

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
Philosophy 185
Winter 2018

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Course Description: We will explore five related and hotly debated topics in the philosophy of religion, and, in doing so, address the following questions:

- (i) What makes something a religion?
- (ii) Is it rational to hold religious beliefs? Should we care about rationality when it comes to religious belief?
- (iii) Could different religions be different paths to the same ultimate reality, or is only one, at most, a “way to God”?
- (iv) What is the relationship between science and religion?
- (v) What is the relationship between morality and religion? Must religious beliefs be true in order for morality to exist?

As we will see, the philosophy of religion leads naturally into just about every other area of philosophy, including epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and the history of philosophy, and into particular central philosophical debates such as the debate over the nature of free will. This means that you will gain insight into many fundamental philosophical issues in this course. Being willing to work hard and subject your own views (whatever they may be) to critical evaluation are essential to doing well and benefiting most from the class. Evaluating our conception of ourselves and of the world is one of the distinguishing features of philosophy.

Requirements:

- 1 in-class midterm 20% (2/9)
- 1 5-page paper (about 1500 words) 25% (Due 2/28)
- 1 take-home final exam, uploaded to TritonEd (30%) (Due 3/21, 2:30 pm)
- Short reading responses (100-200 words for each class meeting, uploaded to TritonEd; 20 out of 26 required; points awarded upon reading feedback) 20%
- Participation in class group assignments and discussion. (5%)

Note: Each assignment must be completed in order to receive credit for the course.

Note: Rubrics and expectations for particular assignments can be found on TritonEd.

Specific course topics and readings

All reading can be found free of charge on our TritonEd website in the form of PDFs or links to articles. You can access library materials remotely through the library web site.

1/8: Introduction

I. What Makes Something a Religion?

1/10: What Makes Something a Religion?

William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (excerpt)

George Freeman III, *The Misguided Search for the Constitutional Definition of Religion* (excerpt)

1/12: What is Religion?

Brian Leiter, *Religion* (chapter 2 of *Why Tolerate Religion?*)

II. Rationality and Religious Belief

1/15: **Martin Luther King Junior Holiday**

1/17: The Cosmological Argument

Aquinas, *The Five Ways*

1/19: The Cosmological Argument

Richard Taylor, *The Cosmological Argument: A Defense*

1/22: The Cosmological Argument

William Rowe, *An Examination of the Cosmological Argument*

1/24: The Teleological Argument

David Hume, *Dialogues on Natural Religion, excerpt*

1/26: The Teleological Argument

Richard Swinburne, *The Argument from Design*

1/31: The Argument from Religious Experience

Selections of Mystical Experiences

C.D. Broad, *The Argument from Religious Experience*

2/2: The Argument from Religious Experience

Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*

Patricia Churchland, *Brainwise* (excerpt)

2/5: The Argument from Religious Experience

William James, *Mysticism*

Barbara Bradley Hagerty, "The Science of Spirituality" (NPR segment, in class)

2/7: The Ontological Argument

Anselm, *The Ontological Argument*

2/9: **Midterm**

2/12: The Problem of Evil

David Hume, *The Argument from Evil*

John Hick, *Evil and Soul-Making*

2/14: The Problem of Evil

Madden and Hare, *A Critique of Hick's Theodicy*

William Rowe, *The Inductive Argument from Evil against the Existence of God*

2/16: The Problem of Evil

Marilyn Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*

2/19: **President's Day Holiday**

2/21: The Problem of Evil

Laura Ekstrom, *Suffering as Religious Experience*

2/23: Rationality Without Evidence

Blaise Pascal, *The Wager*

Simon Blackburn, *Pascal's Wager: A Critique*

2/26: Rationality without Evidence

W.K. Clifford, *The Ethics of Belief*

William James, *The Will to Believe*

2/28: The Role and Value of Rationality **Paper Due**

Linda Zabzebski, *Intellectual Virtue in Religious Epistemology*

II. Religious Pluralism and Exclusivism

3/2: Pluralism

John Hick, *Religious Pluralism and Ultimate Reality*

Edmund Gettier, *Justified True Belief*

3/4: Exclusivism and Disagreement
Alvin Plantinga, *A Defense of Religious Exclusivism*

3/5: Disagreement
David Christensen, *Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News*

III. Religion and Science

3/7: Religion and Science
Richard Dawkins, *Science Versus Religion*
Stephen Jay Gould, *Overlapping Magisteria*

3/9: Religion and Science
TBA

IV. Religion and Morality

3/12: Religion and Morality
Plato, *Morality and Religion*

3/14: Religion and Morality
George Mavrodes, *Religion and the Queerness of Morality*
Bertrand Russell, *A Free Man's Worship*

3/16: Religion and Morality
David Brink, *The Autonomy of Ethics*

Notes

- Laptops, phones and other electronic devices may not be used in class **except by permission of the instructor.**
- If accommodations are needed for a disability or for religious reasons, please notify me during the first class period or as soon as possible.
- The Academic Honor Code must be observed in this course.
Please note that the policies and readings described above are subject to minor change.