



Natural Theology East and West



Course Description

Is there a God? Are there reasons to believe or not to believe in a God?

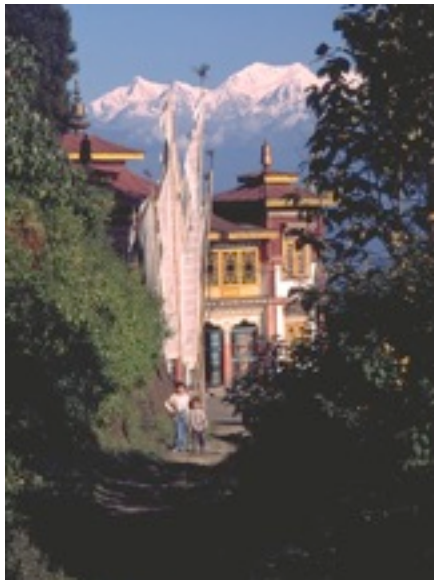
This course surveys and at the same time evaluates arguments for and against the existence of God in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, along with arguments for Brahman (Hinduism) and Emptiness (Buddhism). The course takes a global point of view, comparing arguments proffered originally in Arabic, for example, with medieval arguments expressed in Latin and with a collection of arguments originally expressed in Sanskrit.

We will examine the primary atheistic arguments in the West from Epicurus through Bertrand Russell and in India principally from a philosopher of the eighth century named Kumarila Bhatta.

We will also consider differing concepts of God. An important Buddhist argument purports to prove the Buddha's omniscience. But the Buddhist idea of omniscience differs from the mainstream view of God's omniscience in the West.

Our main focus throughout the course will be on the strengths and weaknesses of each argument. We will examine passages from a wide variety of thinkers, including Aristotle, Epicurus, Paul, Augustine, Kumarila Bhatta, al-Farabi, ibn Sina (Avicenna), Anselm, Udayana, al-Ghazali, ibn Rushd (Averroes), Aquinas, Keśava Miśra, Gangesa, Descartes, Leibniz, Paley, Hume, and Gödel, as well as some contemporary articles illuminating the structure of the arguments.





8/29 Natural Theology and Theodicy

Hinduism and Buddhism: Yoga, Reason, and Self-Experience

8/31 **Hinduism: Core Texts**—Upanishads

9/5 **Buddhism: Core Texts**—Buddha, First Sermon, *Majjhima-Nikaya*, Questions to King Milinda

9/7 **Yoga, Reason, and Self-Experience**—*Brahma-Sutra*, *Yoga-Sutra*, Nagarjuna, *Fundamentals of the Middle Path*



9/10 **Plato**—Plato, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Laws*; Philo, selections

9/12 **Aristotle**—Aristotle, *Physics*; *Metaphysics*; Proclus, *Elements of Theology*

9/14 **Paul**—Acts 17:16–34; Daniel Bonevac, “Pauline Arguments for God’s Existence”

Arguments from Religious Experience

9/17 **Meditation and Yogic Powers**—Stephen Phillips, *Yoga, Karma, and Rebirth*; Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*

9/19 **Mystical Experience**—William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*

9/21 **The Sense of the Divine**—Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*; Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*

9/24 **The Argument from Miracles**—David Hume, “On Miracles,” *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

9/26 **The Argument from Miracles**—Richard Swinburne, “Miracles”

9/28 **The Argument from Miracles**—Daniel Bonevac, “The Argument from Miracles”

The Cosmological Argument

10/1 **The Kalam Argument**—Avicenna, *On the Nature of God*; Aquinas, *Summa*

10/3 **The Kalam Argument**—Al-Ghazali, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*; Averroes, *Incoherence of the Incoherence*

10/5 **The Kalam Argument**—William Lane Craig, “The Kalam Cosmological Argument”

10/8 **Arguments from Design**—William Paley, *Natural Theology*

10/10 **Arguments from Design**—David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

10/12 **Arguments from Design**—Robin Collins, “God, Design, and Fine-Tuning”



The Teleological Argument

10/15 **Arguments from Design**—Nyaya

10/17 **Arguments from Design**—Gangesa

10/19 **Midterm Exam**

The Ontological Argument



10/22 **Anselm**
—
Anselm,
Proslogion
10/24 **Descartes**
—René

Descartes,

Meditations

10/26 **Critiques and Modern Versions**—Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*; Robert Kane, “The Modal Ontological Argument”

