

Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology
PH-4377: Disputation I: Ancient / Islamic Sources

Spring 2020

DSPT Instructors: John Thomas Mellein, O.P., and Dr. Margarita Vega

Primary DSPT contact: John Thomas Mellein, O.P.

Office: East 207

Office Hours: Contact professor by email to schedule an appointment.

Telephone: 510-849-2030 E-mail: jmellein@dspt.edu (email is preferred mode of contact)

General Overview of Disputation I and II

Disputation I and II is a two semester course which covers selections from Plato, Aristotle, and selected Islamic and Christian authors. Faculty from both institutions will guide students through a careful exploration of disputation as it originated in the Greek school and flowed into both Islamic and Christian philosophy. Through analysis of both primary sources and critical commentaries, students will learn epistemological and metaphysical tools to study texts. In Disputation II, students will also explore the use of these tools for examining contemporary ethical topics. Format: seminar. Evaluation: 15-20 page paper, graded by faculty of the student's institution. Intended Audience: Phil MA students; advanced Undergraduate students. [Faculty Consent required; Auditors Excluded; Prerequisite of one course each in Ancient Philosophy and Logic]. 3 Units.

Disputation I Course Description

Disputation I is the first part of a two-part course. Disputation I cover selections from Plato, Aristotle, and selected Islamic authors. Faculty from both institutions will guide students through a careful exploration of disputation as it originated in the Greek school and flowed into Islamic philosophy. Through analysis of both primary sources and critical commentaries, students will learn epistemological and metaphysical tools to study texts. The Plato and Aristotle readings will focus on the formation of definitions. Format: seminar. Evaluation: 15-20 page paper, graded by faculty of the student's institution. Intended Audience: Phil MA students; advanced Undergraduate students. [Faculty Consent required; Auditors Excluded; Prerequisite of one course each in Ancient Philosophy and Logic; DSPT and Zaytuna students only]. 3 Units.

NOTE: Disputation I is a prerequisite for Disputation II.

This course will meet at Zaytua College.

Required Texts:

Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Edited by Richard McKeon. New York:

Modern Library, 2001.

ISBN-13: 978-0375757990.

Paperback. \$21.95.

OR

Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle (2 Volumes)*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

ISBN: 9780691016504 \$62.50

ISBN: 9780691016511 \$62.50

Plato. *Sophist*. Translated by Nicholas P. White. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993. ISBN: 978-0872202023. MSRP: \$11.00.

OR

Plato. *Plato: Complete Works*. Edited by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997.
ISBN: 978-0-87220-349-5
MSRP: \$60.00

Zaytuna College will assign texts for the Islamic authors.

Other course materials will be available online, or will be posted on Moodle during the week of the assigned reading.

Grade:

Paper: 100%

DSPT Students are to abide by the the DSPT's policies regarding academic honesty as found in the *DSPT Student Handbook*. The grading policy as found in the student handbook, as well as the institutional assessment rubrics, will serve as the guideline for grading. We will review the policies at the beginning of the course.

Course Requirements

This seminar course will focus on close reading and in-class discussion of primary text passages. Due to the nature of the course, the grade will be based solely on the student papers, which will be graded by faculty of the school where the student is registered. Students will be expected to participate in the seminar discussions. Class participation should give evidence of careful reading of the texts. During discussion, students will be expected to use the assigned readings support their interpretation. Students are to listen attentively to fellow students and to engage in genuine conversation. DSPT student papers will be evaluated based on support of a clear thesis statement, coherence of argument, and on effective use of primary and secondary sources. As part of the introduction to the Islamic world-view, DSPT students will be required to listen to and take notes on at least one of the recorded Zaytuna lectures. A copy of the notes will be shown to the DSPT professor(s) for proof of completion of the assignment.

Course and Institutional Learning Goals

The main course goal for Disputation I is to introduce the students to Ancient and Islamic principles of dialectic, philosophical reasoning, and disputation.

-Justice

-Eternity of the World

-Resurrection of the Body

-Causality

The main goal of this course is to lay out the basic philosophical anthropology and political theory of each author, and to locate the connection between the philosophical anthropology and political theory. A secondary goal is to assess each theory for its coherence, completeness, and correspondence with reality. A tertiary goal is to improve critical skills in the reading and discussion of philosophical texts and secondary literature. Students are encouraged to relate the topics to contemporary issues, especially in their papers.

The format of the course, especially the in-class discussions, will give students the opportunity to work toward the institutional learning goals: integrative thinking, intellectual humility, self-direction, and ability to collaborate. We will have a brief in-class discussion regarding the institutional learning goals, available here: <https://www.dspt.edu/our-mission>

Outcomes

By the end of Disputation I, students should have a working knowledge of Platonic and Aristotelian requirements for a definition, and some knowledge of how to form a definition. Students should have a knowledge of the difference between Philosopher and Juror in the Islamic tradition, and familiarity with specific topics of concern to early Medieval Islamic Scholars. Students should also have a deeper understanding of the metaphysical commitments of the Greek and Islamic traditions, a facility with epistemological strategies and metaphysical terminology, and an exchange of and greater sensitivity towards the cultural and religious values of all participants.

Students should be able to speak and write intelligently about some aspect of the topics covered. Students will demonstrate subject-appropriate critical thinking skills by offering interpretive insights on the texts, and by assessing contemporary scholarship on their work. Students will demonstrate mastery of the material in class discussion and in the 15-20 page research paper.

Class Outline

1-Course introduction and Cultural World-views

2-Platonic Definition: *Sophist* and selections from *Phaedrus*

3-Aristotle: *Categories, On Interpretation*

4-Aristotle: *Topics*

5-Aristotle: *Posterior Analytics*

6-Aristotle: readings from Natural Philosophy, Ethics, and/or Metaphysics

7-Transition day: Islamic World-View

Weeks 8-13: Islamic sources