

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

PHIL 330 (3 hrs), Manchester University, Spring 2017

MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m., Academic Center 354

Instructor: Dr. Steve Naragon, Office: Academic Center 233 (Phone — *office*: 982-5041; *home*: 982-6033)

Web syllabus: The web-based syllabus is more detailed and up-to-date. Please refer to that first:

[<http://users.manchester.edu/Facstaff/SSNaragon/Online/330-S17/Welcome.html>]

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]

General Education Goals. This course satisfies the Core 4PH (philosophy) requirement, whose goals for the student are:

1. to discuss the approaches that philosophers take to fundamental human questions, and
2. to acquire the vocabulary and skills necessary to engage in philosophical inquiry, especially through developing your ability to understand and evaluate arguments.

These goals are furthered by (a) your careful reading of the texts, (b) classroom and small group discussion, and (c) writing the set of analytical essays. The goals are further elaborated, in the context of this course, under the “Course Objectives”:

Course Objectives. Philosophy is a discipline in the **humanities**, and so our goals here are rather different from those in the natural and social sciences — although the findings of these other areas of inquiry are often of great importance in philosophy.

Philosophy is concerned less with the accumulation of facts, than with the education of the individual. My primary goal — and the goal of the humanities in general — is to help each individual increase their level of self-understanding. This is not a small matter, and it lies at the heart of any human existence that is worth living.

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 (such as 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 upon 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 and Attendance. 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. A course on philosophy is by its nature aimed at self-examination and discussion; consequently, doing well in this class requires preparing for class, being there, and caring. Missing class does not directly affect your grade, although students with poor attendance typically do quite poorly.

Reading Quizzes. There will be a quiz many days at the beginning of class on the readings for that day and material discussed the previous class sessions. These exercises help keep both of us informed of your grasp of the material. [**Makeup:** see the web syllabus]

Analytical Essays. Each student will write six essays (800 word minimum), each analyzing one of the articles to be read for class (two for each third of the semester). See the web syllabus for more details.

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

Grading. Each exam is worth 20% (60% total); each essay is worth 4% (24% total); and the set of reading quizzes is worth 16% of the course grade

Cell Phones. In the best of all possible worlds, you do not bring these to class. In the second best possible world, you keep them turned off and put away. In various versions of a godless and lesser hell, you have your phones always out and on while reflexively checking your various social media accounts in search of affirmation by others.



Title IX reporting requirements / Student disability and reasonable accommodation statement / Medical emergency evacuation schedule: See the “Course Requirements” page of the web syllabus.

Cheating and Plagiarism. See the “Writing” page of the web syllabus.

Schedule of Discussion and Reading

The Nature of Religion

Wed, Feb 1

Introduction to the Course

Fri, Feb 3

An Evolutionary Account

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 1; Dennett, pp. 10f.

Mon, Feb 6

Realism and Non-Realism

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 2; Trigg, pp. 22f.; Philips, pp. 28f.

Religious Experience

Wed, Feb 8

James on Religious Experience

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 3 (pp. 27-33); James, pp. 43f.

Fri, Feb 10

Religious Experience as Perception

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 3 (pp. 33-38); Proudfoot, pp. 59f.

Mon, Feb 13

Religious Credulity

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 3 (pp. 38-49); Martin, pp. 68f.

Faith and Reason

Wed, Feb 15

Reason and its Limits

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 4; Aquinas, pp. 92f.

Fri, Feb 17

Pascal's Wager

| **Read:** Pascal, pp. 96f.

Mon, Feb 20

The Ethics of Belief

| **Read:** Clifford, pp. 99f.; James, pp. 104f.

--- **Discussion Day (Wed, Feb 22)** ---

Fri, Feb 24

Fideism

| **Read:** Kierkegaard, pp. 111f.

Being God

Mon, Feb 27

The Divine Properties

| **Read:** RRB, ch 5.

Wed, Mar 1

Power

| **Read:** Aquinas, pp. 138f.; Mavrodes, pp. 141f.

Fri, Mar 3

Temporality

| **Read:** Pike, pp. 144f.; Boethius, pp. 150f.

Mon, Mar 6

1st Exam

Proofs for God's Existence

Wed, Mar 8

Ontological

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 6 (pp. 90-96); Anselm/Guanilo, pp. 169f.

Fri, Mar 10

Cosmological

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 6 (pp. 96-104); Aquinas, pp. 184f.; Reichenbach, pp. 187f.

Mon, Mar 13

Cosmological (cont.)

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

Wed, Mar 15

Teleological/Design

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

Fri, Mar 17

The Anthropic Principle

| **Read:** RRB, ch 6 (pp. 106-17); Betty/Cordell, pp. 222f.

--- **Spring Break** ---

God without Proofs

Mon, Mar 27

Evidentialism and Foundationalism

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

Wed, Mar 29

Properly Basic Belief

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

Fri, Mar 31 --- no class

The Problem of Evil

Mon, Apr 3

The Logical Problem of Evil

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 8 (pp.145-54); Hume, pp. 276f.; Mackie, pp. 288f.

Wed, Apr 5

Hick on Soul-Making

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 8 (pp.154-67); Hick, pp. 316f.

Fri, Apr 7

A Theist Solution to the Horror

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

Miracles

Mon, Apr 10

Natural Laws and Divine Intervention

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

Wed, Apr 12 **2nd Exam**

Fri, Apr 14 — Good Friday

Life after Death

Mon, Apr 17

On the Possibility of a Bodiless Soul

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

Wed, Apr 19

Problems with Life after Death

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

Fri, Apr 21

Rebirth

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

Religion and Science

Mon, Apr 24

Overview of the Troubles

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

Wed, Apr 26

Separate Domains of Interest

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

Fri, Apr 28

Competing Views

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

Mon, May 1

Design vs Chance?

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

Wed, May 3

Complementary and Congruent

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

Religion and Morality

Fri, May 5

Which God Ought We to Obey?

| **Read:** RRB, ch. 15; MacIntyre, pp. 612f.

Mon, May 8

Natural Law

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

Wed, May 10

Ethics without Religion

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

Fri, May 12 — Cancelled

Finals Week **Third Exam**