History 295 (Special Topics)
An Introduction to Medieval Intellectual History
T10-11:50am, Th 10-10:50am
ARH 130

Professor John Wei
Mears Cottage 305
weijohn@grinnell.edu
Office Hours: MW11-11:50, 1:15-3:05
x9268

Course web page: https://pioneerweb.grinnell.edu

Course Description
This course will provide an introduction to the western intellectual tradition from roughly the end of the fourth century to the late fourteenth century. Students will learn about developments in educational institutions, philosophy, theology, mysticism, spirituality, science, magic, law, and political theory through the reading and analysis of key texts in these areas. The focus will be on Christian Europe. Nevertheless, since Christians in the Middle Ages did not exist in a vacuum, but also interacted with Jews and Muslims and drew inspiration from their writings, we will also spend time examining the Jewish and Muslim intellectual traditions.

It is recommended but not required that students have some background in medieval history, e.g. through the relevant HIS 100, HIS 233, or HIS 234.

Course Goals
1. To gain an understanding of the different types of intellectual history and how intellectual history differs from philosophy, theology, political theory, etc.
2. To become familiar with the major texts, ideas, and thinkers from the Middle Ages.
3. To understand why modern philosophers, theologians, mystics, historians of science, legal theorists, and political scientists continue to be interested in the medieval intellectual tradition.
4. To learn how to analyze and interpret primary sources in their historical context.
5. To improve writing skills.

Assignments and Grading
Students’ grades will be based on:
1. Class participation (25%)
   a. You are expected to come to class having read and thought about the assigned readings.
   b. You must take an active role in class discussion.
   c. Quality will be weighed over quantity.
2. 3 Short (300 word) Response Papers (out of 5 choices) (10% total)
3. 2 Short Presentations (5% each)
4. 1-Page Closing Reflection (5%) on medieval intellectual history
5. Final Paper (40% total): To help ensure the timely submission of the paper, students will be required to submit short assignments at regular intervals. These are:
   a. a 1-paragraph research project proposal with 1-page preliminary bibliography (3%)
   b. a 1-page summary of the argument of your paper (3%)
   c. a 5-page draft (4%)
   d. the final version (15 pages) (30%)

6. Presentation of research (10%)
   a. All students will need to give a 15-minute presentation on their research at the end of the semester.
   b. This assignment will be graded on clarity, presentation, and content.

Grades for the Final Paper will be based on the following criteria: a clearly formulated and non-trivial thesis, critical thinking and argumentation, mastery of the subject matter, good writing, and correct citation practices.

**Participation and Discussion**
Most class sessions will be organized around discussion. In order for our meetings to be meaningful and educational, it is imperative that you do the assigned reading in advance, take notes, and bring the assigned reading to class. If the assigned reading is an electronic or online text, you need to print it out beforehand (which you should do anyway for taking notes). To help guide class discussion, reading and discussion questions will be provided beforehand, usually by email. When preparing for class, you should mark up the assigned reading and write comments in the margins so that you will be able to find relevant passages in the text during class discussion.

**Required Texts**
Arthur Hyman and James J. Walsh, ed., *Philosophy in the Middle Ages.*
Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy,* trans. Victor Watts (Revised Penguin Classics)
Marcia Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition*

**Schedule**

**Week 1: Introduction + 2 Modern Uses of the Medieval Intellectual Tradition**

Jan. 26  Introduction + Applying Augustine to Foucault (and vice versa)
(J) J. Joyce Schuld, “Augustine, Foucault, and the Politics of Imperfection”

Jan. 28  The Relevance of Medieval Legal History
(I) Kenneth Pennington, “Innocent Until Proven Guilty: The Origins of a Legal Maxim”
(I) Kenneth Pennington, “Torture and Fear: Enemies of Justice”

**Weeks 2-5: The Classical and Patristic Traditions**

Feb. 2  Christianity and Classical Culture
Feb. 4  Christian Education: Augustine’s solution
Colish 25-37
(I) Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*

