
The Secular Mind (RelSt 109*)

Spring, 2002

*This course is cross-listed with the Departments of Anthropology, Philosophy, and Sociology

The Purpose of the Course

The purpose of this course is to help you to understand the development of those ideas and institutions that have shaped the way we think about religion and society. To this end, you will be asked to read from a small selection of documents that have played a part in this development. We will then discuss these documents in class.

Because the focus of the class lectures and discussions will be on these documents, you will find it difficult to participate in, contribute to, and/or understand the lectures and discussions unless you have read each of them prior to the class session. Success in this class will be highly correlated with careful reading outside of and prior to the class sessions. Examinations will consist of short selections from the texts, upon which you will be invited to comment. If you don't understand the text, you will be unable to comment on it reasonably and intelligently. The best way to understand the documents is to read them carefully, think about them, and then listen to the lecture and, if possible, participate in class discussion.

The course was designed to serve the general education of undergraduate

students at the University of Illinois. It is an appropriate choice for anyone who wants to think seriously and critically about religious experience. While those who plan to major in sociology, history, philosophy or religious studies are welcomed and even encouraged to take the course, it is no more appropriate for sociology, history, philosophy or religious studies majors than for students in any other discipline. The only prerequisite is a willingness to read carefully, think critically, and to listen and participate actively in class.

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Requirements

There are three requirements for this course:

* **Reading**. The primary source texts assigned for the course are all

included in the textbook, available from Notes & Quotes, 502 East John Street, Champaign. If you don't do the reading regularly and on time, you will not benefit from the lectures and discussions, you will find it impossible to participate effectively in class, and you will not perform well on examinations.

* **Attendance**. Roll will not be taken, but the lectures and class

discussions will be essential to your understanding of the texts assigned.

* **Examinations**. There will be four examinations, given on February

1, March 1, March 29, and May 1. On each of those dates, at approximately 5 pm, a question will be posted on this web site. The question will typically consist of one or more passages taken from the readings assigned, on which you will be invited to comment in some specific way. Your answer may take a variety of different forms, but may not exceed 500 words in length. Your answer must be sent via email to Cheryl Lehman (ctrotter@students.uiuc.edu) by 11 pm on the third day after the exam. Your answer will be given a letter

grade (e.g., A, A-, B+, B, B-, etc.), which will be sent to you a few days later again via email with a brief explanation. There will be no final examination, and none of the four examinations is cumulative.

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Policies

See the Code of Policies and Regulations Applying to All Students
(www.uiuc.edu/admin_manual/code/code_contents.html)

Violations of academic integrity (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, etc.) will be taken extremely seriously. Typically, a student who is caught cheating or plagiarizing will not only be given an F for the assignment and the course, but might also be suspended or even expelled.

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Time and Place

3:00 PM, MWF 253 Mining & Engineering Building

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Textbook

The Secular Mind (R. A. Jones, ed.)
Available at Notes & Quotes, 502 East John Street, Champaign.

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Instructor

Professor Robert Alun Jones
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Office Hours: by appointment or by electronic mail
Phone: 367-3899 (home)
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[\[more information \(../JonesCV.html\)\]](#)

Teaching Assistant

Cheryl Lehman
Office: 3156 Foreign Languages Building
Office Hours: 9-10 AM, Monday and Wednesday
E-mail: ctrotter@students.uiuc.edu

Daily Assignments

Monday, January 14

* Introductions.

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| * Review of the syllabus. |
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| * Instructions for obtaining the readings, communications, etc. |
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| Wednesday, January 16 |
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| * An introduction to Rousseau, and particularly his views on inequality. |
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| * The reading assignment is his second discourse i.e., _The |
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Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men_.

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| Friday, January 18 |
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| * Continuing discussion of Rousseau, with special emphasis on his views |
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of natural law and politics.

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| * The reading assignment is a selection from his _Social Contract_. |
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| Monday, January 21 (Martin Luther King's birthday no class) |
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| Wednesday, January 23 |
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| * The completion of our discussion of Rousseau, with his views on |
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education and religion.

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| * The reading assignment is The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard |
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Vicar, from *Emile*.

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| Friday, January 25 |
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| * An introduction to Kant, beginning with his views on epistemology and |
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particularly the possibility of any philosophical proofs of the existence of God.

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| * The reading assignment is a selection from his _Critique of Pure |
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Reason_.

