

**‘VERBAL JOUSTING’: SCHOLASTICS AND HUMANISTS ON PHILOSOPHY  
PHIL 400**

COURSE  
DESCRIPTION

Analytic philosophy’s closest historical analogue is the scholastic philosophy of the medieval and early modern periods. Much as analytic philosophy has its critics today, scholasticism had its critics in its day. Renaissance humanists, in particular, often ridiculed scholastics for their barbaric Latin, useless quibbling over obscure details, and failure to better the lives of its readers. The scholastics in turn often dismissed the humanists as mere grammarians without an appreciation for true philosophy. And both sides accused the other of being too pagan.

In this course, we will read some Aquinas (on ethics) and Buridan (on language and logic) and engage with them on their own terms in order to get a sympathetic first-hand acquaintance. This will leave us in a good position to evaluate the criticisms of scholasticism when we read Erasmus, More, Vives, and others. So part of the time we will do ground-level philosophy, so to speak, and part of the time we will reflect on two different approaches to philosophy and think about their respective advantages and disadvantages.

READINGS

All readings will be made available on the course website. Students wishing to build their personal libraries may wish to purchase the following texts:

- Thomas Aquinas. *Treatise on Happiness*. Translated by John A. Oesterle. South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.
- Desiderius Erasmus. *Enchiridion militis Christiani*. [Edition to be decided.]
- Michel de Montaigne. *Apology for Raymond Sebond*. Translated by Roger Ariew and Marjorie Grene. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003.
- John Buridan. *Summulae de dialectica*. Translated by Gyula Klima. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

COURSE  
REQUIREMENTS

*Weekly preparation:* All seminar participants are expected to have read the assigned readings for the week carefully and critically and to come to seminar prepared to contribute pertinent questions and critical comments on the readings.

*Questions and Objections:* For ten readings (of your choosing), submit either a question about the reading or an objection to it. A question should be accompanied by a short paragraph motivating the question; an objection should be accompanied by a paragraph (or longer, if needed) justifying the objection. They should be emailed to me no later than the midnight before the class in which we will discuss the relevant reading. I will pick some of the questions and objections for discussion in class.

*Short papers:* Three short papers (4–8 pages): (1) an Aquinas-style article about an ethical proposition of your choosing, (2) an Erasmus-style hortatory rule of your choosing, and (3) a defense of one of the scholastic propositions that More or Vives ridicule, in which you indicate why a scholastic might find the proposition interesting rather than merely silly.

*Term paper:* A longer paper (10–15), in which you identify the key point(s) of contention between the scholastics and humanists, support your identification, and evaluate the two positions. The point of this paper is to think about how to go about doing philosophy, rather than doing ground-level philosophy.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE	Date	Readings
	Week 1	Rummel, ‘ <i>Et cum theologo bella poeta gerit: The Conflict between Humanists and Scholastics Revisited</i> ’; Kraye, ‘Philologists and Philosophers’
	Week 2	Aquinas, <i>Treatise on Happiness</i> , qq. 1–5 (= <i>Summa theologiae</i> IaIIae.1–5)
	Week 3	Ibid., qq. 18–21 (= <i>ST</i> IaIIae.18–21)
	Week 4	Aquinas, <i>Treatise on Charity</i> , qq. 23, 25–27, & 31 (= <i>ST</i> IIaIIae.23, 25–27, & 31)
	Week 5	Aquinas, <i>Treatise on Justice</i> , qq. 109–113 (= <i>ST</i> IIaIIae.109–113)
	Week 6	Petrarch, <i>On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others</i> (excerpts); Vives, ‘On the Corruption of Moral Philosophy’; Erasmus, <i>Enchiridion</i> , ‘The Epistle’
	Week 7	Erasmus, <i>Enchiridion</i> , chapters 1–4
	Week 8	Ibid., chapters 8–9, 11–12, 15–16, and 24
	Week 9	Montaigne, <i>Essays</i> I.9 (‘On Lying’) and II.12 (‘Apology for Raymond Sebond’ – excerpts)
	Week 10	Buridan, <i>Summulae de dialectica</i> I.1–5
	Week 11	Ibid., VIII.4–5
	Week 12	Ibid., ‘Sophismata’, chapters 1–3
	Week 13	Ibid., ‘Sophismata’, chapters 6 & 8.1–11
	Week 14	Vives, <i>Against the Pseudodialecticians</i> ; More, ‘Letter to Martin Dorp’
	Week 15	Leibniz, ‘Preface to an Edition of Nizolius’