

PHI 4230: Philosophy of Religion Seminar
Instructor: Michelle Panchuk, Ph.D.

Office: Byrnes 429

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-2; Wednesdays 10-11

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Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to key philosophical questions and problems related to religious belief and practice, including the nature of the divine, arguments for existence of God, the problem of evil, religious belief, the nature and value of religious experience, and religious language. The course offers a diverse array of perspectives from the history of philosophy, medieval mysticism, contemporary analytic philosophy of religion, feminist epistemology, and contemporary continental philosophy of religion.

Course Objectives:

A student who successfully finishes this course will be able to:

1. Articulate some of the key questions and problems within philosophy of religion and explain why they are important.
2. Critically but charitably engage a wide range of texts and perspectives within the philosophy of religion.
3. Research, formulate, and defend an argumentative thesis both verbally and in essay format.
4. Understand and use key terms essential for competent discourse in philosophy of religion.

Required Texts:

Anselm, *Proslogion* with Gaunilo's reply *On Behalf of the Fool*.

The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion, ed. William Wainwright

Selected Texts Available on Blackboard

Course Requirements:

A. *Terms Quiz* (10%)

Students will be given a list of philosophical terms essential for competent discourse in philosophy of religion. Students are responsible for finding definitions for these terms by using the resources available to them, such as philosophical dictionaries and encyclopedias.

B. *Abstracts* (10%):

Students will submit 150-200 word abstracts for each paper. The abstract should describe their thesis and primary support for that thesis.

C. Paper 1 (15%)

Students will write one 4-5 page essay in which they develop and defend a position on an issue discussed in the readings. Students should do no outside research (apart from our class readings) for this paper, but instead, focus on developing and articulating their own ideas with clarity and precision. Each paper should be double-spaced with 1-inch margins, 12-point Times New Romans font, and Chicago or Turabian citation style.

D. Research Paper Draft (15%)

Students will write a 5-6 page draft of an argumentative essay defending a position on an issue discussed in the readings or on an approved, related topic. Students should do outside research into the current philosophical literature on the topic and take these developments into consideration in arguing for their positions. While this is a draft that will eventually be expanded and revised, students should think of the draft as their best, polished work based on their present understanding and capabilities. Two copies should be turned in, one for the commenter and one for the instructor

E. Comments (10%)

Each student will write 3-4 page critique of a fellow student's draft paper. This will not be a blind critique. Both the author and the commenter will know who the other is. This critique should acknowledge the strengths of the paper in question and point out problem areas. Problems may arise from a misunderstanding of the text being discussed, from a logical inconsistency in the author's claims, or from lack of development or clarity on the part of the author. In addition to pointing out these problems, the critique should suggest possible solutions or corrections. Critiques should focus on the ideas and arguments in the paper rather than on grammar and writing style. Students should submit two copies of their comments, one for the instructor and one for the student whose paper has been critiqued.

F. Final Research Paper (20%)

Students will write an expansion and final revision of their research draft that responds to comments received from their commenter and from the instructor. The aim is to correct and improve grammatical errors, stylistic concerns, structural problems, logical mistakes and gaps found in the draft paper. Additional research may be needed to address these concerns, though it is not required. The final papers should be 8-10 pages long.

G. Philosophy and the Public Sphere (10%)

Imagine that you are giving a short TED talk about your research topic. Try to explain the issues in a way that a non-philosopher could understand it without making it so superficial that your classmates are bored. Think about why your research topic is important. Why should the average person care? Does it relate to any current social or political issues? If you've never done so, you may want to listen to a couple of TED talks for inspiration.

Presentations should be 7-10 minutes in length. Students will present during the last 3 weeks of the course.

H. Attendance and Participation: (10%)

Because this course is largely discussion based, student attendance and participation is critical, not only for each individual student’s progress, but for the progress of the entire class. Students are expected to come to class each week having read the material carefully and having prepared comments and questions to share. Students are allowed two absences without penalty regardless of academic privilege. Exceptions to this policy will be made only in cases for which students have a documented good reason for missing class (Examples of good reasons are: serious illness, death in family etc. Examples of bad reasons are: over-sleeping, planned events, trips etc.)

