

Philosophy of Religion, PHL350 / REL350

Spring 2012
TR 11:00am – 12:20pm
Popplewell 201
Office hours: MWF 11am – 12noon
MWF 1pm – 2pm

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Course Description:

This course will involve a study of the classical and contemporary philosophical enquiry into the nature of religion and questions about God and ultimate reality. Topics to be considered include proving the existence of God, faith and rationality, the problem of evil, and religious pluralism.

Prerequisite for the course: Any previous course in philosophy or religion.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will become familiar with the historical and contemporary arguments prominent in the field of philosophy of religion.
2. Develop their own position regarding the problem of religious pluralism.

Requirements and Evaluation:

Students are responsible for the information presented in *all* course material—reading assignments, videos, *and* lecture. Class lectures will highlight and explain, but also expand on and supplement the reading. Neither the lecture nor the reading is a substitute for the other. Students are therefore expected to come to class having read the assigned materials and ready to discuss them as part of the learning process. Outlining or note-taking is strongly encouraged as one way to prepare for class discussion. The professor reserves the right to give any number of unannounced reading quizzes, which may constitute a maximum of 1/4 of the attendance and participation portion of your grade.

Students will be responsible for class attendance and participation; 15 one-page essay summaries; one major, researched, argumentative essay; a midterm examination; and a final (non-comprehensive) examination. Study guides will be provided in advance for the exams; students should be certain to make use of these and prepare their arguments before the tests (by making outlines of their arguments, reviewing relevant materials, and thinking of good examples to cite). A fuller description for the written assignments will be forthcoming.

Please be aware that grading is not simply an assessment of mistakes (what you got wrong), but involves as well the quality (and even the quantity) of the work done. For essays and papers, this may involve effectiveness of writing, evidence of thoughtful preparation as exemplified by both the quantity and quality of details or supporting examples (including research where relevant), and creativity—as well as demonstrated mastery of the relevant course material. (Unless otherwise specified, all written assignments must involve engagement with—and explicit reference to—the assigned reading materials; omission of this requirement will be graded accordingly.) Along these lines, a ‘B’ represents not merely work that has adequately completed the assignment or answered the essay question on a test, but work that is also above

average in quality; an 'A' correspondingly represents work that is *outstanding* in comparison with the overall class.

E-mailed paper submissions will be confirmed with an e-mail reply from the professor. It is the student's responsibility to enquire about the status of the submission if you have not received a confirmation within 24 hours of submission. Late papers will be deducted 1/3 letter grade per day, including weekends and holidays. Except in the case of emergencies, requests for excused lateness submissions must be made in writing and in advance, and specifying the reason for the request. **Unless otherwise specified, absolutely no papers will be accepted after the final exam period.**

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend class regularly and participate actively. For the purposes of grading, students are allowed two class absences (either 'excused' or 'unexcused'), but beyond those two, every *unexcused* absence will result in a 1/2 letter reduction of your attendance and participation grade. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. Students who arrive for class after attendance has been taken are responsible for coming to the instructor after class to make sure their presence is noted. Such students will be marked late (3 latenesses = 1 absence). Except in the case of emergencies, requests for excused absences must be made in writing, in advance, and specifying each date to be excused, with appropriate documentation.

Please note as well that attendance is a minimal requirement for the attendance and participation grade. Students are invited to ask questions or add appropriate comments at any time and active participation in class discussion is strongly encouraged: Perfect attendance without ever (or only seldom) speaking in class will receive a grade of 'C' for the attendance and participation component of the final grade.

Departmental Make-up Exam Policy:

Students who, under exceptional circumstances, are granted permission to make-up exams must do so during time-periods designated by the Department of History, Philosophy and Geography. One make-up period will be scheduled during the last full week of classes prior to the date when mid-term grades are due; a second make-up date will be scheduled during the last full week of classes. The professor is, however, under no obligation to allow a 'make-up' if a student cannot provide written documentation demonstrating why they could not attend class.

If a student misses the final exam, he or she will receive a '0' for that exam *or* a course grade of 'Incomplete' (I), at the discretion of the professor. *No exceptions may be made to this policy without the approval of the chairperson of the department.*

Academic Dishonesty:

Please note that there is no assignment for which it is acceptable to submit someone else's words as your own work! All assignments must be completed in your own words, with direct quotations clearly marked (either quotation marks or offset/indentation for longer quotes) and proper credit given for any use of sources (parentheticals, footnotes, or endnotes).

Taking a substantial portion of a source—anything longer than a phrase—and substituting a word here or there is *not* paraphrasing. If you need to rely that much on a text, make sure you quote it and mark it.

Also make sure that *every time* you make use of someone else's ideas or information, *even if* you do not directly quote from the text, you cite your source with appropriate academic referencing (e.g. MLA, APA, or Chicago style). If you are not sure, please consult an appropriate style guide or the professor—please note, however, that page numbers in citations are *obligatory* (where relevant and provided in the source material) rather than optional, regardless of style guide specifications.

Any assignment submitted that involves direct quotation without proper identification (as explained above) will receive a zero (rather than an 'F'). At the discretion of the professor, such fraudulent assignments may be documented and submitted to the Provost's Office for further action, according to university policy. For specific details of the university's Academic Honesty Policy and for information on the student due process procedure, please see Western's Student Handbook, available online at <<http://www.missouriwestern.edu/handbook/index.pdf>>.

All students will be required to print out, sign, and submit a statement of understanding concerning this policy in connection with specific assignments for the course. Please see the appropriate form in the course WebCT (and at the bottom of this syllabus).

Students with Disabilities:

If you have been diagnosed with a disability or if you suspect that you may have a disability that has never been diagnosed and would like to find out what services may be available, please visit the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in Eder Hall, room 203N or visit the ODS website at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/ds/> as soon as possible. This syllabus, as well as all other printed or electronic materials, can be made available in alternative/accessible formats if requested with sufficient prior notice. Missouri Western is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.

Other Important University Policies:

Students should refer to the university *Student Handbook* for details on the policy for the grade appeal process and the guidelines for classroom behaviour, both available at <<http://www.missouriwestern.edu/handbook/index.pdf>>.

Requirements:

Attendance and active class participation 25%
15 Summary papers (1 page each @ 1% each) 15%
Research paper 20%
Midterm examination 20%
Final examination 20%

Books and Materials:

Required Texts:

Peterson, Michael et al. *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. 4th ed. Oxford, 2008. ISBN: 9780195335996.
Eschleman, Andrew, ed. *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: East Meets West*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2008. ISBN: 9781405147170.

Statement of Understanding Regarding Plagiarism in Assignments

(Name)

I have read the syllabus for the course and

I understand that all course assignments (both class presentations and papers) must be in my own words or with quotations clearly marked.

I understand that these are NOT examples of my own words:

rearranging whole phrases so that they appear in different order in the sentences and paragraphs of my source

taking source sentences and replacing some of the words with synonyms.

I understand that my options for making use of sources are:

restating the ideas in my own words—the way I would explain it to someone else, using words and phrases that I would use—and then marking it with a reference citation

using the direct quote (clearly marked with either quotation marks or indentation for a longer block quote) and then marking it with a reference citation.

I understand it is my responsibility to clearly mark quotes and submit all other work in my own words—with both ideas and quotes clearly cited with appropriate references—and that failure to do this will result in my work receiving a grade of 0.

(Signed)

(Date)