

Philosophy 3600
Philosophy of Religion
Spring 2008

MWF 1:00-1:50
HLMS 245

Syllabus

Professor

Chris Heathwood
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Office Hours: Monday 2:00-5:00, and by appt.

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TA/Grader

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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. We attempt to answer questions about

- *The Nature of God.* Assuming God exists, what is God like? What are the divine attributes?
- *Puzzles about Omnipotence.* God is supposed to be omnipotent, or all-powerful, but what does this mean? Is the notion of omnipotence even coherent?
- *God and Morality.* What is the relationship between God and morality? Do moral truths depend upon God?
- *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge.* God is supposed to be omniscient, but is this compatible with human freedom?
- *Faith.* What is faith, and what is its relation to reason? Can faith be of any help in trying to determine whether God exists?
- *The Ontological Argument.* Can we prove the existence of God from the very concept of God?
- *The Cosmological Argument.* Does the fact that the universe, or anything at all, exists 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?
- *Religious Experience.* Can religious experience justify believing that God exists?
- *The Problem of Evil.* Does the amount of evil in the world give us reason to think God does not exist?

- *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?

Unfortunately, we will have time to cover only some of these topics. We will approach them by way of the writings of some important philosophers, both classic and contemporary. In each case, our goals will be to understand and to evaluate some of the important theses and arguments on the topic.

This is a course in the *philosophy of religion*. It is not a course in comparative religion, the history of religion, or the psychology 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. We will actually be trying to figure out the correct answers to the questions above.

This is a challenging course. Much of the reading is difficult and must be read slowly and more than once. Many of the ideas and arguments presented in lecture and in the readings are unfamiliar, difficult, and technical. On the exams, you will be expected to know the material thoroughly, to think deeply, and write very clearly and precisely about the issues. If you are looking for a blow-off course, look elsewhere.

Prerequisites

Two courses in philosophy.

Course Website

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

<http://spot.colorado.edu/~heathwoo/phil3600/>

Here you will find:

- a copy of this syllabus
- additional course readings
- a list of all assigned readings for the course
- accounts of what we did in class each day (check this first if you miss a class)
- handouts
- study guides.

Readings

One book is required:

Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology, 5th Edition (Wadsworth, 2008),
edited by Louis P. Pojman and Michael Rea. ISBN: 0495095044

The 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

Class Participation/Weekly Quizzes (20% of your grade): You must attend class regularly, arrive on time, complete each reading assignment on time, bring the book and/or relevant readings with you to class, take detailed 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. Furthermore, there will be weekly pop quizzes designed to test whether you have done the assigned reading and have been coming to class. They are open-note, but not open-book. If you keep up with the readings, come to class, take notes on both, and ask questions when you have them, the quizzes will be very easy. If you don't do these things, you will fail them.

In addition to these parts of class counting directly towards your grade, you will do poorly on the exams (and in general get a lot less out of the course) if you don't do these things. Some questions on the exams will be in reference to material discussed only in lecture and not in any reading. Furthermore, I am much more likely to "bump up" a borderline grade to the higher grade if I see that a student has attended class regularly, taken good notes, asked questions (either in or outside of class), participated in class, and generally put a lot of effort into the course.

A further element of the participation requirement involves *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. If you don't, you will miss crucial information about course content, assigned readings, and exams. You also must have regular access to a printer in order to print out readings from the website.

Exams/Paper (80% of your grade): There will be four in-class, bluebook exams:

Essay Exam 1: A short-essay-type exam around Week 5.

Midterm: A very-short-answer-type exam around Week 8.

Essay Exam 2/Paper: A short essay-type exam around Week 12 – OR – a term paper.

Final Exam: A very-short-answer-type cumulative final exam during Finals Week.

For the short-essay-type exams, you will have the possible essay questions in advance, but you won't know which one or two will be on the exam. The very-short-answer-type exams will contain mostly very-short-answer questions, and also some true-false, multiple choice, and fill-in-the-blank questions.

Instead of taking Essay Exam 2, you can write a term paper on a topic of your choice, which is due the same day as Essay Exam 2. The topic must be in the philosophy of religion, *and must be approved in advance by me*. Term papers should be about 2,000 words, give or take (2,000 words is about 7 pages with normal fonts and margins). Term papers must *defend a thesis* – they cannot be mere “book reports” of the views of others. If you are a philosophy major and a senior, I expect you to do a term paper. If you are a less advanced philosophy major, I still encourage you to do one.

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 is calculated as follows:

Class Participation	20%
Essay Exam 1	15%
Midterm	20%
Essay Exam 2/Term Paper	15%
Final Exam	30%

We will use the following grading scale:

93-100	A	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+
90-92	A-	83-86	B	73-76	C	60-66	D
		80-82	B-	70-72	C-	0-59	F

A Possible Course Schedule Certain Not to Be Ours

- Week 1: What Is the Philosophy of Religion?, The Nature of God
- Week 2: Puzzles about Omnipotence [no class on this Monday: MLK day]
- Week 3: God and Morality
- Week 4: The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge
- Week 5: The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge
- Week 6: Faith and Reason [class cancelled on this Friday]
- Week 7: The Ontological Argument
- Week 8: The Ontological Argument; The Cosmological Argument
- Week 9: The Cosmological Argument

Week 10: The Argument from Design

[Spring Break]

Week 11: The Argument from Design

Week 12: The Problem of Evil

Week 13: The Problem of Evil

Week 14: Immortality; God and the Meaning of Life

Week 15: Reading Week

Finals Week: Final Exam, Tuesday, May 6, 4:30 p.m.

Additional Notes:

- There will be **no class Friday, February 22**, as I will be out of town fighting the good fight.

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.