

**Phi 131: Intro to PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**  
**Fall 2011, 02A-4483**  
**MW 2-3:15pm, Humanities Hall 201**  
**Humanities, Arts, Performance with Writing**

**Dr. Mullen, Pierce Program in Religion**  
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**Office hours: Open**  
**Dr. Mullen's office location: Seney 115C**

### **Course Description**

Catalog description: **This course is an introduction to the central themes in the philosophy of religion, such as the nature of religious experience, the question of God's existence, and the relation of faith and reason.**

This writing-intensive course is designed to introduce the student to the discipline of philosophy as it relates to major issues of religion. We will examine the positions of major theological and philosophical writers on questions regarding religious belief, morality, defining God, arguments for and against the existence of God, the problem of evil, and human free will. The scholar using a philosophical approach to religion does not appeal to revelation or authoritative religious doctrine but instead to the logic, meaning and truth claims of religious revelation and doctrine. The course will equip the student with knowledge of traditional and contemporary arguments for and against many central theistic beliefs and with a conceptual framework in which to articulate one's own positions on the topics at hand.

### **Course Objectives**

It is not a course objective to alter any student's personal religious principles. The ultimate aim of the course is to neither glorify nor critique any one tradition but rather to equip you with an understanding of and skills in the study of philosophy of religion as an academic discipline. In short, the goals and objectives for you as a student in this course are:

- to familiarize yourself with traditional and contemporary arguments for and against many central theistic beliefs,
- to understand the positions of major theological and philosophical writers on questions regarding religious belief,
- to develop the ability to think critically about religious doctrine and religious presuppositions,
- to reflect analytically upon the methodologies and strategies employed in the philosophy of religion, and, of course,
- to develop further your critical skills as a thinker, reader, writer, and speaker within and beyond our academic study.

### **Readings**

Course textbooks (Available in the bookstore. Photocopied primary and other secondary readings may be made available in class or online.):

1. Louis P. Pojman and Michael Rea. *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*. 6th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2007 (ISBN-10: 0495095044 ISBN-13: 978-0495095040).
2. Brian Davies. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004 (ISBN-10: 0199263477 ISBN-13: 978-0199263479).

### **Course Requirements**

Students are expected to keep up with all readings and assignments and are encouraged to ask questions and suggest topics of discussion in class. **Class Attendance and Participation** is part of the final grade. Students will be called upon often and will be asked about the content of assigned readings. **Three Tests** and one **Exam** consisting of essay questions will measure the student's knowledge of the lecture and reading topics. **Three Reflective Analysis Papers** on topics of class study are required. The papers should be brief summaries and scholarly, critical analyses of issues, between 5 and 6 pages long, typed, double-spaced. One **Research-based Argument Paper** provides an opportunity to investigate one topic of the student's interest in greater depth.

Grades will be calculated according to the following:

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| Class Attendance and Participation, including Peer Reviews | 10%            |
| Tests I-III:   | 30% (10% each) |
| RA Paper I:  | 10%            |
| RA Paper II:   | 10%            |
| RA Paper III:  | 10%            |
| Research-based Argument Paper:                             | 10%            |
| Final Examination  | 20%            |

### **Attendance and Class Participation**

This grade includes a **Reading Summary Presentation**: Each week we will start with one or two of you presenting on that week's given reading assignments from Pojman and Rea (not Davies). Here you will give a brief summary of the main points discussed in the readings. Be concise as you only have ten minutes of talking time. Include in your presentation what you deem the highlights and vital points of the readings. The creation of an outline your classmates can follow is encouraged, and the use of technology for this purpose is always appreciated. Your peers will have a chance to comment on the accuracy of your presentation and make suggestions for improvement. You will also provide a discussion question for the class based on the material. With aid from the professor, you will lead class discussion on that topic for five to ten minutes after the oral presentation.

