Phils 327 : Philosophy of Religion  (Spring 2010)

Class Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2.30-4pm
Location: Psychology Building 251
Course Website: http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~grussell/Phil327.html

Instructor: Professor Gillian Russell
Office hours: Monday 1-2pm or by appointment
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Teaching Assistant: John Gabriel
Office Hours: TBA
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Summary

This course is an introduction to the Philosophy of Religion. We will study some classic arguments and texts, beginning with the standard arguments for and against the existence of a god or gods. Readings will include seminal work by Plato, Anselm, Aquinas, Pascal, Hume and Nietzsche as well as the writings of contemporary philosophers, such as David Lewis, Harry Frankfurt and Peter van Inwagen.

Books

The textbook for this course is Philosophy of Religion: an anthology, (5th edition) edited by Pojman and Rea, (ISBN 978-0495095040.) It is the only text you will need to buy. Second hand copies are fine. Any additional required reading will be available on a-res: http://library.wustl.edu/reservesinfo.html.

Readings, Topics and Homework Assignments

Readings marked are in the course textbook. All others will be made available on the a-res page for the course.

Tuesday 19th January - Introduction

Introduction to the course.
Thursday 21st January

Reading:
St. Anselm, The Ontological Argument - Saint Anselm (1033-1109)
Gaunilo's Criticism (from A Reply on Behalf of the Fool) - Gaunilo of Marmoutiers (11th C)
A Critique of the Ontological Argument (extract from The Critique of Pure Reason) - Immanuel Kant (1781/1787)

Tuesday 26th January - The Cosmological Argument

The Five Ways (extract from Summa Theologiae) - Thomas Aquinas (1274)
The Argument from Contingency - Samuel Clarke (1705)

Thursday 28th January

A Critique of the Cosmological Argument - Paul Edwards (1959)

Tuesday 2nd February - The Teleological Argument

The Watch and the Watchmaker - William Paley (1802)

Thursday 4th February

A Critique of the Design Argument (extract from Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion) - David Hume (1779)

Tuesday 9th February


Thursday 11th February

Inverse Gambler’s Fallacy: The Argument from Design - Ian Hacking, Mind, 96: 331–340 (a-res)
http://www.jstor.org/stable/2254310

Tuesday 16th February - Arguments from Religious Experience

Mysticism (extract from The Varieties of Religious Experience) - William James (1902)

Thursday 18th February

No class.

Tuesday 23rd February - Pascal's Wager

The Wager (extract from Pensees) - Blaise Pascal (lived 1623-1662)

Thursday 25th February
The Ethics of Belief - W.K.Clifford (1877)

**Tuesday 2nd March**

The Will to Believe - William James (1879)

Optional extra reading: Al Hayek - "Waging War on Pascal's Wager"
http://philreview.dukejournals.org/cgi/reprint/112/1/27

**Thursday 4th March**

MIDTERM EXAMINATION (IN CLASS)

**Tuesday 9th March**

SPRING BREAK

**Thursday 11th March**

SPRING BREAK

**Tuesday 16th March - The Problem of Evil**

The Argument from Evil (extract from *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*) - David Hume (1779)
Theodicy: A defense of Theism - Gottfried Leibniz (1710)
Rebellion (extract from the Brothers Karamazov) - Fyodor Dostoevsky (1880)

Optional spring break reading: *Candide* - the short novel by Voltaire (1759) (you'll need to buy a copy of this http://www.amazon.com/Candide-Dover-Thrift-Editions-Voltaire/dp/0486266893/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1263883589&sr=8-2)

**Thursday 18th March**

J. L. Mackie - Evil and Omnipotence (1955)

**Tuesday 23rd March**


**Thursday 25th March**

No class.

**Tuesday 30th March - Miracles**

Against Miracles (extract from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*) - David Hume
Thursday 1st April

Of 'Of Miracles' - Peter van Inwagen (1998)

Tuesday 6th April - Omniscience, Omnipotence, Free Will

Pascal Boyer, author of Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought, will present some of his work and answer your questions. It's very important that you read his paper (on a-res) beforehand.

Thursday 8th April

The Logic of Omnipotence - Harry Frankfurt (1964)

Tuesday 13th April - Science


Thursday 15th April


Tuesday 20th April - Morality

Morality and Religion (extract from the Euthyphro) - Plato (lived 428/427BC–348/347BC)

Thursday 22nd April

Extract from On the Genealogy of Morals - Frederich Nietzsche (1887) (a-res)

Tuesday 27th April

"If God is dead, is everything permitted?" Elizabeth Anderson (2007) in Philosophers Without Gods: Meditations on Atheism and the Secular Life, edited by Louise Anthony, OUP (Oxford, 2007.) This article is a little more difficult than most of the rest of the reading.

Thursday 29th April

Review class.

Assessment

20% - short paper (400 words max.) due Thursday, February 4th
40% - midterm examination on Thursday, March 4th
40% - long paper (2000 words max) (due Thursday, May 6th)

There is no final exam.

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**Academic Integrity**

Students suspected of plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty or misconduct *will* be reported to the academic integrity officer for Arts and Sciences (currently Dean Killen), so that the incident may be handled in a consistent, fair manner, and so that substantiated charges of misconduct may be noted in students' records.

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**Pass/Fail Option**

For students taking the course pass/fail, the minimum letter grade required for a pass will be a C-.