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| Monday, January 28 |
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| * Discussion of Kants ethics. |
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| * Students should read the selections from Kants _Groundwork of the |
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Metaphysic of Morals_ and *The Critique of Pure Reason*.

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| Wednesday, January 30 |
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| * Completion of our discussion of Kant, now focusing on his philosophy |
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of religion and his views on Christianity.

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| * The reading assignment is a selection from his _Religion within the |
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Limits of Reason Alone_.

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| Friday, February 1 (First Exam) |
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| * An introduction to Schleiermacher on religion and romanticism. |
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| * The reading assignment is the first speech of his _On Religion: |
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Speeches to its Cultured Despisers_.

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| Monday, February 4 |
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| * An introduction to Hegel, and particularly his philosophy of history |
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and philosophy of right.

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| * The reading assignment is a brief selection from his _Lectures on the |
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Philosophy of World History_.

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| Wednesday, February 6 |
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| * Discussion of Hegels philosophy of mind, alienation, and self- |
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consciousness.

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| * The reading assignment is a brief selection from his _Phenomenology of |
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Mind_.

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| Friday, February 8 |
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| * Completion of our discussion of Hegel, focusing on his philosophy of |
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religion.

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| * The reading assignment is a very brief selection from Hegels 1827 |
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Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion.

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| Monday, February 11 |
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| * Introduction to post-Hegelian writers on religion, beginning with |
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David Friedrich Strauss.

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| * The reading assignment is a selection from Strauss _Life of Jesus_. |
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| Wednesday, February 13 |
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| * Continuing discussion of post-Hegelian writers on religion, turning to |
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Ludwig Feuerbach and religious alienation.

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| * The reading assignment is a selection from Feuerbachs _Essence of |
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Christianity_.

Friday, February 15

* Introduction to the early works of Karl Marx.

* The reading assignment includes several short writings, including his

Introduction to a Critique of Hegels Philosophy of Right, his essay On the Jewish Question, his eleven Theses on Feuerbach, and a selection from The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844.

Monday, February 18

* Continuing discussion of Marx, turning to his theory of historical

materialism.

* The reading assignment is a brief selection from his book (written

with F. Engels), *The Germany Ideology*.

Wednesday, February 20

* Introduction to the Darwinian Revolution, beginning with a discussion

of the relationship between religion and science before Darwin.

* The reading assignment is the first three chapters of William Paleys

Natural Theology.

Friday, February 22

* Continuing discussion of the Darwinian Revolution, including its

consequences for religion and social theory.

* The reading assignment is the concluding chapter of Darwins
_Origin

of Species_.

Monday, February 25

* The first of three lectures on the French sociologist and
philosopher

Emile Durkheim.

* The reading assignment is the chapter on egoistic suicide and
religion

from his book, *Suicide*.

Wednesday, February 27

* The second lecture on Durkheim deals with the development of his

theory of primitive religion.

* Students should begin reading Chapter VII, Book Two, of _The

Elementary Forms of the Religious Life_.

Friday, March 1 (Second Exam)

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| * The third lecture on Durkheim deals with the implications of his |
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theory of primitive religion.

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| * Students should complete their reading of Chapter VII, Book Two, of |
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The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.

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| Monday, March 4 |
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| * The first of three lectures on the German sociologist and economist |
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Max Weber.

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| * Students should begin reading Part I of _The Protestant Ethic and the |
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Spirit of Capitalism_.

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| Wednesday, March 6 |
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| * The second of three lectures on the German sociologist and economist |
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Max Weber.

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| * Students should complete their reading of Part I of _The Protestant |
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Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism_.

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| Friday, March 8 |
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| * The third and final lecture on Weber deals with his larger theory of |
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the progressive rationalization of the West, particularly as concerned with religion.

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| * The reading assignment is his Social Psychology of the World |
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Religions.

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| Monday, March 11 |
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| * The first of two lectures on William James will deal with his |
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psychological theories and the origins of pragmatism.

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| * The reading assignment is the third lecture of his book on _The |
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Varieties of Religious Experience_.

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| Wednesday, March 13 |
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| * The second lecture on James deals with his pragmatic theory of |
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religion.

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| * The reading assignment is his essay, The Will to Believe. |
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| Friday, March 15 |
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| * This single lecture on John Dewey will continue with the development |
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of pragmatism and its application to our understanding of religion.

