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► Description

This seminar will focus on selected topics central to the metaphysical thought of Western medieval philosophers, with special emphasis on those issues that bear relevance to the work of contemporary metaphysicians.

We will spend roughly the **first five weeks** on the ‘logical’ (i.e., the logico-semantic) framework in which the issues are framed and debated, via a reading of Paul V. Spade’s *Thoughts, Words and Things*, supplemented with Fridugisus of Tours’s *Letter on the Being of Nothing and Shadows*, as well as extensive selections from Parts I and II of William of Ockham’s *Summa Logicae*, from the “Longer Treatise” of Walter Burley’s *De Puritate Artis Logicae*, and from Jean Buridan’s *Summulae de Dialectica*. Topics to be covered include: the kinds of terms, the kinds of *suppositio* of terms, the so-called predicables—genus, species, *differentia*, *proprium*, and accident—, the referents of syncategorematic expressions like ‘something’ and ‘nothing’, the kinds of propositions, the truth conditions for propositions, modal and tensed propositions, and propositions with non-referring expressions.

The **rest of the term** will then be devoted to considering a number of specific metaphysical *quaestiones*, with a view both to becoming clear about the underlying principles relied on in the argumentation (*pro* and *contra*) and to assessing the cogency of those arguments. Among the topics addressed by such *quaestiones* are: existence *vs.* essence, simple *vs.* composite and material *vs.* immaterial substances, Divine simplicity, causation, motion, the problem of universals, the theory of location, the structure of space. For primary texts, we will rely on selected portions of Henry of Harclay’s *Ordinary Questions* and Ockham’s *Quodlibetal Questions*. We might also consider some questions from Buridan’s *In Metaphysicen* [sic] *Aristotelis*, which we will translate ourselves.

► Requirements

The seminar presupposes some familiarity with metaphysics and some acquaintance with elementary logical notions and techniques.

For **R-credit**, the requirements are: (i) regular attendance and participation in class, and (ii) keeping up with the readings.

For **E-credit** (letter grade), the requirements are: (i) regular attendance and participation in class, (ii) keeping up with the readings, and (iii) *either* one long paper (c. 20 pp.) on a topic of your choosing, to be selected in consultation with us no later than the first week of April and due on Monday, May 3, 2010, *or* two shorter papers, on topics of your choosing, to be selected in consultation with us—the first of these papers should be approximately 8 pp. in length and will be due on Monday, March 8, 2010, and the second should be approximately 12 pp. in length and will be due on Monday, May 3, 2010.

► Texts

Below is a list of the main primary texts that we shall be reading during the seminar. For convenience, the relevant selections will be made available in electronic form through *CourseWorks* (section *Class Files*, folder *Shared Files*). During the course of the semester, we may also rely on *CourseWorks* to provide a selection of important, recent philosophical scholarship dealing the issues we'll be treating each week.

- Jean Buridan, *Summulae de Dialectica*, trans. G. Klima (New Haven, 2001).
- Walter Burley, *On the Purity of the Art of Logic*, trans. P. V. Spade (New Haven, 2000).
- Henry of Harclay, *Ordinary Questions*, trans. M. Henninger (Oxford, 2008).
- William of Ockham, *Ockham's Theory of Terms: Part I of the Summa Logicae*, trans. M J. Loux (South Bend, Indiana, 1974).
- William of Ockham, *Ockham's Theory of Propositions: Part II of the Summa Logicae*, trans. A. Freddoso and H. Schuurman (South Bend, Indiana, 1980).
- William of Ockham, *Quodlibetal Questions*, vols. 1-2 (= Quodlibets 1-7), trans. A. Freddoso and F. Kelley (New Haven, 1991).
- Fridugisus of Tours's *Letter on the Being of Nothing and Shadows* (available on *CourseWorks* as *Fridugisus.pdf*)
- Paul Vincent Spade, *Thoughts, Words and Things: An Introduction to Late Medieval Logic and Semantic Theory* (available on *CourseWorks* as *Spade.pdf*)