Grading Scale:

A	94-100	Student demonstrates exceptional knowledge of the material. Student’s work significantly exceeds expectations.
A -	90-93	
B+	87-89	
B	83-86	Student demonstrates solid working knowledge of the material. Student’s work exceeds the minimum requirements.
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	
C	73-76	Student demonstrates a minimum satisfactory knowledge of the material. Student’s work meets minimum requirements.
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	
D	63-66	Student demonstrates a significantly deficient understanding of the material. Student’s work comes short of requirements.
D-	60-62	

F	Below 60	Student does not demonstrate significant comprehension of the material. Student's work falls far short of requirements.
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Late Policy:

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated in the schedule. Assignments will be counted late 15 minutes after the beginning of class time on that day. Papers will be marked down 5 points for each day past the due date. Students may turn in papers at the professor's office prior to the date due. Exceptions to this policy will be made only in the case of a documented good reason.

Academic Integrity and Classroom Decorum:

Plagiarism and cheating of any kind will not be tolerated in this class. Students found engaging in these activities will receive an automatic 0 on the assignment, possibly an F for the course, and will be reported to the Dean.

A second aspect of academic integrity is respect for both the instructor and fellow students. Ideas may be evaluated and criticized, but this should always be done respectfully and without attacking the intelligence or character of the individual defending those ideas. Personal insult is never an acceptable form of philosophical argument and certainly fails to accord with the Christian commitment to love of neighbor. Students engaging in this, or any other form of disruption, will be asked to leave the class.

Please turn off all cell phones during class. Laptop computers and other reading devices may be used for electronic texts and note-taking; however, if it becomes clear that these devices are being used for other purposes that distract from classroom discussion, the instructor may ask that the device be turned off.

Course Schedule:

1	Introduction and Review of Syllabus
The Nature of the Divine	
2	Power and Goodness: OHP15-27
3	Omniscience: OHP 27-34
4	Omnisubjectivity: Zagzebski (Blackboard)
5	A Feminist Perspective on Omniscience: Farmer (Blackboard)
The Existence of God	
6	Aquinas's Five Ways (Blackboard)

7	Aquinas's Five Ways (Blackboard)
8	Cosmological Arguments: OHPR 116-127
9	The Ontological Argument: <i>Proslogion</i> , Chapters 1-13 TERMS QUIZ
10	The Ontological Argument: <i>Proslogion</i> , Chapters 14-17
11	Kant's Critique of the Ontological Argument (Blackboard)
12	Kant's Moral Argument (Blackboard) Abstract 1 Due
13	Does Divine Hiddenness Justify Atheism? Schellenburg (Blackboard)
The Problem of Evil	
14	Ivan on the Problem of Evil: "The Grand Inquisitor" (Blackboard) Paper 1 Due
15	God's Goodness and the Existence of Evil: OHPR, 188-197
16	Theistic Responses: OHPR 197-217
Religious Belief	
17	Pascal's Wager: Blackboard
	Pascal's Wager: OHPR 168-179
18	James' Will to Believe: OHPR 180-187
19	Religious Epistemology: Dougherty and Tweedt (blackboard)
20	The Wounded Word: Cretien
Religious Experience	
21	Alston, "Religious Experience justifies Belief in God" (Blackboard)
22	Fales "Religious Experience Doesn't Justify Belief in God" (Blackboard)
23	A Glance at Mystical Experience: Selections from Hadewijch (Blackboard) RESEARCH DRAFT DUE
24	Religious Experience and Continental Philosophy of Religion: Caputo 123-138 (Blackboard)
25	Religious Experience and Continental Philosophy of Religion: 138-154
Religious Language	
26	Aquinas's Theory of Analogy: (Blackboard) Comments Due

27	Talking About God: OHFR 120-132
	Thanksgiving Break: No Class
28	Talking about God: OHFR 132-243
29	Apophatic and Kataphatic Religious Language: Simmons (Blackboard) Research Paper Due