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| * The reading assignment is Dewey's <i>A Common Faith</i> . |
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| Monday–Friday, March 18–22 (Spring Break no classes) |
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| Monday, March 25 |
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| * The first of two lectures on Søren Kierkegaard will deal with his |
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anti-Hegelianism and the early development of his Christian existentialism.

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| * The reading assignment is the discussion of the Genesis account of the |
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Fall in his *Concept of Dread*.

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| Wednesday, March 27 |
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| * The second lecture on Kierkegaard deals with his mature work. |
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| * The reading assignment is his discussion of the Biblical account of |
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Abraham and Isaac in his *Fear and Trembling*.

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| Friday, March 29 (Third Exam) |
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| * The single lecture on Schopenhauer and philosophical pessimism, in |
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part as preparation for Nietzsche.

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| * The reading assignment is Chapter 49, The Road to Salvation, from |
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The World as Will and Representation.

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| Monday, April 1 |
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| * The first lecture on Nietzsche will deal with the development of his |
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early thought and especially his theory of tragedy.

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| * The reading assignment is the Attempt at a Self-Criticism, the |
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Preface to Richard Wagner, and Sections 1–9 of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

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| Wednesday, April 3 |
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| * The second Nietzsche lecture deals with his views on religion. |
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| * The reading assignment is the Foreword and Sections 1–38 of <i>The Anti-</i> |
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Christ.

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| Friday, April 5 |
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| * The first lecture on Freud will deal with his early life and the |
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development of psychoanalysis.

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| * The reading assignment is <i>On Dreams</i> . |
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Monday, April 8

* The second Freud lecture will deal with his views on religion and

civilization.

* The reading assignment is _The Future of an Illusion_.

Wednesday, April 10

* An introduction to Heidegger and the foundations of existentialism.

* The reading assignment is his essay, What is Metaphysics?

Friday, April 12

* An introduction to Sartre and existentialism.

* The reading assignment is his essay on The Humanism of

Existentialism.

Monday, April 15

* The first lecture on Tillich will deal with his early life and the

development of his thought.

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| * The reading assignment is the introduction and Chapters 1-3 of _The |
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Dynamics of Faith_.

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| Wednesday, April 17 |
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| * The second lecture on Tillich will deal in greater depth with his |
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theology and Christian existentialism generally.

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| * The reading assignment is Chapter 3-6 and the conclusion of _The |
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Dynamics of Faith_.

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| Friday, April 19 |
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| * An introduction to the early Wittgenstein. |
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| * The assignments consists of selected parts of the _Tractatus Logical |
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Philosophicus_.

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| Monday, April 22 |
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| * An introduction to the later Wittgenstein. |
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| * The reading assignment is a selection from his _Philosophical |
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Investigations_.

Wednesday, April 24

* The first lecture on MacIntyre will deal with his theory of the

incoherence of contemporary moral discourse.

* The reading assignment is chapters 1 and 14 of *After Virtue*.

Friday, April 26

* The second lecture on MacIntyre will deal with his theory of the

virtues and his notions of tradition and practice.

* The reading assignment is chapters 15-18 of *After Virtue*.

Monday, April 29

* The first lecture on Rorty will be an introduction to his pragmatist

critique of modern philosophy, and his distinction between metaphysicians and ironists.

* The reading assignment is his essay on Private Irony and Liberal

Hope.

Wednesday, May 1 ([Fourth Exam \(exams.html\)](#))

* The second lecture on Rorty and the last of the semester will deal

more specifically with his view of religion.

* The reading assignment is his essay on Pragmatism as Romantic

Polytheism.

Civility

One of the less attractive features of modern society has been the gradual decline of civility i.e., a respect for the feelings and interests of others, reflected in courteous, polite behavior. The more obvious and egregious manifestations of such behavior include loud talking in movie theatres, cell phone conversations during church services, phone solicitors calling during the dinner hour, and so on. Unfortunately, this kind of behavior has increasingly invaded the university classrooms and lecture halls e.g., students consistently wandering into class late and/or leaving early, making sufficient noise to disturb the concentration of other students, falling asleep in class (and occasionally snoring), and so on.

Let me be abundantly clear about this. While I recognize that one might occasionally, unavoidably be late to class, there is no excuse for repeated tardiness; and there is no excuse whatever for repeated early departures. Neither is there any excuse for falling asleep in class. If your studying the night before has left you exhausted and unable to stay awake, then there is no point in your coming to class in the first place. Those who violate the basic norms of civilized behavior will simply be asked to leave.

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