

- Department of Philosophy, University of Guelph -

PHIL 4410/6320. MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY: THE ETHICS AND MORAL PSYCHOLOGY OF THOMAS AQUINAS



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Fall Term 2018

Course Description:

The aim of this seminar is to explore the ethics and moral psychology of Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274), perhaps the best known of the medieval scholastic theologians. The course will focus on a careful reading of some of Aquinas's key texts, mainly taken from his *Summa theologiae* and his lesser-known *Quaestio disputata de malo*, selections from which will be studied in translation. Topics to be treated will include Thomas's account of human action, particularly his theory of the will and its role in the human ability to act freely, his theory of the virtues and of natural law, and his account of the scope and nature of human happiness. Through weekly lectures, class discussion and student presentations, the course will concentrate not only on understanding the content of Aquinas's views on human nature in their own right, but on contrasting them, where appropriate, with ancient sources such as Aristotle, and even with modern and contemporary views in the field of ethics and moral psychology.

Sources:

- 1) Thomas Aquinas, *Selected Writings*. Trans. R. McNerny. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1998.
- 2) Courselink Readings
- 3) <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/>

Requirements:

- 8-weekly papers: 5% x 8 = 40%
- Term paper =30%
- 30 minute presentation=30%

September

11. Introduction to Course

18. The Ultimate End: Aquinas *Summa Theologiae (ST)* I-II, qq. 1 and 2, (McInerny, 482-509); Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I. 1094a1-1103a10.

25. The Ultimate End: Aquinas *ST* I-II, qq. 3, 4 and 5 (McInerny, 509-550); Aristotle, *NE* X. 1172a19-1179a27.

October

02. The Will: *ST* I, q. 82; *ST* I-II, q. 6, 8, 9 and 10 (Courselink reading).

09. No Class—Tuesday after Thanksgiving.

16. On Human Choice: *ST*, q. 83 (Courselink reading); *Disputed Question on Evil* q. 6 (McInerny, 551-564); *ST* I-II, qq. 13 and 14 (Courselink Reading).

23. Culpable Ignorance, Weakness of Will and Malice: *ST* I-II, q. 77 and 78 (Courselink Reading); *Disputed Question on Evil* q. 3, aa. 6-9 and aa. 12-13 (Courselink Reading).

30. The Virtues: *Disputed Question on the Cardinal Virtues* (Courselink Reading); Aristotle, *NE* II. 1103a14-1109b26.

November

06. On Law: *ST* I-II, qq. 90-94 (McInerny, 612-652).

13. Presentations

20. Presentations

27. Presentations

29. Presentations

Requirements:

1) 30 Minutes Presentation (30%)

Presentations will consist of a 30-minute talk to the group on a topic that is relevant to the course that has been approved beforehand by me, and for which you will sign up at our first meeting. By Thursday, November 8th, I would like to have met with each of you to discuss your presentation topic, so make sure to set up an appointment with me by that date. Even if you only have a rough idea of what you would like to talk about, that's fine. I can help you narrow the scope when we meet one on one. As for the presentation itself, the idea is to argue for a position as though you were giving a paper at a conference. For this purpose, you will obviously need to consult not only the primary literature, but the secondary literature as well in order to stake out your own position. Once you have delivered your paper, the class will engage in a short discussion. Since your term paper ('essay') will be based on your presentation, this discussion will be helpful in refining the final product.

Because it is important for the rest of the class to have read some material that is relevant to your presentation, I would like each of you to notify the class by email of the primary sources that you are planning to use so that class can re-read this material.

The presentations will be graded on clarity, accuracy, and quality of engagement with the primary and secondary material.

2) Reports on Weekly Readings (8 x 5%) (40%)

For the first nine weeks, though excluding our first meeting, participants in the seminar will be required to submit a 300-word response to the reading for that week, which will act as the basis for discussion in the class. This is not intended to be a summary of the material for the day. Rather, I would like you to focus on a few sentences or a paragraph from Aquinas that struck you as philosophically interesting, and write a short response to it, explaining what you think it means, and why it is philosophically interesting or significant. At the end of the response, I would like you to pose a question for discussion. Each week, after I give a brief lecture on the material for the day, I will ask students to read their weekly reports out to the class, along with their questions for discussion.

It is imperative, therefore that students come to class having completed these weekly assignments. At the end of each class, students will submit a hard copy to me of these write-ups for grading purposes.

3) Term Paper (30%)

The term paper refers to your essay for the course, which will be a refined version of your presentation. It should be written in a clear, accessible style, with a thesis that is stated at the beginning and that is defended in the body of the essay. The length of the paper should be 10-12 pages for undergraduate students, and 15-20 pages for graduate students. It is due on Friday, December 07, 2018, exactly one week after our last meeting. Late papers will be penalized at a rate of 3% a day.

Course Statements

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities that involve, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar

University Statements

Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. The regulations and procedures for [Academic Consideration](#) are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the fortieth class day; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of the add period in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for [Dropping Courses](#) are available in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required, however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to book their exams at least 7 days in advance, and not later than the 40th Class Day.

More information: www.uoguelph.ca/sas

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.