PHIL 327 Philosophy of Religion  MW 10:00–11:30, McDonnell 361

Instructor: Jonathan L. Kvanvig, Wilson 206, 935-7914

Office Hours: MW Mornings, before class by appointment.

Textbook: Michael Peterson & Raymond VanArragon, eds., *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*.

Course Description: This course focuses on debates concerning the existence of God as well as on special issues that arise within religion and within specific religions.

Policies & Procedures:

- **Class time**: Time in class will consist of lecture and discussion, with a concerted effort to make the latter the primary focus.

- **Grades**: Two papers and a weekly assignment journal will be the basis for grading. Each paper will be worth 40% of the grade, with only the final draft graded, where the grade reflects full participation in the process involving (i) turning in a full rough draft on time; (ii) providing comments to other students on time; and (iii) submission of all the parts of the portfolio on time and the quality of the final paper itself. Because of the cooperative aspect of paper projects, late or incomplete first drafts will not be accepted for credit and late comments will not be accepted either. Failure on either score will result in a deduction of 25% of the grade on the total project. The remainder of the grade will on the quality of your journal. Possible paper topics will be discussed in class.

  - **Weekly Assignment Journal**: Students will be required to keep a journal for the course. For each reading assignment, the journal assignment is due prior to the class period in which we will discuss that reading. The journal entry will summarize the reading, focusing on the issues, controversies, and arguments that arise in it. Each entry should be no
more than 1-2 pages in length. Grading for the journal entries will be pass/fail, with the percentage of passing constituting 20% of the course grade. Your journal entries should be entered in the discussion section on Canvas for the course.

The readings for each week are generally a section of the textbook. You should read the main articles (2 for each section) for the Monday class, and enter summaries for both articles. For each Wednesday, you should read the replies and enter summaries of them.

• 5-7 Page Papers
  First Drafts
Students will bring two copies of their (complete) drafts to class, with an electronic copy in Word format sent to the instructor prior to class. Drafts will be shared with two other students who will provide comments. Students who do not hand in drafts on time will get no credit for their drafts and will not receive any drafts on which to comment, and will receive a grade of zero for that portion of the grade.

The paper will be a thesis defense paper, and the topic will involve one of the issues for that section of the course. So, for the first paper, you may write on any of the topics in weeks 1-6, and for the second paper, any of the topics for the remainder of the course outline (see below). The paper assignments provide the opportunity to cultivate the ability to evaluate complex positions and arguments. Your intended audience is someone at your own educational level who is not in this class and has not read the textbook. So you should first explain the position and argument being analyzed, and then turn to an evaluation of it. Evaluations can involve any of the following: arguing that one of the premises of the argument is false, arguing that the conclusion does not follow from the premises, or defending the premises from objections you can think of to them or which you discover by reading the work of others who disagree with the position of the paper you are evaluating. If your evaluation consists of arguing that the conclusion does not follow from the premises, you need to explain what needs to be changed or added to the argument so that the conclusion would then follow. After doing so, you will then be in a position either to defend the new argument from objections to it, or argue that one of the premises is false.
The simplest form for your paper is to identify a significant dispute between the authors for each section, and write on that dispute.

**Paper Comments**

Students will write critical comments on each of two drafts of papers by other students in the class. By “critical,” I do not mean “negative.” Critical commentary points out both the strengths and the weaknesses of a given paper, and it does so in a way that is respectful and helpful. You may note grammatical mistakes and inelegancies of style, but the primary focus of your comments should be on the substance of the paper. Remember that the task of the author of the paper is to convince you that he or she is correct in their evaluation, so it is not your job to work hard to find a good point in the paper. The paper should defend a position in a straightforward and accessible way, and where it doesn’t, you should make a note of it. Your primary job as a commentator is to summarize in one quick paragraph what you think the point of the paper is, and in the remainder, comment on how successful the paper was at defending this point. So, substantive comments will focus on issues such as: not being able to ascertain the point of the paper, not being able to determine what the argument is for this point, finding the argument unpersuasive and identifying the precise point at which the argument fails to persuade. Students should bring two copies of each set of comments. One set will go to the student whose paper is commented on and one copy will go to the instructor. These comments are due at the beginning of the first class of weeks seven and fourteen.

**Final Drafts**

Final drafts of each paper will be due weeks eight and fifteen. The final draft will be part of a portfolio turned in, which will include: the rough draft of the paper and the comments received on it, the rough drafts of papers commented on and the comments on these papers, the final draft of the paper, together with an explanation of the changes made in response to the comments received and an evaluation of the quality of these comments.

**Academic Honesty:**

As a student at Washington University, you have agreed to abide by the University’s academic integrity policy. Details can be found at “Undegraduate Student Academic Integrity Policy” found [here](#).
Course Outline:

Introduction & The Problem of Evil .......................... Week 1
Reading: Section 1 of Textbook
The Problem of Evil ........................................... Week 2
The Problem of Hiddenness ................................. Week 3
Reading: Section 2 of Textbook
Finding the Argument Notes
The Problem of Hell ....................................... Week 4
Reading: Section 10 of Textbook
Beamer Slides
Cosmological, Teleological, Ontological ................ Week 5
No Reading Assigned, but here are the Notes
Cosmological Arguments ................................. Week 6
Reading: Section 4 of Textbook
Complete Draft of First Paper ......................... Week 6
The Argument from Religious Experience ........ Week 7
Reading: Section 5 of Textbook
Comments Due ............................................. Week 7
Freedom, Foreknowledge, and Providence .......... Week 8
No Reading Assigned Notes here
Final Draft of First Paper ............................... Week 8
Freedom, Foreknowledge, and Providence .......... Week 9
Reading: Section 8 of Textbook
Christian Philosophy of Mind .......................... Week 10
Reading: Section 12 of Textbook
Pluralism, Exclusivism, and Inclusivism ............. Week 11
Reading: Section 7 of Textbook
Omni-Properties and Their Paradoxes ............... Week 12
No Reading Assigned
Omni-properties and Their Paradoxes ............... Week 13
Notes
Complete Draft of Second Paper ...................... Week 13
Miracles ......................................................... Week 14
Reading: Section 6 of Textbook
Religion and Science ...................................... Week 15
Reading: Section 3 of Textbook
Final Draft of Second Paper ............................ Week 15