

PHIL 6210/MEDVL 6210: SEMINAR IN MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

Fall 2014

Tuesday 4:30–6:30, Rockefeller Hall B16

Sydney Penner

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Office hours: W 2:00–4:00 or by appt.

Course website: <http://sydneypenner.ca/phil6210/>

*[Suárez's *Metaphysical Disputations*] 17–19 constitute ... the longest, most profound, and most thorough tract ever written on creaturely efficient causality from an Aristotelian perspective. – Alfred J. Freddoso*

DM 17 and 18 ... seem far less interesting. ... It is often difficult to see how [Suárez's] Aristotelian perspective sheds light on modern questions about causality. – Robert Pasnau

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Although not really medieval on any sane periodization of Western history, Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) certainly worked within the scholastic tradition (despite myths about its earlier demise) and it is often remarked that one learns much about medieval philosophy from reading Suárez. Embedded within his best-known work, *Metaphysical Disputations*, is a remarkably detailed and comprehensive treatment of causation. Excerpts from that treatment will form the core of our course. We will look at all four kinds of Aristotelian causes: material, formal, efficient, and final. In addition to trying to get a better sense of what Suárez takes each of those four kinds of causation to be, questions that we will look at include the following: why four kinds of cause rather than fewer or more? does efficient causation have priority over the other kinds of causation? are there causes that act freely? do so-called secondary causes genuinely act? if so, do they act by themselves or must God always act concurrently?

As I said, Suárez's writings on causation will form the core of the course. What to read in addition remains to be determined in consultation with seminar participants.

I will assign some secondary literature, but most of our attention will be devoted to working through the primary texts. All assigned texts will be made available in English translation, though seminar participants are of course more than welcome to work with the Latin texts.

TEXTS

Since we are not reading any published volumes in their entirety, I will make all of the required readings available electronically on the course website. Building personal libraries is generally to be recommended, however, so you may wish to purchase the following volumes:

- Suárez, Francisco. *On the Formal Cause of Substance: Metaphysical Disputation XV*. Translated by John Kronen and Jeremiah Reedy. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2000.
- ———. *On Efficient Causality: Metaphysical Disputations 17, 18, and 19*. Translated by Alfred J. Freddoso. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.
- ———. *On Creation, Conservation, and Concurrence: Metaphysical Disputations 20–22*. Translated by Alfred J. Freddoso. South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2002.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS	<p><i>Attendance and participation:</i> It should go without saying, but I expect seminar participants to have done the readings with care and to come to our weekly meetings prepared to participate in discussion of those readings.</p> <p><i>Weekly questions:</i> Please submit a question or reflection on the reading by noon of the day of class. Usually a paragraph or two will suffice; anything over a page is certainly unnecessary. I want to see that you've read the texts with care. I may bring these questions up in class, so be prepared to discuss them further in that context.</p> <p><i>Presentations:</i> Students taking the class for credit will be asked to lead a discussion of an assigned reading for half of one of the weekly meetings.</p> <p><i>Term paper:</i> Those taking the course for credit should either (i) write two shorter papers (one to be handed in by Oct. 21 and the other to be handed in by Dec. 15) or (ii) one longer paper in two drafts (to be handed in by Dec. 9 and Dec. 18, respectively). I am not overly concerned about lengths – some great papers are short; some great papers are long – but 14–18 pages for the shorter papers and 30–35 pages for a longer one will get you in the right ballpark. I will not assign paper topics but am of course more than happy to be consulted.</p> <p>It is my view that philosophers are prone to being lamentably unprofessional and unscholarly in their paper-writing practices. If you have not already, please figure out what a style manual is and how to use it. I'm partial to the <i>Chicago Manual of Style</i>, but you are free to use another manual if you prefer. Just be sure to adhere to a consistent style of footnoting, citations, etc.</p>
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY	For an undergraduate to plagiarize is seriously ill-advised. I trust that you aren't foolish enough even to contemplate doing so as a graduate student, are you?
SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS	If you require any special accommodations for reasons related to disabilities, religious observance, or something else, do not hesitate to let me know. I will be happy to work with you in arranging appropriate accommodations for those requirements. Letting me know sooner is better than later.
USEFUL LINKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://sydneypenner.ca/phil6210/ (course website) • http://sydneypenner.ca/SuarTr.shtml (guide to English translations of Suárez, including links to texts available online) • http://sydneypenner.ca/SuarLat.shtml (guide to Latin Suárez texts available online – all the editions important for our purposes can be found online)