

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
FALL SEMESTER, 2013
PHIL 224, PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
FRIDAYS, 1:00 - 3:30, NICELY 321

Instructor: Dr. Chris Johns E-Mail: cj08@aub.edu.lb Phone: Ext. 4259	Office: 139 Fisk Hall Office Hours: Fridays, 12 noon to 1:00, 3:30 – 4:30, and by appointment.
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Course Description: This course consists of a survey of major themes in the philosophy of religion. The philosophy of religion consists generally of an inquiry into the basic principles, concepts, and assumptions of religious ideas and practice. These include the idea of God, the problem of creation out of nothing, rational “proofs” for and against God’s existence (including the problem of evil), the relationship between faith and reason, between science and religious knowing; miraculous evidentialism, the problem of freedom versus God’s foreknowledge, life after death, multiple, coexisting faiths, and finally, religious toleration and political secularism.

Basically, each week we will read a chapter of William Rowe’s *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* as well as a supplemental reading, usually a primary text related to the chapter in Rowe. You are expected to have done the readings ahead of time, so that we can discuss them in class. To encourage you to be prepared, we will have a short reading quiz every week. Occasionally, these quizzes will consist of “group work” where you will answer several questions in a small group and discuss them with the class. There will be two short papers, and a final. Some of the readings are quite difficult. You will need to keep track of complicated arguments, details, and terms. This is not an easy class. It aims to turn you into a more effective thinker and writer.

This course mainly emphasizes philosophical thinking, which I take to mean the slow, careful, reflective reading and analysis of texts and concepts. Classes will be discussion-driven and centered on the assigned readings. My goal is not only to introduce the student to various problems in the philosophy of religion, but to develop the habit of reading and thinking philosophically.

Program Learning Outcomes

- The ability to precisely identify the conclusion for which a writer is arguing.
- The ability to accurately represent the argument(s) which someone is using to support his or her conclusion.
- The ability to identify and assess objections to arguments in our readings.
- The ability to develop, explain, and defend your own views.

Essential: Read this syllabus carefully. By taking this class, you agree to understand and comply with this syllabus. By ‘syllabus’ I mean all of the documents, including this one, found in the **Syllabus Section** on Moodle. To maintain organization and fairness, I must maintain the policies stated therein. If I make any changes to the syllabus, I will inform you. If you have a question about any policy, I am happy to talk about it. But if it is in the syllabus, you can never say that you did not know. So, read so that you can know.

Required Texts: See course schedule below for assigned readings.

- Rowe, William. *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Available at AUB Bookstore)
- Course Packet, available at AUB Bookstore.

Graded Requirements:

- Quizzes (approx. seven, dispersed throughout the semester): 20% of course grade
- In-class (or outside) midterm essay 1: 25%
- In-class (or outside) midterm essay 2: 25%
- Final exam: 30%

Quizzes: These are multiple choice or short answer quizzes given occasionally (according to Course Schedule) designed to keep you up with the readings and to sharpen comprehension. The Quiz for that day will be over the readings assigned for that day (or the previous day) only. Quizzes may *not* be made up. Your lowest quiz score will not be included your total Quizzes score. Here is how they are scored: -1 = 90; -2 = 80; =3 = 70; -4 = 60; -5 = 0. Note that if you cheat on the quiz by looking at someone else's quiz or by giving or obtaining answers from some other source, you will receive a zero for the quiz.

In-class essays and final: You will be given a choice of two out of three questions to answer. The questions will be based on the previously assigned readings. Along with the question, I will usually give you a passage from the reading I want you to analyze or respond to. Here are the bases on which I will grade your essay: You must be able to identify and discuss the main idea (thesis) of the readings. You must be able to identify the reasons that are given in support of that thesis. You must be able to critically evaluate that thesis. You must be able to write in clear, grammatically correct, English. Your thoughts must be well-organized. Essays that fulfill all of the above in an excellent manner will receive 90 points. Those that do so in a "good" manner, or fulfill the criteria partially, will receive 80 points or more. Those essays that need work in at least two of the above criteria will receive 70 points or more. Those that do not fulfill several of the criteria, or do so in a weak manner, will receive 60 points or more. Those essays that fail to display much knowledge of the readings, *or* are incomprehensible or thoughtless in expression, will receive a 59 or less. The best way to prepare for these essays is to read the assigned readings *carefully* and pay attention to how we discuss them in class. Also, for most of the readings, I will provide "reading questions" on Moodle that will help you focus on what is important.

Attendance: is up to you. However, since the class meets only once per week, given that your final grade depends on your performance on the in-class essays and quizzes, and that we will be discussing these difficult essays in class, it is in your best interest to attend every class, to be attentive, and to participate in the discussions. However, if you miss more than four classes you will receive a 50 for the course, no matter what.

