

AP1000P
Philosophy for Understanding Theology

Semester 1: Classroom-based (AP1000P)

Description

This unit explores the philosophical underpinnings of some key theological turns in Christian history. Variants of Platonism provide the background against which the Hellenistic elements in the New Testament can be interpreted; subsequent Platonist developments inform Augustine's thought, and thereby, much later, Luther's. Similarly, Aristotle sets the scene for Thomas Aquinas; Kant for Schleiermacher and the nineteenth century liberal theologians; Hegel, in a different way, for Kierkegaard and Barth; Heidegger for Bultmann and Rahner. The unit concludes by exploring a contemporary philosophy with theological implications. Throughout, the student is given an engagement with the philosophers concerned, both in their own right and as they provide a background for scriptural and theological contemporaries and successors.

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this unit, it is expected that students will be able to:

1. Explain the difference between philosophical and theological approaches to exploring truth
2. Discuss the ways in which the particular philosophers studied have extensions of their philosophical claims that are essentially theological
3. Identify and describe the issues involved in assessing the theological merits and demerits of the various philosophical positions studied
4. Describe the relationship between the philosophers studied and the theological responses and reactions they generated in others
5. Outline the ways in which secular-philosophical and religious-theological currents have flowed together in Christian history.

Assessment

Assessment Type	Weighting
Essay (2000 words)	50%
2-Hour Examination	50%

Pre-requisite: none

Lecturer: John Martis

Recommended reading

* = set texts recommended for purchase

*Allen, Diogenes and Eric O. Springsted. *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*. 2nd ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster-John Knox Press, 2007. 267 pp.

Beilby, James K., ed. *For Faith and Clarity: Philosophical Contributions to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006.

Bonsor, Jack A. *Athens and Jerusalem: The Role of Philosophy in Theology*. Marwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993.

Brown, Colin. *Philosophy and the Christian Faith: a Historical Sketch from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1980. 320 pp.

Copleston, F. *A History of Philosophy*. Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1962-1977.

Craig, William Lane, and J.P. Moreland, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*. Chichester, UK; Malden, MA: Wiley- Blackwell, 2009.

Gilson, Etienne. *God and Philosophy*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1941.

Melchert, Norman. *The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*. 4th ed. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2001; or 3rd. ed. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co, 1999.

Taylor A.E. *Plato: The Man and His Work*. Dover Books on Western Philosophy. New York: Dover Books 2011.

Vesey, Godfrey, ed. *The Philosophy in Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.

AP8000P
Philosophy for Understanding Theology

Semester 1: Classroom-based (AP8000P)

Description

This unit explores the philosophical underpinnings of some key theological turns in Christian history. Variants of Platonism provide the background against which the Hellenistic elements in the New Testament can be interpreted; subsequent Platonist developments inform Augustine's thought, and thereby, much later, Luther's. Similarly, Aristotle sets the scene for Thomas Aquinas; Kant for Schleiermacher and the nineteenth century liberal theologians; Hegel, in a different way, for Kierkegaard and Barth; Heidegger for Bultmann and Rahner. The unit gives the student an encounter with the philosophers concerned, both in their own right and as they provide a background for scriptural and theological contemporaries and successors. It challenges the student to address critically the question of the whether there exists a theoretical limit to fruitful engagement between philosophical and theological approaches to discovering ultimate meaning.

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this unit, it is expected that students will be able to:

1. Explain the difference between philosophical and theological approaches to exploring truth;
2. Discuss the ways in which the particular philosophers studied have extensions of their philosophical claims that are essentially theological;
3. Recognise the issues involved in assessing the theological merits and demerits of the various philosophical positions studied;
4. Critically evaluate, with reference to original texts, the coherence of the philosophical positions studied as these bid to inform theological positions.
5. Demonstrate understanding, through focus on a particular philosopher or philosophy, of the deeper issues uniting and dividing secular-philosophical and religious-theological approaches.

Assessment

Assessment Type	Weighting
Essay 1 (3000 words), following prior presentation at seminar of draft essay*.	50%
Essay 2 (3000 words)	50%

*Seminar presentation of draft (clarity of presentation and leadership of discussion to be assessed, followed by the written-up essay)

Pre-requisite: none
Lecturer: John Martis

Recommended reading

* = set texts recommended for purchase

*Allen, Diogenes and Eric O. Springsted. *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*. 2nd ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster-John Knox Press. 2007. 267 pp.

Grayling, A.C. *The History of Philosophy*. Viking, 2019.

Bonsor, Jack A. *Athens and Jerusalem: The Role of Philosophy in Theology*. Marwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993.

Brown, Colin. *Philosophy and the Christian Faith: a Historical Sketch from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1980. 320 pp

Copleston, F. *A History of Philosophy*. Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1962-1977.

Craig, William Lane, and J.P. Moreland, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*. Chichester, UK; Malden, MA: Wiley- Blackwell, 2009.

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Melchert, Norman. *The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*. 4th ed. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2001; or 3rd. ed. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co, 1999.

Taylor A.E. *Plato: The Man and His Work*. Dover Books on Western Philosophy. New York: Dover Books 2011.

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