

# PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

PHIL 330 (3 hrs), Manchester College, Spring 2011

MWF 1:00-1:50p

---

**Instructor:** Dr. Steve Naragon, Office: Ad Bldg., #231c (Phone — *office:* 982-5041; *home:* 982-6033)

## **Required Texts:**

- (1) Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger, *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 4th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2009). [ISBN: 978-0-19-533599-6]
- (2) Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger, *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 4th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2010). [ISBN: 978-0-19-539359-0]

## **Course Objectives**

The philosophy of religion is the critical study of questions raised by our various religious beliefs and practices. It also involves an investigation into when a belief or practice is religious, or concerns the sacred or divine. The philosophy of religion intersects with all the traditional areas of philosophy, and so our explorations this semester will also lead us into logic, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

By the end of this course, you should have improved your ability to:

- (1) articulate the basic concepts in the philosophy of religion (faith, revelation, the sacred, miracles, belief, ...)
- (2) explain various problems that religious belief and practice present to us, and evaluate possible solutions.
- (3) critically evaluate arguments and beliefs, as presented in our texts and by each other
- (4) reflect carefully and fairly on ideas and beliefs that might be quite distant from your own.

Each of you in this class comes with a distinct set of convictions regarding religion, and those convictions will shape the way you understand the texts we read and how you enter into the conversations. Some of you will approach the course more as interested by-standers, others as deeply committed participants in the world of religious belief and practice. But none of us can be by-standers in our roles as students, and the only commitment I insist on us all sharing is a commitment to seek the truth and a respect for all who seek the truth, wherever that may take any of us.

**Some virtues** to cultivate while in the philosophy classroom:

- humility** when comparing your beliefs with those of others;
- patience** for listening closely to views that seem foolish or misguided to you;
- courage** to advance in the face of adversity what seems to be the correct view;
- endurance** for following arguments to their conclusion;
- humor** for those moments when you feel the utter futility of your efforts.

## **Requirements and Grading**

**Readings.** Read the assignments closely prior to class, and **always bring the text**. Class discussions and your success in this class depend upon this. If you are not willing to commit yourself to this, then it would be best to withdraw from the course.

One more thing: **you must always bring the text**.

**Attendance and Participation.** A course on philosophy is by its nature aimed at self-examination and discussion; consequently, doing well in this class requires being there. Part of the course grade will be based on your attending class having worked through the readings for the day, and ready to profitably discuss the readings with others. A participation grade will be entered for each week, following a 4 pt. rubric:

**Very Short Quizzes.** About every other day I will offer a brief quiz on the day's readings and/or the previous day's discussion.

**Exegetical Essays.** Each student will write three exegetical essays (800 word minimum), each analyzing one of the articles to be read for class. Each essay should summarize (in your own words) the overall structure of the author's argument, analyze the most important steps of that argument, highlight key definitions and distinctions, and explore at least one counterargument. Finally, the student should briefly indicate where the argument being analyzed is most vulnerable, and thus most in need of attention. See the rubric below.

**Leading Class Discussion.** Each student will lead class discussion once during the semester. This should be on a day when an article you have explored in an exegetical essay will be discussed. See the 5 pt. rubric below.

**Exams.** There will be three in-class essay exams.

**Grading.** Each exam is worth 15% (45% total); each essay is worth 10% (30% total); leading discussion is worth 5%, the set of reading quizzes is worth 10%, and the participation is worth 10% of the course grade

**Cell Phones.** Please don't bring these to class. If you bring a cell phone, it needs to be turned off and put away, preferably at the bottom of a very deep pocket or book bag. If you are unable to part company with your cell phone, or are unable to keep it turned off and stowed, then please find another class to attend. Thank you.

**Students with Disabilities.** Manchester College, in compliance with federal guidelines, is committed to providing students with disabilities an access to programs and activities that are equal to the access provided to students without disabilities. If you believe that you need an accommodation due to a disability, please contact Bonnie O'Connell, the director of services for students with disabilities (Success Center, second floor of the Union); please telephone 982-5076 to schedule an appointment.

**Cheating and Plagiarism.** Plagiarism consists of submitting the statements, ideas, opinions, or findings of another *as if they were your own*. It is *not* plagiarism to copy from or paraphrase a source as long as this is acknowledged and the source is cited. Cheating and deliberate plagiarism will result in automatically failing the class. For more information, see the college *Catalog*.

**Rubrics**

<b>Participation (4 pts)</b>	<b>Class Discussion (5 pts)</b>	<b>Exegetical Essays (5 pts)</b>
<b>Quality of Contributions (2 pts)</b>	<b>Accuracy and Completeness (2 pt)</b>	<b>Length (1 pt)</b>
2 = Comments are relevant and reflect an understanding of the text(s) and previous remarks of other students	2 = Fully and accurately presents the reading, with appropriate background information on the author and topic.	1 = At least 800 words.
1 = Comments betray a lack of preparation or lack of attention to the remarks of others.	1 = Some errors of accuracy or omission.	0 = Less than 800 words.
0 = Comments reflect little understanding of either the assignment or previous remarks.	0 = Serious lack of preparation.	<b>Analysis and Discussion (3 pts)</b>
<b>Frequency of participation (2 pts)</b>	<b>Use of Time (2 pts)</b>	2 = Good grasp of the text, and focused discussion of the topic.
2 = Active participation at appropriate times.	2 = Remarks were all relevant and well-organized.	1 = Some unclarity and/or lack of focus.
1 = Occasional participation, but otherwise "tuned out".	1 = Some lack of focus or organization.	0 = Serious misunderstanding of the text or unfocused discussion.
0 = Seldom participate and are generally disengaged.	0 = Serious lack of preparation.	<b>Mechanics (1 pts)</b>
	<b>Facilitating Discussion (1 pt)</b>	1 = Good use of topic sentences; no errors of spelling, punctuation, or grammar.
	1 = Presents good leading questions and engages the others in the discussion.	0 = Two or more errors.
	0 = Needs to watch more closely how others do this.	