Participation and class conduct: Participation is strongly encouraged. In order to participate well, you must do the assigned readings *before* class, and *always bring the assigned text to class*. Ask questions, make comments, and respond (respectfully) to other students. No question or comment is too silly or off-base. Everyone has questions, and surely others have the same questions as you. However, please do not monopolize the discussion. Give others a chance to speak. *Be respectful of me and others by listening to what is going on, rather than talking among yourselves*. A philosophy class is one of the very few places where you have the opportunity to express and examine opinions. However, you should expect to have your opinions *challenged*. You should also expect me to call on you unexpectedly. So, be prepared. NOTE: Repeat offenders of the following behaviors will be ejected from class and will have **points removed from their final grade**. (1) Talking while someone else is talking. If you cannot avoid talking to your neighbor, then sit somewhere else. (2) Text messaging in class. Answering calls. All electronic devices must be turned off and put away completely out of sight. I reserve the right to take your "Crackberry" until class is over. If you insist on taking notes with a computer, the internet connection must be turned off. (3) Leaving the room to make or answer phone calls; playing games or reading non-class material during class. (4) Repeated lateness; leaving early. (5) Also, as a courtesy to me, *do not make preparations to leave class until I say class is over*. If I seem unaware that class time has expired, kindly alert me, thank you.

Grade Calculation: I want you to understand how your grades are assigned and calculated, so that you can know better what I expect and so that you can exercise more control over your own progress. See "Calculating and Estimating Your Grades" on Moodle." This will show you completely explicitly how all calculations are made, so that you can do them yourself. Here is a brief explanation: All grades are recorded on Moodle's "Grades" (as well as on the assignments themselves), so you can view them as soon as I have put them up (Moodle→Administration→Grades). To estimate your grade at any point in the semester, simply figure your average and multiply it by the "weighted" amount; then sum the

weighted amounts (see “Calculating and Estimating. . .”). Be sure to drop the lowest score on your quizzes. Your course grade will not be rounded up. An 82.75 is an 82.

NOTE: Never tell me that you “need” a certain course or paper grade, nor ask me to “go easy” on grades or anything else. The request is completely inappropriate. The only reason students make such a request is that they think it will influence their grade—and they are right. If made, I will *reduce* your course grade by at least 2 points. The best way to get the grade you need is to do the required work as best you can; although I offer no guarantees that you will get it.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the intentional or careless use of someone else’s writing or ideas as if they were your own. I consider it equivalent to stealing, lying, and cheating, and no amount of it will be tolerated in my class. Plagiarism is wrong for another reason: The general objective of college is to become a better writer, thinker, learner, and person. Plagiarizing severely undermines that objective and harms, not only you, but all students, professors, the university, and society in general. If you plagiarize, you fail to learn how to write and think. You represent yourself as having skills and knowledge that you in fact do not have. Also, *I despise plagiarism and plagiarists*. I take your work and my work seriously. If you plagiarize, then my work becomes a pointless waste of time. I hate wasting time, because I wish to fill my life with meaning and accomplishments. Nor do I wish to have false relationships. When I read and respond to your work, I consider myself as engaged in a mutual relationship of trust, respect, truth, care, and progress. If I am reading your plagiarized work, then I am having a false relationship with you. I despise false relationships because they destroy the substance of life. **If you plagiarize anything in this class, you will receive a grade of zero for the assignment and be reported to the Dean. It will go on your record and you could be dismissed from the university.** This includes any submitted work whatsoever (including essay drafts, single sentences and ideas, using dictionary definitions, encyclopedia entries, or any part thereof, paraphrasing, whether from books, internet, magazines, friends, wherever). You must also discourage plagiarism by not giving your paper to someone else to copy. Unfortunately, I catch plagiarizers *every semester*. I am an experienced reader and can usually tell, simply by reading, when a student has plagiarized. I can tell because the writing does not match the assignment, because the text has an “internet feel,” or because it uses awkward wording in an attempt to disguise the source. I also use Google and other resources.

You can, of course, easily avoid plagiarism simply by *citing your sources properly*. If you are unsure of how to cite sources properly, see “**Documenting Sources: Rules & Mechanics**” posted on Moodle. But *you are responsible for any plagiarism*. If you are struggling with an assignment, or with your English, please come and talk to me. I am here to help.

Turnitin. Unfortunately, due to a few people’s insidious attempts to plagiarize, I must force everyone to submit all assignments to Turnitin.com. Failure to submit your work to Turnitin results in an automatic 0 for the assignment.