10/29 **Contemporary Ontological Arguments**—Kurt Gödel, “Ontological Proof”

10/31 **Indian Ontological Arguments**—Yoga-sutra-bhashya, Shreeharsha

11/2 **Anselm**—Anselm, *Monologion*

The Problem of Evil

11/5 **The Problem of Evil**—Epicurus; Hume

11/7 **The Problem of Evil**—Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy*

11/9 **The Problem of Evil**—Augustine, *Confessions*, *Enchiridion*; David Griffin, “Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil”

11/12 **Theodicy**—Kumarila

11/14 **Theodicy**—Shankara

11/16 **Theodicy**—Aurobindo; Phillips, “God’s Last World”

Normative Arguments

11/26 **Moral Arguments**—Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*

11/28 **Axiological Arguments**—Robert Nozick

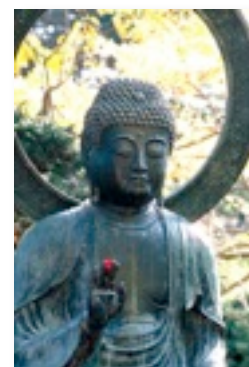
11/30 **Moral Arguments**—Alvin Plantinga, “Two Dozen (or so) Theistic Arguments”

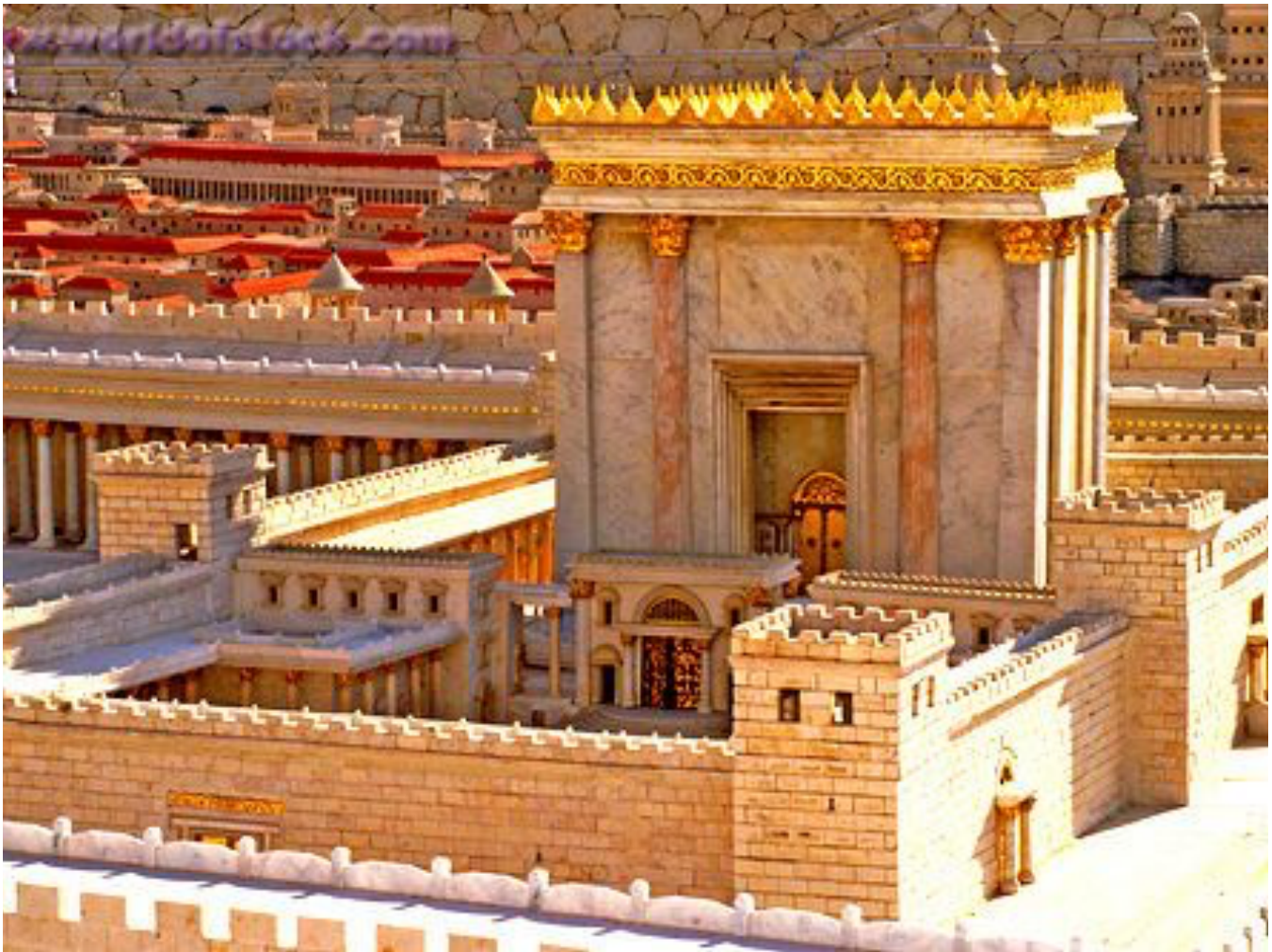
12/3 **Moral Arguments**—Alvin Plantinga, “Two Dozen (or so) Theistic Arguments”

