

Syllabus

Professor

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Course Description

In Western philosophy of religion, we attempt to answer fundamental questions concerning the important doctrines of the major Western religions, especially the doctrines concerning God. In this course, our main focus will be on evidence for and against the existence of God. We will investigate some of the following issues:

- *Religious Experience.* Does religious experience provide any evidence for God's existence?
- *The Cosmological Argument.* Does the fact that the universe exists, or the fact that there is something rather than nothing at all, give us reason to think God exists?
- *The Teleological Argument.* Some features of the natural world appear designed. Does this give us reason to think God exists?
- *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge.* God is supposed to be omniscient, but is this compatible with human freedom?
- *The Problem of Evil.* Does the amount of evil in the world give us reason to think God does not exist?
- *Divine Silence.* Does the fact that God is not making his existence more obvious provide reason to think God doesn't exist at all?
- *God and Morality.* What is the relationship between God and morality? Do moral truths depend upon God? Does the existence of objective moral truths provide reason to think that God exists?
- *Immortality.* What would human beings have to be like for life after death to be possible? Is there any reason to think we are that way?
- *The Meaning of Life.* If there is no God, is everything pointless? If there is no afterlife, is everything pointless?

This is a course in the *philosophy of religion*. It is not a course in comparative religion or in the history of religion. We will not be asking what the religious beliefs of some group are, or how they differ from the beliefs of some other group, or what cultural circumstances led them to adopt their religious views, or whether it's a good or a bad thing that there are religions.* We will instead be trying to figure out the answers to questions like the ones above.

* With the exception this semester of the events of week 3. See Course Schedule below.

Course Website

The course website, which you should check regularly, can be found here:

<http://spot.colorado.edu/~heathwoo/phil1600/>

There you will find:

- a copy of this syllabus
- additional required readings
- study guides for exams
- guidance on papers
- other important course information.

Readings

Three books are required:

- C. Stephen Layman, *Letters to Doubting Thomas: A Case for the Existence of God* (Oxford University Press, 2007). ISBN: 0195308158
- John Perry, *Dialogue on Good, Evil, and the Existence of God* (Hackett, 1999). ISBN: 0-87220-460-X.
- John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (Hackett, 1978). ISBN: 0-915144-53-0.

Each book is available at the CU Bookstore. Additional required readings will be made available on the course website. In addition to bringing your book to class, you are required to print out and bring these readings to class as well, on the relevant days.

Requirements

1. Attendance and Participation (10%). You must attend class regularly, arrive on time, complete each reading assignment on time, bring the day's reading with you to class, take notes on readings and in class, ask questions when you have them, contribute to class discussions, and be an active member of your group during group activities. I will be keeping track of all of this, and it will affect your grade.

Because this is a small honors course, it will be more discussion-oriented and less lecture-oriented than most courses. It is thus imperative that everyone attends regularly. For this reason, *you will be allowed only four absences* - "excused" or not (though I hope many of you will have no absences). For each absence after that - "excused" or not - your final grade for the course will be brought down one notch (e.g., A- to B+, B to B-, etc.). Do not to use up your free absences for frivolous reasons; save them for when you are really sick.

Further elements of the participation requirement involve *technology*. You must have an email account and regular access to the internet, and you must check your colorado.edu email address and the course website frequently. You also must have regular access to a printer in order to print out readings from the website. Finally, *text messaging during class is strictly prohibited*. First-time offenders will be asked to stop; additional offenses will result in dismissal from class and losing credit for attending. When you get to class, *turn your cell phone OFF*.

2. Discussion Leader (10%). You will be responsible for leading class discussion for one class meeting. The main things you should try to do as discussion leader are the following:

- Begin with a summary of the day's reading.

- Pick one or two things (e.g., theses, arguments, objections to a thesis or an argument) from the reading that you find interesting and/or important.
- Explain for us in detail what these are. Include an explanation of all the necessary background concepts. Explain things slowly and thoroughly. This portion of your discussion leading might take up the majority of the class period.
- Ideally, you would then make a critical comment about your topic. You might, e.g., explain why you think the argument you are discussing is not a successful argument.
- If you agree with whatever you are discussing, another thing you can do is imagine an objection that a critic might raise, explain this objection to us, and then say why you think this objection is not successful.
- If you are unable to do either of these things, you might try to provoke discussion by raising some questions on the topic.

You will be graded here on preparedness, clarity, understanding of the material, ability to answer questions, quality of critical commentary. You may make a handout, but that is not required. You are encouraged to use the chalkboard, especially if you don't use a handout.

Discussion leader sign-ups will take place the first or second day of class.

3. Papers (20% each). Two 4-5 page papers are required (see Course Schedule below for due dates). The paper will give you a chance to defend your own view about one of the topics discussed in the class (e.g., you can defend a positive position on one of our topics, or you can offer your own criticism of an argument defended in one of our readings). I'll have more to say about papers later. Late papers will be penalized unless you have a legitimate, documented excuse.

4. Exams (15%, 25%). There will be two exams: a midterm exam (15%) and a cumulative final exam (25%) (see Course Schedule below for dates). These will be in-class, short-answer, bluebook exams. To help you prepare, and to give you an idea about the sorts of questions you can expect, a study guide will be made available before each exam.

