knowledge of God

Topics:

1. Various medieval approaches to what we can know about God by natural means: the *via negativa*; incidental knowledge of God; knowing God through creatures; knowing God by analogy.
2. Scotus’s criticisms of those various approaches.
3. Scotus on what we can know about God by natural means.

Readings:

- John Duns Scotus, “Commentary on the *Sentences*.” (Blackboard)

Week 5 (Oct. 7): William Ockham on Church and State

Topics:

1. The life and times of William Ockham.
2. A scholastic approach to Faith and Reason as institutions: Ockham on the legal rights of church and state.

Readings:

- William Ockham, “A Short Discourse on Tyrannical Government.” (Blackboard)

II: Alternative Christian Approaches to Knowing God: Emotion, Imagination, and Visionary Experience (Prof. McNamer)

Week 6 (Oct. 14): The "Franciscan Revolution": affective devotion and the imitation of Christ

Topics:

1. Emotion as an alternative to reason as a way of knowing God; the rise of affective devotion; St. Francis and the emergence of the Franciscan movement
2. *Imitatio Christi* as experiential knowledge
3. Compassion as a means of spiritual insight

Readings:

Primary texts:

- Thomas of Celano, *The Life of St. Francis* (selections on Blackboard)
- *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*
- Lyric prayers: a selection (on Blackboard)

Secondary texts:

- Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* (selections on Blackboard)
- André Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint* (selections on Blackboard)

Week 7 (Oct. 21): Affective Meditation, part 1

Topics:

1. The "authority of the imagination" as a challenge to scripture and scholasticism
2. The rise of a genre: affective meditation and the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*
3. *Imitatio Mariae* and the feminization of knowledge

Readings:

Primary texts:

- *Meditations on the Life of Christ: Part I*, on Blackboard
- Devotional lyrics: selections on Blackboard

Secondary texts:

- Italian art of the early Trecento: optional field trip to the National Gallery of Art; alternative reading assignment for those who cannot go (details on Blackboard)

Week 8 (Oct. 28): Affective Meditation, part 2

Topics:

1. The Passion as focus of feeling and knowing in late-medieval Christian culture
2. Women as readers and writers of affective meditation

Readings:

Primary Texts:

- *Meditations on the Life of Christ: Part II* (on Blackboard)
- Passion lyrics and devotions in the vernacular (on Blackboard)

Secondary Texts:

- Thomas Bestul, *Texts of the Passion* (selections on Blackboard)

Week 9 (Nov. 4): Visionary Experience and Vernacular TheologyTopics:

1. Vernacular theology in the later Middle Ages
2. Women writers and claims to authority
3. God as mother

Readings:*Primary Texts:*

- Julian of Norwich, *A Book of Showings*

Secondary Texts:

- Caroline Bynum, "Jesus as Mother, Abbot as Mother" (on Blackboard)
- Sarah McNamer, "The Exploratory Image: God as Mother in the *Revelations of Julian of Norwich*" (Blackboard)

III. Medieval Judaism (Prof. Ray)**Week 10 (Nov. 11): Jewish Theology**Topics:

1. Halevi on being a "chosen" people
2. The issue of rabbinic authority
3. Observance of the commandments

Readings:*Primary texts:*

- Judah Halevi, *The Book of Kuzari*, 27-49
- Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, in I. Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader*, 93-5
- Maimonides, Commentary to the Introduction to *Mishnah Sanhedrin* ch. 10, in I. Twersky ed., *A Maimonides Reader*, 402-07

Secondary texts:

- "Defining Judaism," in J. Neusner, *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, 3-19
- "Maimonides," in J. Baskin, ed., *Dictionary of Judaism and Jewish Culture*, 410-11

Week 11 (Nov. 18): Jewish RationalismTopics:

1. Why Jews sought to reconcile human reason and divine revelation
2. Classic treatments of the soul, free will, and the afterlife in Saadya and Maimonides

Readings:*Primary texts:*

- Saadia Gaon, *Book of Doctrines and Beliefs* in Alexander Altmann ed., *Three Jewish Philosophers*, 25-47 and 93-114
- Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, in I. Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader*, 72-4, 341-9

Secondary texts:

- “Background and Context,” in D. Frank and O. Leaman, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, 3-68
- Daniel Frank, “Maimonides and Medieval Jewish Aristotelianism,” in idem and O. Leaman, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, 136-156

Week 12 (Nov. 25): NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 13 (Dec. 2): Jewish Pietism

Topics:

1. Pietist movement in Ashkenazi (German) Jewry
2. New views on Jewish martyrdom

Readings:

Primary texts:

- Judah ben Samuel (he-Hasid), *Sefer Hasidim*, in *Rabbinic Fantasies*, David Stern and Mark J. Mirsky ed. and trans., 215-238
- “The Crusaders in Mayence,” in *The Jew in the Medieval World*, ed. J. R. Marcus, 128-133

Secondary texts:

- Ivan G. Marcus, “The Politics and Ethics of Pietism in Judaism,” *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 8 (1980): 227-258

Week 14 (Dec. 9): The Critique of Maimonidean Rationalism

Topics:

1. The Maimonidean Controversy and the attempt to ban philosophical study
2. Crescas’ argument for the importance of divine love

Readings:

Primary texts:

“The Conservative Reaction in Christian Spain,” chap. 16 in *The Jewish Philosophy Reader*, ed. D. Frank, O. Leaman, and C. Manekin.

Secondary texts:

- Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, “The Maimonidean Controversy,” in *History of Jewish Philosophy*: 331-345
- James Robinson, “Hasdai Crescas and anti-Aristotelianism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, ed. D. Frank and O. Leaman, 391-413

Final Examination, TBD.

This syllabus is subject to revision.

A note on learning and other disabilities:

If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing

documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

Faculty Access/Student Access/MyAccess: Students are responsible for checking the email account they have registered with the Registrar's Office & School of Continuing Studies; messages sent to students will be sent through GU's Faculty Access or through Blackboard.

Blackboard: Students are responsible for accessing articles and assignments on Blackboard and/or reserve (regular and electronic) at Lauinger.

No audio or video recording is allowed without express written permission by professor. This includes recording via a lap top computer.

No laptops are permitted in class without express written permission by professor.

All other electronic devices should be turned off. Anyone text-messaging or emailing in class will be asked to leave and will be listed as absent.