You must be present for class meetings in order to do well in the course. Assigned readings will be supplemented by in-class lectures, discussions, in-class writing exercises, and more. Class participation is part of the learning process. As it is also part of the final grade, there will be ample opportunity for it over the course of the semester. Apart from the lectures you will be involved in activities such as class discussion, group work with subsequent presentations, and in-class writing. I expect you to keep up with all readings and assignments and to get the notes for missed class sessions from your peers. I will call on you often and ask about the content of assigned readings, and you are strongly encouraged to ask questions and suggest topics for discussion in class on your own. You are allowed to be absent from a total of three (3) class sessions. With every additional absence your final grade for this class will go down 5%. This means you will have to plan ahead with your allowance of three absences. Talk to your professor ahead of time if you foresee any difficulties for yourself with this policy.

If a disability requires special circumstances for you in the classroom, taking notes, or taking tests or exams, please see the Office of Disability Services on campus for proper aid.

### **Reflective Analysis Papers**

These three short **papers** (5-6 pages, 12 pt TNR, double-spaced, one-inch margins) are meant as scholarly reaction and reflection opportunities on current course topics. The papers are also thus opportunities to better master the arguments and counter-arguments we study. You will reflect in a logical, mature, informed, and scholarly manner on one of the course reading topics. For each paper, you should not try to write on all options given but focus on one.

In your writing I will look for increasing use of terminology relevant to our course, exploration of relevant concepts, clear and accurate summary of the given issue, questioning that extends beyond class discussion, clarity of thought and writing, and informed attempts on your part to answer questions that arise from your interaction with the material. The criteria for grading the assignments are: a) evidence of mastery of material and informed voice, b) appropriate and relevant use of terms, concepts, examples, and scholarly sources c) coherent thesis, conclusion, argument and clear presentation of points, and d) depth of one's own scholarly engagement with the material. Late papers are not accepted. Submit papers via Safe Assign on Blackboard and in class in hard copy.

### **Research-based Argument Paper**

One longer, argument paper that employs secondary sources in research on a course topic or problem of the student's choice is also required. This paper should be between 8 and 10 pages long, typed, double-spaced (use 12pt font and one-inch margins). As this is a research paper at foundation, citations and a list of references are required. You have much freedom regarding this assignment. The project may focus on any argument, author, philosopher, theologian or issue relevant to our course. Your paper must not simply

summarize another author's argument or problem. It must exhibit the student's own skills in argument construction, be meaningfully explanatory and provide a helpful analysis and sound conclusion for the reader, as well. Succinctly state the problem you have chosen to explore, explain its contextual (historical, religious or other) significance, investigate possible solutions, and propose and argue convincingly for your hypothesis. You must carefully research previously published work on the topic in order to produce your own, thorough investigation.

In order to facilitate the writing process, there are four distinct activities and deadlines that you should meet. First, you should consult your professor for approval of your topic and for help in finding sources. You must have cleared your topic with me via email (not Safe Assign) **Monday, Sept. 26**. Second, around the middle of the semester you will write a progress report on your research to-date. It will provide a snapshot of your work and should include a brief description (no more than 300 words) of your research topic, findings so far, as well as any difficulties you have encountered. In addition, please attach an outline of your research paper and a bibliography of the works you are using or planning to use in your research. Internet sources other than those via the library online are strongly discouraged, as most are unscholarly; "wiki" encyclopedias are absolutely not allowed. Your progress report is due via email (not Safe Assign) **October 12**.

MLA style is suggested. Choose one style of citation, and be correct and consistent with it.

Third, you will work in assigned groups to critique each others' papers in helpful, constructive peer reviews. Provide a copy of the first draft of your research paper for each of your peer group members, on **Wednesday, November 2**. **Peer Reviews are due on Wednesday, Nov. 9 via Safe Assign and to your group members either in hard copy or electronic copy.** On Wednesday, Nov. 9 in class, peers will exchange thoughts and suggestions for improvement of the papers in order to allow you to revise your paper before submitting it to the professor. Please refer to the peer review handout found on Blackboard for guidelines on constructive critiques. Your professor will take part as much as possible in each group.

Fourth, submit the final draft on **Monday, Nov. 14**. Late papers are not accepted. Submit papers via Safe Assign on Blackboard and in class in hard copy.

### Online Tools

This course uses Blackboard tools including Safe Assign as well as readings and documents located there. If you have difficulty with Safe Assign, email your paper to emullen@emory.edu to avoid lateness.

### Academic Honesty

Finally, all students deserve an atmosphere of fairness, honesty and maturity. All of us at Oxford College live by the standards set forth in the Honor Code, which includes the "responsibility for maintaining standards of unimpeachable honesty in all academic work." The Honor Code also indicates that we cannot tolerate actions in others that violate this code, so we all are obligated to report violations. Penalties for violations are severe. Please read the Honor Code carefully, and ask questions if you have any confusion.

**Other:** Our classroom must provide an atmosphere of respect and hospitality for all. Some simple rules contribute to this productive environment.

Bring no food in the classroom. Silence your cell phones, and refrain from use. Phones must be off for tests. Lateness for class is counted as absence. Those wishing to use a notebook computer in class may do so but must sit in the front row. Out of courtesy, email your professor if you are missing class. Asking about course material is knowledge-building; demanding a grade to be changed is not. Discussion of course material is a civilized activity: questioning and disagreeing are encouraged; disrespectful language and behavior toward your neighbors are unacceptable. Submit your assignments in plenty of time before a final deadline; never wait until the last moment to print or upload.

At times the course material may be challenging in many ways beyond the intellectual for students; consider your choice of this course carefully and maturely.

**Schedule of topics and readings**

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|---|---|
| Week 1 (week beginning 8/24)            | <p>Introductions and class business</p> <p>Reading: Pojman and Rea, Preface and Part IA; Davies, Introduction - Chapter 2.</p>                          |
| Week 2 (week beginning 8/29)            | <p>Cosmological Arguments</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part II.B; Davies, Chap. 3.</p>  |
| Week 3 (9/7 Wed. only due to Labor Day) | <p>Teleological Arguments</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part II.C; Davies, Chap. 4.</p>  |
| Week 4 (week beginning 9/12)            | <p>Argument from Design</p> <p><b>Test I Wednesday</b></p>  |
| Week 5 (week beginning 9/19)            | <p>Ontological Arguments</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part II.A; Davies, Chap. 5.</p> <p><b>RA Paper I due Wednesday</b></p>                                  |
| Week 6 (week beginning 9/26)            | <p>Religious Experience</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part III; Davies, Chap. 6.</p> <p><b>Research Topics due Monday via email</b></p>                        |
| Week 7 (week beginning 10/3)            | <p>The Problem of Evil</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part IV; Davies, Chap. 10.</p>  |
| Week 8 (10/12 Wed. only due to break)   | <p>Attributes of God</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part I.B; Davies, Chap. 9.</p> <p><b>Progress Report due Wednesday via email</b></p>                        |
| Week 9 (week beginning 10/17)           | <p>Miracles</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part V; Davies, Chap. 11.</p> <p><b>Test II Wednesday</b></p>  |
| Week 10 (week beginning 10/24)          | <p>Immortality</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part VI; Davies, Chap. 13.</p> <p><b>RA Paper II due Wednesday</b></p>  |
| Week 11 (week beginning 10/31)          | <p>Faith and Reason</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part VII.B; Davies, Chap. 7.</p> <p><b>Draft of Research-based Argument Paper due to Peers Wednesday</b></p> |
| Week 12 (week beginning 11/7)           | <p>Justifying Faith</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part VII.A</p> <p><b>Peer Reviews due and Peer Review Day in class Wednesday</b></p>                         |
| Week 13 (week beginning 11/14)          | <p>Religious Pluralism</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part IX.</p> <p><b>Research-based Argument Paper due Monday</b></p> <p><b>Test III Wednesday</b></p>      |
| Week 14 (week beginning 11/21)          | AAR Meeting (no class) <b>Thanksgiving Break</b>  |
| Week 15 (week beginning 11/28)          | <p>Religion and Ethics,</p> <p>Pojman and Rea, Part X; Davies, Chap. 12.</p> <p><b>RA Paper III due Wednesday</b></p>                                   |
| Week 16 (12/5 Monday only)              | Review for Final. Reading Day December 7.   |
| Exam Week                               | <b>Final Exam: Friday, Dec. 9, 9:00am - noon.</b>   |