If you miss an exam, you will be permitted to take a make up exam only if you have a legitimate, documented excuse (e.g., non-trivial illness, death in the family, religious obligation). If it was at all possible, *you must let me know in advance that you must miss an exam.*

Grading

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and Participation	20 points	10%
Discussion Leader	20 points	10%
First Paper	40 points	20%
Midterm	30 points	15%
Second Paper	40 points	20%
Final Exam	50 points	25%

TOTAL:	200 points	100%

We will use a standard "non-curved" grading scale, as follows:

185-200	A	175-179	B+	155-159	C+	135-139	D+	0-119	F
180-184	A-	165-174	B	145-154	C	120-134	D		
		160-164	B-	140-144	C-				

Course Schedule (subject to change):

Date	Topic	Readings (due on date listed)
[1] M 1/12	First Day Stuff	
W 1/14	Argument to the Best Explanation	Layman, Preface and Introduction
F 1/16	Argument to the Best Explanation	
[2] M 1/19	NO CLASS - MLK DAY	
W 1/21	Theism and Naturalism	Layman, ch. 1, pp. 10-22
F 1/23	Theism and Naturalism	Layman, ch. 1, pp. 23-37
[3] M 1/26	Special evening class session (required). "What So Great About God?" Debate between Christopher Hitchens and Dinesh D'Souza. Macky Auditorium, January 26, 7 p.m. Attendance required. Sign Will Call Sheet for tickets.	
W 1/28	The Value of Organized Religion	
F 1/30	Religious Experience	Layman, ch. 2, pp. 38-48
[4] M 2/2	Religious Experience	Layman, ch. 2, pp. 48-56
W 2/4	Religious Experience	Layman, ch. 3 (pp. 57-78)
F 2/6	The Cosmological Argument	Layman, ch. 4, pp. 79-91;
[5] M 2/9	The Cosmological Argument	Layman, ch. 4, pp. 92-102
W 2/11	The Cosmological Argument	Layman, ch. 4, pp. 103-109
F 2/13	The Design Argument	Layman, ch. 5, pp. 110-118
[6] M 2/16	The Design Argument	Layman, ch. 5, pp. 118-137
W 2/18	The Design Argument	
F 2/20	NO CLASS	
[7] M 2/23	First Paper Due , Discuss Papers	
W 2/25	Review for Midterm	
F 2/27	Midterm Exam	
[8] M 3/2	Review Midterms; Start the Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge	Rowe, pp. 147-153 (online)
W 3/4	Freedom and Foreknowledge	Rowe, pp. 153-160 (online)
F 3/6	Freedom and Foreknowledge	Layman, ch. 6, pp. 163-173
[9] M 3/9	The Problem of Evil	Perry, <i>Evil</i> , "The First Morning"
W 3/11	The Problem of Evil	Perry, <i>Evil</i> , "The First Afternoon"
F 3/13	The Problem of Evil	Perry, <i>Evil</i> , "The Second Morning"
[10] M 3/16	The Problem of Evil	Perry, <i>Evil</i> , "The Second Afternoon"
W 3/18	The Problem of Evil	Layman, ch. 7, pp. 174-195
F 3/20	The Problem of Evil	Layman, ch. 7, pp. 195-205
S P R I N G B R E A K		
[11] M 3/30	No-Evidence Arguments for Atheism	Hawthorn, pp. 116-131 (online)
W 4/1	The Argument from Divine Silence	
F 4/3	Arg's from the Character of Religion	Hawthorn, pp. 131-134 (online)
[12] M 4/6	The Moral Argument	Layman, ch. 9, pp. 229-234; Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> (online)

W 4/8	The Moral Argument	Layman, ch. 9, pp. 235-246
F 4/10	The Moral Argument	Layman, ch. 9, pp. 246-249
[13] M 4/13	Personal Identity and Immortality	Perry, <i>Personal</i> , "The First Night"
W 4/15	Personal Identity and Immortality	Perry, <i>Personal</i> , "The Second Night"
F 4/17	Personal Identity and Immortality	Perry, <i>Personal</i> , "The Third Night"
[14] M 4/20	Personal Identity and Immortality	
W 4/22	God and the Meaning of Life	Readings TBA
F 4/24	God and the Meaning of Life	
[15] M 4/27	Second Paper Due , Discuss Papers	
W 4/29	FCQ's, Review for Final	
F 5/1	Review for Final	
Sa 5/2	Final Exam , 1:30 – 4:00 p.m.	

Class Mates

So that you will have someone from whom to get the notes (and any other pertinent info) should you miss class, introduce yourself to two classmates and write their information here:

Name:	Email:	Phone:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Issues, Complaints, etc.

If something is bothering you about the course, the readings, your classmates, the classroom environment, me, or anything related to our course, please do not hesitate to discuss the problem with me. If you don't feel like I am dealing with it to your satisfaction, please bring your problem to the attention of our department chair, David Boonin (David.Boonin@Colorado.edu), or our director of undergraduate studies, Wes Morrison (Wes.Morrison@Colorado.edu).

Academic Integrity

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/.

Anyone caught violating the academic integrity policy (in any way) will automatically receive an F for this course, and may be subject to expulsion from the university.

Disability Services

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from

Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices.

Religious Observances

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. Please let me know well in advance about any such conflicts, so we can resolve them. Your class participation grade will not be negatively affected due to such conflicts. For more information about the university's policies on these matters, see www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information about the university's policies on these matters, see www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code.

Discrimination and Harassment

The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at www.colorado.edu/odh.