12/5 **Criteriological Arguments**—Stephen Phillips, “The Criteriological Argument”, Udayana

12/7 **Intelligibility Arguments**—Daniel Bonevac, “The Putnamian Argument, (O) The Argument from Reference, and (P) The Kripke-Wittgenstein Argument from *Plus* and *Quus*”

12/10 **Final Exam**





Policies

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Out of respect for your fellow students, please do not use cell phones in class.

You may use computers for note taking in class. You should know, however, that research shows that students who write notes by hand remember and understand the material much

better than those who type their notes.

Grades in this class use plusses and minuses in accord with University policy. The general pattern: A: 93–100; A–: 90–93; B+: 87–90; B: 83–87; B–: 90–83; etc.

Please review safety and evacuation procedures in case of an emergency. If you will need assistance in such a circumstance, please let us know in advance.

University of Texas Honor Code

“As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of

the University and uphold academic integrity.”

Your papers must be your own work. You must not use material without citing your sources.

UT’s Academic Honesty Policy can be found at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

For more on how to avoid plagiarism, see

http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint_plagiarism.php

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/index.html>.

<http://philosophical.space/theology>



Requirements

We will base the grade in this course on four things:

A midterm exam	20%
A final exam	20%
An 8-10-page paper	40%
Attendance	20%

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam on October 19 will consist of a variety of short-answer questions, asking you to define key terms, explain key quotations, and summarize key arguments. You should bring a blue book to class.

Final Exam

The final exam on the last day of class will consist of some short-answer and essay questions. Your answers must be your own work. You should bring a blue book to the exam.

Term Paper

Your term paper, 8 to 10-pages in length (or about 2500 words) and due December 13, should discuss one particular version of one argument. It may be of any of these kinds:

a **historical** paper: What did X really mean? What is Y's argument for p? To make this interesting, you must discuss something controversial.

So, you should disagree with at least one commentator.

a **critical** paper: X argues that p. But that argument fails, because.... You

shouldn't just repeat someone else's criticisms. Be original.

a **defensive** paper: X criticizes Y's argument that p on the ground that q. But Y's argument survives X's criticism, because....

an **analytical** paper: If you examine X's argument that p, you

see that it has this structure, and rests on some assumptions....

Advance beyond what we've done in class, or what someone has done in an article. Be original!

a **comparative** paper: If you compare X's argument that p to Y's, you see that the crucial difference between them comes down to W, which reveals something important about X's argument....

a **synthetic** paper: If you take some elements of X's argument that p, and combine it with some aspects of Y's argument, together with some highly original ideas of my own, you

get a much better argument, namely....

In general, you should refer to at least one contemporary philosopher. But don't just repeat their arguments. Google Scholar (scholar.google.com) is your friend!





Resources

Religious holidays will be respected in accordance with University policy.

Students with **disabilities** may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone).

The **Sanger Learning Center** helps more than one-third of UT undergraduate students each year to improve their academic performance. All students are welcome to take advantage of the Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic

coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

The **University Writing Center** offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing, foster their resourcefulness and increase their self-reliance. <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

The **Counseling and Mental Health Center** provides counseling, psychiatric

consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students' academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Student Emergency Services:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

ITS helps with technology: <http://www.utexas.edu/its/>

Libraries <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/>

Canvas help: <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials>