

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION (7AAN2071)

SPRING 2023

Instructor:	Dr. Zita Toth	Office:	Philosophy building, 709
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Course Description. In this course, we will look at the most important classical problems in the Philosophy of Religion, from both a historical and a contemporary perspective. We will consider how thinkers thought about religious belief in general; about whether we can meaningfully talk about God; about whether God exists, and if so, what characteristics God may have. We will also look at the problem of evil and the connection (if any) between religion and morality.

Expectations and Assignments.

Attendance and in-class participation: Conversation is essential to philosophy. Everyone, even if they are bored or shy or anxious is expected to participate in the seminar. To prepare for the class, when you do the assigned readings, make notes about: (1) the main thesis or idea of the reading; (2) the main argument (if any); (3) the main examples the reading uses to illustrate the point; and (4) any questions or remarks you have about the reading.

Presentation: Everyone will be expected to give a short response to one of the readings for the class. If you cannot be there for your response presentation, please let me know in advance so that we can make arrangements.

Formative assessment: A written response paper to one of the first few readings for the class. **Due: 28 February.**

Summative assessment: A research paper on a topic of your choice, ca. 3500 words. Detailed guidelines will follow. **Due: 26 April.**

Electronic devices: While you may use your computer to take notes and have the readings at hand, you should be aware that according to plenty of research, electronic note-taking and reading on screen adversely affects deep understanding. Thus, students are strongly encouraged to use analog means instead.

Plagiarism: If you use or copy a source without properly citing it, whether this act is intentional or not, you commit plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of stealing. It is very easy to detect, and will result in your automatic failure of the course.

Lateness: Late assignments will not be considered unless for very serious reasons. If you have such reasons, please let me know as soon as you can.

Special Accommodations: Students with special needs requiring accommodations should please get in touch with Student Services Disability Support (disability@kcl.ac.uk) as soon as possible.

Tentative Schedule of Readings. The schedule is tentative, but we will make every reasonable effort to stick to it unless major reasons dictate otherwise. All the readings will be made accessible to students once enrolled. Many of the readings can be also found in *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide and Anthology*, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Week 1, 17/01: Philosophy and religion; the rationality of religious belief

- Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* I.3–7
- Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”

Week 2, 24/01: Talking about God

- Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, chs. 52–58
- Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, ch. 2

Week 3, 31/01: Arguments for God’s existence 1: The ontological argument

- Anselm, *Proslogion*, chs. 1–5
- Gaunilo’s reply to Anselm’s argument

Week 4, 07/02: Arguments for God’s existence 2: The cosmological argument

- Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.2.3
- Rowe, “The Cosmological Argument”

Week 5, 14/02: The practical argument: Pascal’s wager

- Pascal, *Pensées*, 233
- Martin, “Pascal’s Wager as an Argument for Not Believing in God”

21/02: Reading week (no class)

Week 6, 28/02: Divine attributes 1: Divine simplicity

- Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I.3
- Morris, “Simplicity”

Week 7, 07/03: Divine attributes 2: Divine omniscience

- Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, book V
- Pike, “Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action”

Week 8, 14/03: The problem of miracles

- Hume, “Of miracles” (*Enquiry*, sec. 10)
- Swinburne, *The Concept of Miracle*, ch. 3

Week 9, 21/03: God and evil

- Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* III.10; *De malo* 3.1–2
- Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism”

Week 10, 28/03: Religion and morality

- Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* V–VIII
- Nielsen, “Ethics without Religion”