

MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

Instructor: Dr Anders Kraal

Last updated: Dec 7, 2025

1. Course Description

The label “Medieval Philosophy” applies to the phase of Western philosophy in-between Ancient and Modern Philosophy, from approximately the 5th to the 16th centuries. In this course we pursue a careful study of some key writings of Augustine (d. 430), the most influential figure in Medieval Philosophy. The core of the course consists of a close reading of Augustine’s *Confessions*, the first autobiography in world literature, which contains philosophical meditations on a large number of topics, including God, the problem of evil, the meaning of life, free will, sexuality and love, the nature of mind, the afterlife, and the nature of time.

Throughout the course we pursue multiple digressions on how themes in Augustine’s thought impacted subsequent Medieval philosophy (e.g. Anselm and Aquinas), Renaissance philosophy (e.g. Petrarch and Ficino), and Early Modern Philosophy (e.g. Leibniz and Pascal). We will also look at how Augustine’s thought is indebted to earlier Greek and Roman Philosophy.

2. Lectures. MWF 11:00-11:50pm in Buch A 202.

3. Lecture style: Lectures are centred on the texts of the course; detailed information about weekly texts are posted every Saturday in advance; no slides, recordings, or preprinted handouts; students are responsible for taking their own notes.

4. Instructor. Dr. Anders Kraal (anders.kraal@ubc.ca)

5. Instructor Office Hours. TBA

6. Instructor Email Policy. Instructor will read and reply to emails weekdays

7. Teaching Assistant. TBA. (The TA will be marking exams and papers, and will answer questions about marked work via email.)

8. Required Texts. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Chadwick (Oxford: OUP, 2008). (Or any other edition.) (Will be available in the UBC bookstore.)

9. Course Requirements

In-Class Exam (x3): In the in-class exams, you will be asked to provide answers to questions dealing with matters brought up in class prior to the date of the exam. If a student misses an in-class exam, for whatever reason, the weight of that exam will be transferred to their final exam. TA's are entitled to judge from case to case if and how much feedback to give on an in-class exam beyond the mark itself; students asking TA's for feedback should be aware that each TA has limited time allotted for each exam and may not be able to provide as much feedback as the student asks for.

Final Exam: The final exam is cumulative (unlike the midterms), and will be held during UBC's final examinations period. A missed final exam will be assigned 0p unless an explanation is provided that is acceptable by the standards of the UBC Academic Calendar, in which case there will be a standing deferred final exam typically several months after the term ends. Finals are not handed back to students, as per department policy. Final exam scores and marking is not posted or handed back to students, rather it is added to the scores earned from the midterms and uploaded directly to UBC Workday's grade database.

The midterms and the final exam are written online via Canvas using Respondus Lockdown Browser (UBC's usual system for online exams). Exams are closed book.

Note: If a student suspects their computer will glitch during the online exam, they should bring sheets of paper to the exam that they can write their answers on, by hand. However they are also asked to show each sheet of paper to the instructor before they start to write, and should also sit in the front row of the class so that the instructor can easily invigilate their exam at all times. Students who hand in paper exams will not receive these paper exams back, nor will they receive written feedback on their exams.

There will be no makeup exams for students who performs poorly on exams.

10. Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course the student will be expected to i) be familiar with some main themes in Medieval Philosophy; ii) have more detailed knowledge of some central themes in Augustine's *Confessions*; ii) be aware of problems and prospects attaching to the above themes, and be able reflect critically and constructively on them

11. Missed Lectures

Students who miss classes are encouraged to ask classmates for notes. If that fails, they may ask the instructor to post an announcement on canvas with their request for notes along with their email; it will be up to the classmates whether they will receive any reply.

12. Marking Parameters

Your mark in this course will be a function of three main factors: i) your performance on the examinable momenta relative to your peers, ii) your comprehension of the course material, iii) demonstration of skill in assessing and evaluating philosophical ideas.

13. Marking Scale

A+ 90-100% / **A** 85-89% / **A-** 80-84% / **B+** 76-79% / **B** 72-75% / **B-** 68-71%

C+ 64-67% / **C** 60-63% / **C-** 55-59% / **D** 50-54% / **F** 0-49%

The degree of difficulty on the examinable momenta will be set so as to *aim* at a class average outcome that by and large conforms to the department average for this course down the years. Scaling may be used to this effect.

14. Policy on Review of Marked Work

Marks on exams and papers will be posted on canvas. Feedback on expected outcomes of exams and papers will be provided (typically by the Instructor) in so-called Feedback Sessions. Any concerns about the marking of a paper or exam should be submitted to the marker (typically the TA) via email, and will be responded to (typically by the TA) via email.

15. Plagiarism (quoting from the UBC Academic Calendar)

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. See also <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

16. UBC Values and Policies (quoting from the UBC Academic Calendar)

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with

disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here (<https://senate.ubc.ca/policiesresources-support-student-success>).

17. Schedule

A more detailed schedule will be posted on Canvas.

January

5

7

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12

14

16

19

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23

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28

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February

2

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16 Family Day

18 Reading Break

20 Reading Break

23

25

27

March

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30

April

1

3: Good Friday

6

8

10

14-25: Final exam period