



Phil 290: Advanced Seminar on Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy

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In Person Seminar | Fall Semester, 2023 | Thursdays, 6:00 - 8:45 PM

In this course, we will examine a variety of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic philosophical perspectives of the Middle Ages and Renaissance (roughly 4th century CE through the 16th century). In this course we will engage with several challenging primary texts in the history of philosophy in a way that is sensitive to the historical and cultural contexts in which they were written. In doing so, we will also discuss the various ways later philosophical perspectives draw upon and challenge the central themes of medieval and Renaissance philosophy as well as an appreciation of the lasting significance of medieval philosophy to the disciplines of theology, religious studies, history, literature, and political science.

Authors we will likely encounter include: al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), Maimonides, Averroes (Ibn Rushd), Thomas Aquinas, Marguerite Porete, Julian of Norwich, Nicholas of Cusa, Marsilio Ficino, and Teresa of Ávila. Thematically, we will focus on the following topics in particular:

- The powers/functions of the human soul and the question of these powers' dependence on human embodiment
- The notions of divine providence, predestination, and the problem of evil and the relevance of these notions to the question of the possibility of free will
- Various philosophical and theological perspectives on the possibility of individual immortality
- The nature of human virtues and human happiness and the possible relationships between spiritual and secular aims of human action
- The fortunes of Plato and Aristotle throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance
- The relationships and tensions between philosophies influenced by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance

