

Philosophy of Religion

PHI 3700

TR 11:00-12:15, EDU 115

Prof. Thomas Williams

Office Hours: T 1:30-2:30, FAO 231; R 9:45-10:45, CPR 311

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the main topics and debates in contemporary analytic philosophy of religion, including

- the proper characterization of divine attributes and their mutual consistency,
- the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments for the existence of God,
- the problem of evil as an argument against the existence of God,
- the relationship between reason and religious belief, and
- the relationship between religion and morality.

Text (available in the USF Bookstore)

Michael J. Murray and Michael C. Rea, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Grades

100 points first examination (attributes of God): Tuesday, September 30

100 points second examination (the rationality of religious belief): Tuesday, November 4

150 points final examination (comprehensive): Tuesday, December 9, 10:00 am-noon

150 points two short (2-page) argumentative papers, 75 points each

487.5-500: A+	462.5-487: A	447.5-462: A-
432.5-447: B+	412.5-432: B	397.5-412: B-
382.5-397: C+	362.5-382: C	347.5-362: C-
332.5-347: D+	312.5-332: D	297.5-312: D-
297& below: F		

Students are encouraged to bear in mind that grades are not moral evaluations, but measures of the degree to which a student has met the standards for excellent work in a class at this level.

Schedule of Readings, Examinations, and Papers

The indicated reading should be done before class on the day listed.

Students must take the final examination at the scheduled time unless there are genuinely exceptional circumstances. Voluntarily undertaken commitments and the desire for personal convenience do not constitute exceptional circumstances.

date	topic	read in IPR
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T, 8/26	Introduction	
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Unit One: The Attributes of God

R, 8/28	The Concept of God	1.1 and 1.2
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T, 9/2	Divine Necessity	1.3
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R, 9/4	Divine Omnipotence	1.4
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T, 9/9	Divine Goodness	1.5
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R, 9/11	Divine Eternity	2.1 and 2.2
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T, 9/16	Divine Omniscience	2.3
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R, 9/18	Divine Providence	2.4
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T, 9/23	Divine Simplicity	
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R, 9/25	Review	
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T, 9/30	First examination	
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Unit Two: The Rationality of Religious Belief

R, 10/2	The Nature of Faith	4.1
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T, 10/7	Faith and Reason	4.2
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R, 10/9	Ontological arguments I	5.1 - 5.1.1
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T, 10/14	Ontological arguments II	5.1.4
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R, 10/16	Cosmological arguments	5.2-5.2.1
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F, 10/17	First paper due	
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T, 10/21	Design arguments	5.3
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R, 10/23	The argument from evil I	6.1
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T, 10/28 The argument from evil II 6.1
R, 10/30 Review

T, 11/4 Second examination

Unit Three: Science, Morality, and Immortality

R, 11/6 Science and the miraculous 7.1-7.2

T, 11/11 Veterans Day holiday
R, 11/13 Science and religion 7.4

F, 11/14 Second paper due

T, 11/18 Religion and morality 8.1-8.3
R, 11/20 Class canceled

T, 11/25 Immortality and survival I 9.1-9.2
R, 11/27 Thanksgiving Day holiday

T, 11/2 Immortality and survival II 9.3, 9.4.3
R, 11/4 Review

T, 12/9 Final examination, 10:00 am-noon

Short Argumentative Papers

Each student will write two short papers (roughly two pages) stating a thesis to be defended, offering at least one argument in favor of that thesis, anticipating at least one objection to that argument or thesis, and replying to that objection.

The first paper must be turned in no later than Friday, October 17; the second paper must be turned in no later than Friday, November 14. No exceptions will be made; no extensions will be given. It is therefore wise to plan to write your papers well in advance of the deadlines.

Papers should focus on a topic covered in our readings, lectures, or discussions.

Papers should be printed in a standard twelve-point font (Times New Roman is always safe), double-spaced, on one side of the paper only. Pages should be numbered. The pages should be stapled together.

Frequently asked questions

What should I write on?

Write on whatever interests you. If some thesis or argument strikes you in class, turn it into a paper.

How should I write?

Write clearly. Make the connections between your ideas explicit. Define important terms. Use standard, idiomatic English.

Really? English counts?

Heck yes. Misspellings, awkward constructions, comma splices, run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and the like are signs that the writer holds his or her reader in contempt. They put a reader in a bad mood. Readers in bad moods assign low grades.

More instructions on writing will be forthcoming. In the meantime, however, make note of topics that interest you.