Here is how it works: As their website says, “Every paper submitted is returned in the form of a Originality Report. Results are based on searches of billions of pages from current and archived instances of the Internet, millions of student papers submitted to Turnitin, and commercial databases of journal articles and periodicals” (http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_solutions.html). NOTE that Turnitin only submits a “similarity” report, not a plagiarism report. The similarity report shows the percentage of your text that is similar or identical to another text, and therefore helps me determine whether you have plagiarized. Some similarity is fine and to be expected. But identical similarity or paraphrased similarity is plagiarism. NOTE: Writing papers does *not* consist of using a source and changing a few words here and there. Nor does paraphrasing a source consist of changing a few words here and there. It means making a compact summary of the main point of a paragraph, for purposes of clarification for the reader. All paraphrasing must be documented.

To submit your paper to Turnitin, go to Moodle and click on “Turnitin submission” for the current assignment.

More information on Plagiarism is posted on Moodle.

The Writing Center:

If you have writing issues that need extra attention, please take advantage of the Writing Center. Their instructors help all students, from first-year to doctoral. Keep in mind that they will *not* proofread or copy-edit your work. Walk in or make an appointment: 9 am - 5 pm, Monday – Friday. West Hall 336; Ext. 3157; E-mail: writing@aub.edu.lb

Moodle: Here you will find course material such as the syllabus, some course readings, citation mechanics, tips on writing papers, and such. Class notices and announcements will be sent to you by e-mail (via the “News Forum”) so, **check your AUB e-mail** regularly. You may also post your own thoughts on the News Forum for everyone to see.

E-mail: So that we may better communicate, you must use your AUB e-mail and “authenticate” it so that I can see your name and know who you are.

See Course Schedule, next page--

Course Schedule: This schedule is subject to change, although any changes will be announced well in advance. To be prepared for class discussions, read the assigned material *prior* to class time. *Always* bring the assigned material to class. Bring whatever is assigned for Tuesday to Thursday’s class as well. *If you do not bring the readings to class, I may ask you to leave until you return with them!*

Date	Topic and Reading
1. Sept. 6	Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion A variety of creation accounts: Upanishads, Greek, Hebrew
2. 13	“Is Creationism Scientific?” (course packet) Problems interpreting Scripture (readings from Bible, Qur’an) Packet: Ibn Rushd: “The Harmony of Philosophy and the Qur’an”.
3. 20	The Idea of God (Rowe: Ch. 1) Packet: Armstrong, <i>History of God</i> , Chapter One Practice Quiz
4. 27	Is Religion Necessary for Morality? Packet: Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> ; excerpt from <i>Republic</i> ; Leibniz, “Reflections on the Common Concept of Justice”; Rachels, “Does Morality Depend on Religion? Optional” Darwal, “Theological Voluntarism.” Quiz 1
5. Oct. 4	Rowe: Ch 2, The Cosmological Argument Packet: Hawking, “The Beginning of Time” and “The Origin of the Universe.” Quiz 2
6. 11	Rowe: Ch 3, The Ontological Argument Packet: St. Anselm, <i>Proslogium</i> . Supplement, “The classical ontological argument” including Guanilo’s critique. Optional: Plantinga, “A Contemporary Modal Version of the Ontological Argument.” Quiz 3 (in class) Essay 1 (take home)
7. 18	NO CLASS Rowe: Ch 5, Religious and Mystical Experience In place of Quiz 4 , answer question 4 on p. 89. Post on Moodle.
8. 25	Rowe: Ch 4, The Design Argument Packet: Paley, “The Analogical Teleological Argument” Quiz 5
9. Nov. 1	Rowe: Ch 6, Faith and Reason Packet: Murphy, “Theology and Scientific Methodology” Packet: Flew, “Theology and Falsification” Quiz 6
10. 8	Rowe: Ch 7, The Problem of Evil Packet: St. Augustine on evil; Hume, “Evil Makes a Strong Case Against God’s Existence.” Dostoevsky, “Rebellion” Quiz 7
11. 15	Rowe: Ch 8, Miracles and the Modern World View Packet: Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , “Of Miracles.” Quiz 8 (in class). Essay 2 (take home)
12. 22	Independence Day, no class
13. 29	Rowe: Ch 9, Life after Death Packet: Epicurus, “Letter to Herodotus” and “Death is Nothing to Us” Rowe: Ch 10, Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom Quiz 9
14. Dec. 6	Last Class Rowe: Ch 11, Many Religions Packet: John Locke, “A Letter Concerning Toleration.” Rowe: “Friendly Atheism Revisited” Quiz 10
15. 13	Exams begin (Final paper due, TBA)
16. 20	Official end of semester, Dec. 21