Feb. 9  Augustine’s Life
*Confessions* 1-6

Feb. 11 Augustine’s Life continued
*Confessions* 7-9

Feb. 16 Memory, Time, and Other Thoughts
*Confessions* 10-13
Response Paper #1

Feb. 18 A Different Reconciliation of Philosophy and Christianity
Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, Books 1-2

Feb. 23 A Different Reconciliation of Philosophy and Christianity continued
Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, Books 3-5
Response Paper #2

Feb. 25 Textbook Writers, the Seven Liberal Arts, and Monastic Education
Colish 42-51
Excerpts from Donatus, *Ars Maior*; Priscian, *Institutiones* and *Libri minores*
(E) Excerpts from Boethius, *On Arithmetic*
(E) Excerpts from Boethius, *On Music*
(E) Excerpts from *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*

**Weeks 6-7: Scholasticism**

Mar. 2  Neo-Scholasticism and Modern Interest in the Scholastics
(I) *The Old Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Neo-scholasticism”

5-minute presentations on important modern scholars of scholasticism
1. Neo-scholastics: Etienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain
2. German Philosophy: Martin Heidegger
3. Transcendental Thomism: Karl Rahner
4. Analytical philosophers: Elizabeth Anscombe, Peter Geach, Norman Kretzmann, Eleanor Stump

Mar. 4  Anselm of Canterbury
Hyman 147-62
(J) Colin Grant, “Anselm’s Argument Today”

Mar. 9  The Rise of Cathedral Schools and Universities
(I) Abelard, *Historia calamitatum*
(E) Excerpts from John of Salisbury’s *Metalogicon*
(E) Excerpts from William of Tyre
Response Paper #3

Mar. 11  High Scholasticism
Colish 289-301
Hyman 234-247 (Avicenna), 503-515, 523-527 (Aquinas)

**Weeks 8-9: Law and Political Theory**

Mar. 16  Natural Law: Medieval and Modern
(I) Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, qqs. 90, 91, and 94
(I) Anderson and Tollefsen, “Biotech Enhancement and Natural Law”
Response Paper #4

Mar. 18  Class cancelled

**Research Project Proposals due (by email)**

-------------------------------------------Spring Break-------------------------------------

Apr. 6  Just War Theory in the Modern World
(J) Nicholas Rengger, “On the Just War Tradition in the Twenty-First Century”
(I) James Turner Johnson, “Just War, As It Was and Is”
Response Paper #5

Apr. 8  Medieval Just War Theory
Gratian, C.23 qqs.1-2
Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 40, a.1

Apr. 9  1-page summary of argument due (by email)

**Weeks 10-11: Science and Magic**

Apr. 13  What was Science in the Middle Ages?
Colish 319-25
Hyman 471-88 (Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon)
(J) Durand, “Magic and Experimental Science”
(J) Pingree, “Hellenophilia versus the History of Science”

Apr. 15  Aristotelian Science
(I) Overview of Aristotle’s account of motion
Hyman 686-688 (Ockham), 766-771 (Buridan)
Apr. 20  Sorcery and Witchcraft  
   (J) Michael D. Bailey, “From Sorcery to Witchcraft”

Apr. 22  Medicine

**Weeks 12-13: Mysticism and Spirituality**

Apr. 27  What is mysticism? Is it a form of knowledge or revelation? Is it a technique?  
   (LFL) Origen; Gregory of Nyssa; Augustine  
   (E) Excerpts from Jewish and Muslim mystics  

10-minute presentations

Apr. 29  Love and the Imitation of Christ  
   Colish 225-44  
   (LFL) Bernard of Clairvaux; Francis of Assisi; Bonaventure

May 4  Negative Theology  
   (LFL) Pseudo-Dionysius; Meister Eckhart; John Ruusbroec; *The Cloud of Unknowing*  
   (J) Bernard McGinn, “The Changing Shape of Late Medieval Mysticism”

May 6  Female Mystics  
   (LFL) Catherine of Siena; Julian of Norwich  
   (E) Marguerite Porete

May 7  5-page draft due
Week 14: Presentations and Wrap-Up

May 11  Presentations

May 13  Wrap-up
(I) Marcia L. Colish, *Remapping Scholasticism*
EOC Evaluations
1-Page Reflection Due

May 20  Final Paper Due