

Debates

As a regular part of in-class activity, students will be paired up (or pitted against several others in some weeks) to debate each other on questions of relevance to our theme and/or texts. A debate with two participants should take approximately five to ten minutes and be informed by primary and/or secondary readings; effectively, debaters are asked to introduce and defend positions held by medieval thinkers or contemporary scholars. The setup is as follows:

- Bring no more than a cue card's worth of notes, plus a second cue card's worth of relevant quotations (biblical or from other primary literature) if you wish: this shouldn't be a reading contest. Debates will be carried out standing up.
- Use some or all of the readings suggested below to research your position, and feel free to find more elsewhere or come up with your own arguments, as long as you don't distort the views of the thinker(s) you are representing.
- You may meet with your opponent(s) ahead of time and agree on a rhetorical choreography for dramatic effect if you like.
- Though this exercise takes the form of a debate, its real object is to introduce and explain the world-view or scholarly opinion you have been assigned. You may not be able to persuade your opponent, and if your position is a historical one, you probably won't persuade your fellow students, either. Instead, try to educate your audience about your position while making as persuasive a case for it as is feasible.
- If you have difficulty building an argument based on the assigned readings, add substance using creativity and common sense.
- The use of creative examples will almost certainly help you argue your point!
- A debate is a dynamic affair: come prepared to modify or add to your argument based on your opponent's angle. Also be prepared to adduce evidence for your axioms in case your opponent challenges them!
- Be courteous; don't interrupt your opponent.
- Each debate is followed by a class discussion on the same topic. Accordingly, all students are encouraged to read the materials for that week, even if these are not part of the general homework. These readings may give you an idea for a killer paper!
- Your performance will not be graded, but the assignment (or an appropriate alternative assignment) is a mandatory prerequisite for admission into the exam/paper assessment. If you cannot make it to your own debate, contact me as soon as possible ahead of time to let me know and arrange an alternative date or assignment.

Sign up for a slot and position on the reverse of this sheet. The "literature" column refers to items listed in the bibliography found in the syllabus.

Date	Position	Debater	Literature
3 Nov	An Epicurean position on free will		O'Keefe, "Action and Responsibility"
3 Nov	A Stoic position on free will		Frede, "Stoic Determinism"
3 Nov	Augustine's position has a place for free will		Stump
3 Nov	Augustine's position leaves no room for free will		Rowe
10 Nov	A (Semi-)Pelagian position on the human ability to do good		Weaver ch. 2, esp. pp. 45 ff.
10 Nov	Augustine's position on the human ability to do good		Rist; cf. Kleist chs. 1-2
10 Nov	Cassius's position on the human ability to do good		Postel [DE] pp. 18-39
17 Nov	Jesus's position on worldly goods		The Gospels (not provided)
17 Nov	The OE <i>Boethius</i> translator's position on worldly goods		OE <i>Boethius</i> prose 9; Frakes ch. 5, esp. pp. 100-119
24 Nov	Augustine was a fatalist		Weaver chs. 1-2, e.g. pp. 30-2, 42-43; 66-67
24 Nov	Augustine was not a fatalist		Weaver chs. 1-2, e.g. pp. 30-2, 42-43; 66-67
1 Dec	Present pleasures are the greatest good		O'Keefe, "The Cyrenaics"
1 Dec	Worldly pleasures are false pleasures		<i>Consolation</i> book 3
8 Dec	The wicked have virtuous desires		<i>Consolation</i> 3p11, 3p12, book 4
8 Dec	The wicked have wicked desires		OE <i>Boethius</i> prose 21, 22; Kleist 104-107
8 Dec	Virtue is not always rewarded, vice not always punished		<i>Consolation</i> book 4
8 Dec	Virtue is always rewarded, vice always punished		<i>Consolation</i> book 4
8 Dec	Evil exists and God is responsible		Find your own source!
8 Dec	A Manichean understanding of evil		Lieu
8 Dec	An Augustinian understanding of evil		<i>Consolation</i> 4p2; Mann
15 Dec	<i>Deor</i> shows Boethian influence		Kiernan
15 Dec	<i>Deor</i> shows no Boethian influence		Langeslag
5 Jan	<i>The Ruin</i> has a Christian aim		<i>Ruin</i> ; Doubleday
5 Jan	<i>The Ruin</i> does not have a Christian aim		<i>Ruin</i> ; cf. Renoir
12 Jan	King Alfred himself played an active role in the translation of <i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i>		Bately, "Did King Alfred Actually Write Anything?"
12 Jan	King Alfred did not play any direct role in the translation of <i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i>		Godden, "Did King Alfred Write Anything?"
19 Jan	<i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i> is a Christian work		De Vogel; cf. Chadwick pp. 247-253
19 Jan	<i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i> is not a Christian work		Barrett ch. 1; cf. Chadwick pp. 247-253
26 Jan	The speaker in <i>The Wanderer</i> is appreciative of heroic values		<i>The Wanderer</i> ; cf. O'Keefe
26 Jan	The speaker in <i>The Wanderer</i> is dismissive of heroic values		<i>The Wanderer</i> ; cf. O'Keefe
2 Feb	<i>Wyrð</i> in <i>Beowulf</i> is a lingering pagan concept		Ehrismann [DE], esp. pp. 235-239
2 Feb	<i>Wyrð</i> in <i>Beowulf</i> has no pagan connotations		Timmer, esp. pp. 223-228