

Medieval Thought and Culture  
Professor McNelis  
Summer 2018

This course is an introduction to foundational trends and developments in the thought and culture of Europe from late antiquity to the Renaissance (roughly 400-1500). We will read a series of texts (e.g. Augustine, Chaucer, Dante) and focus in particular on their treatment of major themes such as the relationships and responsibilities of the individual to authority (both civic and divine); the pursuit, acquisition and preservation of knowledge both by individuals and institutional structures; the relationship of an individual to the broader community to which one belongs as well to external communities and religions; important ideas about gender; and arguments about divinity that reflect intense disagreements in thought about the nature of the divine. While the texts will serve as the basis for class discussion, there will also be discussion of various aspects such as gender of the medieval world during each class session.

#### Office Hours

I am available to meet most days, but if that does not fit with your work schedule, I am happy to talk over the phone or other ways to address your concerns. My office is Healy 320; phone number is 202-687-8714; email is [cam72@georgetown.edu](mailto:cam72@georgetown.edu).

#### Requirements:

- a) **Written Work (40%)** Students will write 5 short papers (500 words or less) over the course of the semester. These papers are designed to develop critical thinking and to develop analytical skills by focusing on issues discussed in class. These will be graded on a standard scale from A to F; only truly excellent work will receive the highest grades. Over the course of semester, I anticipate that there will be significant improvement in your writing from the beginning to the end of the class. You are not to use outside sources for these papers; doing so will be considered a violation of the University's Honor Code and (if proven) will result in an F for the assignment. Moreover, papers should respect the page limitation spelled out above; longer papers will not be read. Written work is due at the start of each class in hard copy. If you cannot be in class, you may submit your paper online before the start of class. Your absence will be recorded as such, but your paper will count as long as it arrives before the start time.
- b) **Class Participation (30%)** Students are expected to attend every class. I recognize that emergencies may arise. Students must, however, be extremely cautious about missing class, since, through BALS policy, the second absence will result in failure of the course. The only exception to this rule is medical; for that, I will need documentation from a doctor, and I will consult with SCS administrators about what should be done. Your presence in the classroom, by itself, amounts to C work (75%, i.e. a "fair" performance). A higher grade is easily obtainable by contributing meaningfully to our discussions. This can mean asking questions as well as answering those posed by faculty and other students. The foundation of your class participation should be a careful, thoughtful reading of the texts. Much of this material will be unfamiliar, even uncomfortably challenging. Each class session is designed to help you understand the assignment and to think about it in new ways. In other words, there will be learning during the class session, and your active participation will be an index of how much you are learning.
- c) **Final (30%):** A take home exam. More details later.

#### Learning Goals and Assessments

Students will be assessed according to the following benchmarks and goals:

- 1) Students will develop strategies of reading, understanding and enjoying literary works.
- 2) Students will learn to analyze and discuss complex ideas that emerge from literature and other expressions of intellectual activity.
- 3) Students will learn a basic outline of medieval history and be able to understand the basic intellectual context in which texts were written.
- 4) Students will learn the basic form and style of academic writing. Students will be able to produce papers that engage closely with specific passages and that are free from lexical and grammatical errors.

#### Schedule of Readings:

May 21:	Course Introduction
June 4:	Augustine, <i>Confessions</i>
June 11:	Einhard, <i>Life of Charlemagne</i> ; Salisbury, <i>Policraticus</i>
June 18:	<i>Beowulf</i>
June 25:	Letters of Abelard and Heloise (selections)
July 2:	Aquinas, selections
July 9:	Dante, <i>Inferno</i> and <i>Purgatorio</i>
July 16:	Dante, <i>Paradiso</i>
July 23:	Chaucer, selections from <i>Canterbury Tales</i>
July 30:	Chaucer, selections from <i>Canterbury Tales</i>
Aug. 6:	Petrarch, selections
Aug.13:	Wrap-up

#### Required Texts

It is essential that you acquire the correct translations. Please order by ISBN number.

