**Traditions:**

The two key notions around which this course revolves: notion of worldview & notion of humanism.

Philosophy has traditionally been divided into four major areas of investigation:

* **Logic** – the study of the correct rules of reasoning  
  Point: Good reasoning is key to analyzing worldviews and to support your own worldview
* **Epistemology –** the study of knowledge  
  Point: Facts are crucial in our understanding of worldviews
* **Ethics / Politics –** the study of right and wrong and how to organize social life  
  Point: Worldviews typically include significant ethical and political components
* **Metaphysics** – the study of the nature of reality  
  Point: Worldviews are primarily about what reality consist of, whether “reality” is understood in a philosophical, religious, scientific, political, etc., sense the term

**A Brief Overview of the History of Humanism**

*Humanism comes from Italian word “umanista” which referred to the “humanities”.*

Key moments in history of humanism:

Stage #1: The roots of humanism in ancient times (from the 6th century BC to the Roman Empire).

Key breakthroughs for the humanist tradition:

* The birth of philosophy – the passage from a mythological understanding of the world to rational/scientific one. (theme #1)
* The emergency of some skepticism cocerning the existence of Gods (theme #2)  
  Protagoras (490-420 BC): “Concerning the gods, I have no means of knowing wether they exist or not or what sort they may be, because of the obscurity of the subject, and the brevity of human life.”
* The possibility of leading a good and meaningful life without relying on Gods or supernatural explanations (themes #3, 4 and 6), for instance in a views such as Stoicism or Epicureanism.

Famour quote from Epicurus (341-271 BC): “Death does not concern us, because as long we exis, death is not here. And when it does come, we no longer exist.”

Stage #2: Renaissance humanism (1450-1600)

The renaissance, which means “rebirth,” is a social and intellectual movement which is important for the humanist tradition because it involved:

* A rediscovery of key humanist themes from Antiquity
* The rejection of scholasticism, the doctrine that prevailed during the Middles Ages
* Main breakthrough for the humanist tradition: A new focus – humans and their role in the universe and society
* Symbolic representation of this new movement: Leanardo da Vinci’s (1452-1519) The Vitruvian Man
* Giovanni Pico dela Mirandolla’s On the Dignity of Man (1486) is often seen as the manifesto of Renaissance humanism.  
  Key points of this quote:   
  The nature of humans, unlike that of animals, is not fixed.  
  This means that we have the ability and responsibility to make free choices.  
  Plus, humans are special and have a special role to play in worldly affairs.

Stage #3: The scientific revolution of the 17th century (humanist theme #1)

* Emergence of a purely mechanical/naturalistic conception of the world
* Inventon of many technologies
* Mathematics becomes the best tool to study the universe
* The new rules of knowledge: Logic, reason and evidence/experiment.

Stage #4: The enlightenment (the 18th century) – the Age of Reason

* First time in human history when science and philosohy become independent of religion
* Political revolutions that result in the birth of modern democracies which rest on a clear separation of church and state (humanist theme of secularism)

Stage #5: The Golden Age of Humanism – from the 19th century to the present day:

* Emergency of thinkers who are openy atheist: Karl Marx, Friederich Nietzche, Signmund Freud
* Emergence of moral theories designed to promote human happiness (e.g., utilitarianism)
* Science and religion conflict on many social and ethical issues

**The issues**

We will address four separate issues:

1. The mystery of the origin of the universe who or what caused the universe?
2. Is it justified to believe in God? Are there any rational grounds for that belief?
3. Why do people believe in God - what makes them believe in God?
4. What is the relationship between science and religion?

Definitions:

* What do we mean by “God”?: The three main characteristics of God in the three main monotheistic religions: Omniscience, omnipotence and supreme benevolence.
* Reminder – some key words in that context:   
  Theism  
  Deism  
  Atheism,   
  Agnosticism   
  Pantheism: nature is the universe which suggest something more divine. However no one created it.

**First issue: The mystery of the Origins of the Universe:**

Discussion based on the principle of sufficient reason – the principle that for everything that exists there must be an explanation of why it exists.

So the issue is: Who or what caused the universe to exist?

1. The scientific answer: The Big Bang  
   Big explosion 15 billion years ago whereby space and time were created.  
   Purely naturalistic explanation that answers the “how” question  
   Most scientists dismiss the “why” question in that context as unnecessary
2. The religious answer: The consomological argument  
   There must be a reason/purpose beyond the Big Bang as to why the universe exists

**Second issue: Are there Rational Grounds for Believing?**

Puzzle: The widespread evidence of “The Wonders of Nature” – that is, of “design” and “complexity”.

1. The religious answer  
   William Paley’s (1743-1805) watchmarker analogy  
   See the two forms of design argument on the hand-out
2. The scientific answer: The argument from evolution  
   Natural selection is the process that brought about all the phenomena of complex design  
   Father of that theory: Charles Darwin (1809=1882)  
   See the three conditions for evolution by natural selection to operate on hand-out

**Third issue: Why people do believe?**

1. The fear-of-the-unkown argument:  
   Religion was created to satisfy our curiosity and to explain the unexplained  
   Religion gives meaning/purpose/comfort to the life of individuals
2. The anthropological argument:  
   Religion was created to organize and regulate social life

Religion is a means of controlling the mob

* Lucretius (99-55 BC): ”Fear is the mother of all gods.”
* Karl Marx (1818-1883): “Religion is the opium of the people.”

Religion is a psychological necessity: people are naturally programmed to believe.

People are just downright irrational (Richard Dawkins, Steven Weinberg, Christopher Hitchens)

Religion is a safe boat – Blaise Pascal’s (1623-1662) wager