Sometimes I think we’re alone. Sometimes I think we’re not. In either case, the thought is staggering.

– R. Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983)
Philosophy of Religion
What does ‘God’ mean?
Images of God
Zeus, the youngest son of Cronus and Rhea, rules supreme on Mount Olympus among the pantheon of gods residing there.

Ingres (1780-1867), “Zeus and Thetis” (Musee Granet, Aix-en-Provence)
The World’s Religions

Estimates of the total numbers of adherents to the major world religions are rough at best. Few religions other than Christianity attempt to keep statistical records, and even here the methods of counting differ. Below are estimates for the top ten organized religions of the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>1.9 billion</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>1.1 billion</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>781 million</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>324 million</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhism</td>
<td>19 million</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>14 million</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha'ism</td>
<td>6.1 million</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confucianism</td>
<td>5.3 million</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jainism</td>
<td>4.9 million</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shintoism</td>
<td>2.8 million</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Source: Encyclopedia Britannica]
Discuss in Your Groups

Describe God:
List God’s three most important traits.

[facilitators: start and stop the discussion, and keep it on track]
[monitors: make sure everyone’s ideas are heard]
[recorders: go to the board and write down your group answer]
Four Views of God in the U.S.

(1) The Authoritative God (31%)
    Involved in human history; powerful; punishes those who disobey; clear division between the righteous and the rest.

(2) The Benevolent God (24%)
    A force for good who cares for and comforts all people.

(3) The Critical God (16%)
    Watches this world, and settles accounts in the afterlife.

(4) The Distant God (24%)
    Created the world, then left it alone; believers focus on spirituality.
Do You Believe in God?
Can I *Know* that God Exists?

Knowledge $\equiv$ justified true belief
“I believe in God” =df. ??

(1) I believe that a being with properties X, Y, and Z exists.
   (belief as “an assent to a proposition”)
   and/or

(2) I accept God’s view of what is good and bad, and what
counts as “the good life” or “the best life” for me (or for
humans in general).
   (belief as “a way of life”)

(3) …

God’s (likely) Properties:
(1) all-knowing
(2) all-powerful
(3) all-loving
(4) personal
(5) creator
(6) …??
Three Propositional Attitudes

Theism
   Belief in P

Atheism
   Disbelief in P

Agnosticism
   Withholding judgment about P

P = “God exists.”
Three Propositional Attitudes

Theism
Belief in P

Atheism
Disbelief in P

Agnosticism
Withholding judgment about P

P = “God exists.”

Three Philosophical Attitudes

Philosophical Theism
The view that P can be proven

Philosophical Atheism
The view that P can be disproven

Philosophical Agnosticism
The view that P can be neither proven nor disproven
Are My Beliefs about God Justified?

What are the three strongest reasons for believing in God’s existence?

What are the three strongest reasons for questioning God’s existence?

[recorders: go to the board and write down your group answer]
Doubting God’s Existence
Reasons to Doubt

- God of the Gaps
- Diversity of Belief
- Non-Religious Explanations for Religious Belief
- Problem of Evil
God of the Gaps

It’s the lovely goddess Iris!
God of the Gaps

It’s God’s promise to all Creation!

It’s the lovely goddess Iris!
God of the Gaps

It’s light refracted in small droplets of water, you nitwits! You can replicate this with a garden hose in your backyard; it’s neither a god nor a sign from a god.

It’s the lovely goddess Iris!

It’s God’s promise of hope and salvation!
“Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”
“Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”

Religion is a mechanism that helps stabilize the social order.

It is the *opium* of the people.
“Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”

Religion is a mechanism that helps stabilize the social order. It is the opium of the people.

“Religion is an illusion and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls in with our instinctual desires.”

Emile Durkheim 1858-1917

Karl Marx 1818-1883

Sigmund Freud 1856-1939
The Problem of Evil
Plurality of Religions

I’m right!
Plurality of Religions

No, I’m right!

I’m right!
Plurality of Religions

No, I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!
Plurality of Religions

I'm right!

No, I'm right!

I'm right!

I'm right!
Plurality of Religions

I’m right!

No, I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!
Plurality of Religions

I’m right!

No, I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!
Plurality of Religions

I'm right!

No, I'm right!

I'm right!

I'm right!

I'm right!
I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

No, I’m right!

I’m right!
Plurality of Religions
Plurality of Religions

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!
Plurality of Religions

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

We’re right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!

I’m right!
Plurality of Religions

I'm right!

So who is right?
**Religion Poll #1**

“Do you think Jesus Christ was God or the Son of God, or another religious leader like Mohammed or Buddha?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>God or Son of God</th>
<th>Religious Leader</th>
<th>Neither/Other</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Don’t believe Jesus ever lived</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALL</strong></td>
<td>82</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Christians</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Religion Poll #2

If your party nominated a generally well-qualified person for president who happened to be ___, would you vote for that person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married for the third time</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72 years of age</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A homosexual</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An atheist</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>