**Schedule of Discussion and Reading**

<b>The Nature of Religion</b>		
<u>Wed. Feb 2</u> Introduction to the Course	<b>Read:</b> RRB, pp. 33-49; Alston, pp. 51f.; Martin, pp. 68f.	<b>Read:</b> Kierkegaard, pp. 111f.
<u>Fri. Feb. 4</u> An Evolutionary Account   <b>Read:</b> RRB, ch. 1; Dennett, pp. 10f.	<u>Mon. Feb. 14</u> Religious Credulity   <b>Read:</b> Martin, pp. 68f.	<b>Being God</b>
<u>Mon. Feb. 7</u> Realism and Non-Realism   <b>Read:</b> RRB, ch. 2; Trigg, pp. 22f.; Philips, pp. 28f.	<b>Faith and Reason</b>	<u>Fri. Feb. 25</u> The Divine Properties   <b>Read:</b> RRB, ch 5;
<b>Religious Experience</b>	<u>Wed. Feb. 16</u> Reason and its Limits   <b>Read:</b> RRB, ch. 4; Aquinas, pp. 92f.;	<u>Mon. Feb. 28</u> Power   <b>Read:</b> Aquinas, pp. 138f.; Mavrodes, pp. 141f.
<u>Wed. Feb. 9</u> James on Religious Experience   <b>Read:</b> RRB, pp. 27-33; James, pp. 43f.;	<u>Fri. Feb. 18</u> Pascal's Wager   <b>Read:</b> Pascal, pp. 96f.	<b>Discussion Day (Wed. Mar 2)</b>
<u>Fri. Feb. 11</u> Religious Experience as Perception	<u>Mon. Feb. 21</u> The Ethics of Belief   <b>Read:</b> Clifford, pp. 99f.; James, pp. 104f.	<u>Fri. Mar. 4</u> Temporality   <b>Read:</b> Pike, pp. 144f.; Boethius, pp. 150f.
	<u>Wed. Feb. 23</u> Fideism	<b>Mon, Mar 7</b> <b>1st Exam</b>

---

**Proofs for God's Existence**


---

Wed. Mar. 9

Ontological

| **Read:** RRB, pp. 90-96 ;Anselm/Guanilo,  
pp. 169f.

Fri. Mar. 11

Cosmological

| **Read:** RRB, pp. 96-104; Aquinas, pp. 184f.;  
Reichenbach, pp. 187f.

Mon. Mar. 14

Cosmological (cont.)

| **Read:** Mackie, pp. 205f.

Wed. Mar. 16

Teleological/Design

| **Read:** RRB, pp. 104-6; Paley, pp. 212f.;  
Hume, pp. 215f.

Fri. Mar. 18

The Anthropic Principle

| **Read:** RRB, pp. 106-17; Betty/Cordell, pp.  
222f.

---

**Spring Break**


---



---

**God without Proofs**


---

Mon. Mar. 28

Evidentialism and Foundationalism

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 7.

Wed. Mar. 30

Properly Basic Belief

| **Read:** Plantinga, pp. 246f.; Hasker, pp.  
262f.

---

**The Problem of Evil**


---

Fri. Apr. 1

The Horror! The Horror!

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 8; Hume, pp. 276f.;  
Dostoyevsky (ANGEL).

Mon. Apr. 4

The Logical Problem of Evil

| **Read:** Mackie, pp. 288f.

Wed. Apr. 6

Hick on Soul-Making

| **Read:** Hick, pp. 316f.

Fri. Apr. 8

Overcoming Horror, for Theists

| **Read:** Adams, pp. 333f.

---

**Miracles**


---

Mon. Apr. 11

Natural Laws and Divine Intervention

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 10; Mackie, pp. 448f.;  
Swinburne, pp. 455f.

<b>Wed, Apr 13</b>	<b>2nd Exam</b>
--------------------	-----------------

---

**Life after Death**


---

Fri. Apr. 15

On the Possibility of a Bodiless Soul

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 11; Price, pp. 465f.

Mon. Apr. 18

Problems with Life after Death

| **Read:** Badham, pp. 483f.

Wed. Apr. 20

Rebirth

| **Read:** Anon., pp. 499f.; Aurobindo, pp.  
502f.

---

**Easter Break**


---



---

**Religion and Science**


---

Mon. Apr. 25

Overview of the Troubles

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 13.

Wed. Apr. 27

Separate Domains of Interest

| **Read:** Gould, pp. 515f.

Fri. Apr. 29

Competing Views

| **Read:** Dawkins, pp. 523f.

Mon. May 2

Design vs Chance?

| **Read:** Dembski, pp. 527f.; Kitcher, pp.  
542f.; Lennox, pp. 560f.

Wed. May 4

Complementary and Congruent

| **Read:** Polkinghorne, pp. 551f.

---

**Religion and Morality**


---

Fri. May 6

Overview

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 15.

Mon. May 9

Which God Ought We to Obey?

| **Read:** MacIntyre, pp. 612f.

Wed. May 11

Natural Law

| **Read:** Aquinas, pp. 619f.

Fri. May 13

Ethics without Religion

| **Read:** Sartre, pp. 622f.

<b>Finals Week</b>	<b>Third Exam</b>
--------------------	-------------------