St. Augustine, *Confessions*, R.S. Pine-Coffin (tr.), Penguin ISBN-13: 978-0140441147

Two Lives of Charlemagne, Penguin ISBN-13: 978-0140455052

S. Heaney, *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation* ISBN-13: 978-0393320978

Peter Abelard. *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* Penguin, B. Radice (tr.) ISBN-13: 978-0140448993

Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, J. Ciardi (tr.) ISBN-13: 978-0451208637

G. Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, N. Coghill (tr.) ISBN-13: 978-0140424386

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- Grading Scheme

A = 93-100%

A- = 90-92%

B+= 88-89.9%

B = 83-87.9%

B- = 80-82%

C+= 78-79.9%

C = 73-77.9%

C- = 70-72%

D+= 68-69.9%

D = 60-67.9%

F = Below 60%

#### Absences

A student will count as “absent” in any week in which he/she fails to submit any of the assignments due that week, including discussion postings, and/or writing assignments. After the student accumulates two such “absent” weeks, the student will receive a failing grade in this course, regardless of grades earned in any other assignment

#### Accommodation (*Students with Disabilities Policies*):

The School of Continuing Studies proudly supports the role of Georgetown's Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Affirmative Action and does not discriminate or deny access to otherwise qualified students on the basis of disability. Depending on their documentation, students with disabilities may be eligible for reasonable accommodations and/or special services in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Students with disabilities are strongly encouraged to contact the Academic Resource Center (Leavey Center, Suite 335; 202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu) before the start of classes to allow that office time to review their documentation and to make recommendations for appropriate accommodations, including note takers, books on tape, extended time on tests, interpreting services and enlarged texts, among others. There is a procedure for requesting an accommodation as well as a list of possible accommodations available.

If the Academic Resource Center recommends accommodations, its office will provide the student with an official letter to share with professors. Students are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance. In some instances, recommended accommodations might not be allowable by a professor if doing so would modify course or degree requirements considered an essential requirement of the program of instruction. Should questions or related issues arise, the student and professor should work directly with the Academic Resource Center to find an appropriate resolution.

#### Academic Integrity

As signatories to the Georgetown University Honor Pledge, students are required to uphold academic honesty in all aspects of the course, especially on exams and papers. The professor is aware of and regularly consults all of the major internet sources for plagiarized papers. Thus, students are hereby cautioned to follow the letter and the spirit of the Standards of Conduct outlined in the Georgetown Honor System brochure pp. 3-4, 11-13. If you have any questions about conforming to rules regarding plagiarism or about the proper format for citations, consult your professor or teaching assistant. The first instance of plagiarism will result in a grade of “F” on that assignment. Any further instance of plagiarism will result in an “F” for the course.

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#### **Title IX at Georgetown**

<https://titleix.georgetown.edu/>

#### ***Sexual Misconduct***

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (“Title IX”) prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational programs, which includes sexual harassment or any acts of sexual misconduct. Title IX requires the University, upon becoming aware of any incident of sexual harassment and misconduct to respond appropriately to protect and maintain the safety of the University community, including students, faculty, and staff.

Georgetown University prohibits sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking.

Discrimination based on sex, including sexual misconduct and discrimination based on pregnancy or parenting status, subverts the University's mission and threatens permanent damage to the educational experience, careers, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff.

Please know that as a faculty member I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence and sexual assault. However, University policy also requires me to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct.

Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. These resources include:

**Jen Schweer, MA, LPC**

Associate Director of Health Education Services for Sexual Assault  
Response and Prevention  
(202) 687-0323  
jls242@georgetown.edu

**Erica Shirley**

Trauma Specialist  
Counseling and Psychiatric Services  
(CAPS)  
(202) 687-6985  
els54@georgetown.edu

More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found at:  
<https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help>.

***Pregnancy Adjustments and Accommodations***

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant and parenting students. Students may request adjustments based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication. Specific adjustments will be handled on a case by case basis and will depend on medical need and academic requirements.

Students seeking a pregnancy adjustment or accommodation should follow the process laid out at: <https://titleix.georgetown.edu/student-pregnancy>.