Philosophy 350 – Metaphysics
MW – Willamette 112 – 2-4 PM
Professor Adam Arola
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Office Hours: 4-6 MW

Course Description
Nominally, metaphysics has come to name the sub-discipline of philosophy that asks after the ultimate foundations of reality: what are the ultimate building blocks of reality? What is really real as opposed to merely transient? This course will indefinitely explore this issue in full form. However, our major focus in this course will be to study the history of this discipline with two quotes in mind – Martin Heidegger’s claim that “Metaphysics is Platonism,” and Friedrich Nietzsche’s assertion that “Christianity is Platonism for the people.” To that end we will study the history of asking after first causes and principles with a principle focus on Medieval Philosophy all the while asking ourselves what exactly has caused the long history of metaphysics to be so besmirched by 19th and 20th century philosophers – and whether or not the issues found within this tradition are as endemic as it may seem at first glance.

Assignments
Students will be required to write two essays for this course, the first being a short essay of 3-5 pages which is worth 30% of your grade, the final essay being a bit longer 6-8 pages and worth 50% of your grade. In both cases prompts for these will be distributed in class, though I am always willing to accept proposed paper topics from students. The remaining 20% of your grade will be based upon your participation in the classroom.

Required Texts

Week 1
M: Course Intro – What is Metaphysics?
W: Parmenides – On Nature

Week 2
M: NO CLASS – MLK Day
W: Plato – Republic (excerpts from Book VI)

Week 3
M: Plotinus – The Good or The One (from the Enneads)
W: Dionysius the Areopagite – The Divine Names, Book 1

Week 4
M: Scotus Eriugena, Periphyseon, excerpts from Book 1 & 2
W: Al-Farabi – The Attainment of Happiness

Week 5
M: Al-Ghazali – Deliverance From Error (First Paper Assigned)
W: Al-Ghazali – Deliverance From Error (cont.)

Week 6
M: Meister Eckhart, “Jesus Entered,” from Wandering Joy (First Paper Due)

Week 7
M: Meister Eckhart, “Saul Rose From The Ground,” from Wandering Joy
W: Meister Eckhart, “See What Love” & “Blessed Are The Poor,” from Wandering Joy

Week 8
M: CLASS CANCELLED
W: Georges Bataille, Theory of Religion, pp. 9-25

Week 9
M: Georges Bataille, Theory of Religion, pp. 27-42
W: Georges Bataille, Theory of Religion, pp. 43-61 (Final Paper Assigned)

Week 10
W: Georges Bataille, Theory of Religion, pp. 87-End

Final Paper Due: 3 PM – Wednesday, March 21st