

PHI 341: PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

[Semester][Year]

Time and Location: TBA

Instructor: **Paul Prescott PhD**
Office: 541B Hall of Languages
Office Hours: TBA
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REQUIRED TEXT

- Chad Meister, *The Philosophy of Religion Reader* (Routledge, 2007). ISBN: 0415408911

The required text is available for purchase at the University Bookstore in the Schine Student Center. Additional readings will be made available for download on Blackboard.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Philosophy and Religion is an introduction to the major problems and issues at the intersection of philosophy and religion. Topics include the nature of religion; the problems of religious pluralism and diversity; the nature of ultimate reality; arguments for and against the existence of God; faith and reason, science and religion; the philosophical challenges posed by religious experience; and the problem of evil and the human condition.

Readings are from both contemporary and historical sources. Significant attention will be paid to non-Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions and perspectives.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be four short papers, and a final exam. Regular attendance and participation are expected.

Papers [4 pages each]: Topics and guidelines will be provided as the semester progresses.

Final Exam: The final exam will cover all the material in the course, and will primarily consist of short answer questions.

Attendance and Participation: *Regular attendance, preparation, and participation are expected.* Students are expected to read prior to class, and to participate in classroom discussions throughout the semester. A significant proportion (20%) of your final grade will be based on regular attendance and participation.

GRADING INFORMATION

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

First Paper:	15%
Second Paper:	15%
Third Paper:	15%
Fourth Paper:	15%
Final Exam:	20%
Attendance and Participation:	20%

I use a standard grading scale:

A	= 94-100%	B	= 84-87%	C	= 74-77%
A-	= 90-94%	B-	= 80-84%	C-	= 70-74%
B+	= 87-90%	C+	= 77-80%	D	= 60-70%

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Laptops and Cell Phones: Close your laptops and silence your cell phone while class is in session.

Make-up Exams: Family emergencies and illnesses are the only excuses for missed exams. In order to receive a make-up exam, you must provide documentation.

Late Papers: Late papers will be marked down by 1/3 a letter grade per day late. For example, a paper that would receive a 'B' handed in on time will receive a 'C+' handed in two days late.

Blackboard: Course information and course materials will be available on Blackboard, SU's online learning system. To access the Blackboard website, go to <http://blackboard.syr.edu> and use your Syracuse NetID username and password to log in.

Academic Integrity: The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy will be enforced. The Syracuse policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete University policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

Special Accommodations: If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located at 804 University Avenue, room 309, or call 315-443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue "Accommodation Authorization Letters" to students with documented disabilities as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: *Philosophy and Religion*

Reading: Griffiths: Religion (online)

Week 2: *Religious Pluralism and Diversity*

Reading: Hick: Religious Pluralism and the Pluralistic Hypothesis
 Ward: Truth and the Diversity of Religions
 Plantinga: A Defense of Religious Exclusivism

Week 3: *The Nature of Ultimate Reality*

Reading: Avicenna: God's Nature and Knowledge
 Maimonides: Divine Simplicity, Negative Theology, and God-Talk
 Ramanuja: God as Infinite, Personal, and Good

Week 4: *The Nature of Ultimate Reality*

Reading: Shankara: Brahman is All
 Laozi: The Dao
 Jayatilke: Nirvana is Ultimate Reality

FIRST PAPER

Week 5: *Cosmological Arguments*

Reading: Aquinas: The Classical Cosmological Argument
 Craig: The Kalam Cosmological Argument
 Mackie: A Critique of Cosmological Arguments

Week 6: *Teleological Arguments*

Reading: Paley: The Classical Design Argument
 Behe: A Recent Intelligent Design Argument
 Hume: A Critique of the Design Argument

Week 7: *Ontological Arguments*

Reading: Anselm: The Classical Ontological Argument
 Kant: A Critique of the Ontological Argument
 Hartshorne: A Recent Ontological Argument

Week 8: *Nontraditional Arguments*

Reading: Copan: The Moral Argument
 Feuerbach: Religion as Projection
 Moreland: The Noölogical Argument

SECOND PAPER

Week 9: Faith and Reason

Reading: Clifford: The Ethics of Belief
Clark: Without Evidence or Argument (online)
Pascal: The Wager

Week 10: Science and Religion

Reading: Plantinga: Naturalism and Science
Dennett: Science and Religion
Nagel: Mind and Cosmos (online)

Week 11: Religious Experience

Reading: James: Mysticism
Freud: Religious Ideas as Wish Fulfillments
Geivett: The Evidential Value of Religious Experience

THIRD PAPER

Week 12: The Self and the Human Condition

Reading: Augustine: The Fallen Self
Nietzsche: The Noble Human Being
Suzuki: Karma and the Self in Zen Buddhism

Week 13: The Problem of Evil

Reading: Rowe: The Problem of Evil
Hick: A Soul-Making Theodicy
Plantinga: A Free Will Defense

Week 14: The Problem of Evil

Reading: McCord Adams: Horrendous Evils
Surin: Against Theodicy (online)
Kalupahana: Suffering – A Buddhist Perspective

Week 15: FOURTH PAPER
FINAL EXAM

RESOURCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Marilyn Adams & Robert Adams (eds.), *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford, 1990).
- Louise Antony (ed.), *Philosophers Without Gods: Meditations on the Secular Life* (Oxford, 2007).
- John Bowker, *Why Religions Matter* (Cambridge, 2015)
- Steven Bullivant & Michael Ruse (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism* (Oxford, 2013).
- John Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy, and Human Value* (Cambridge, 2005).
- John Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion: Towards a More Humane Approach* (Cambridge, 2014).
- William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. Centenary Edition (Routledge, 2002).
- Mark Johnson, *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry* (Princeton, 2009).
- Philip Kitcher, *Life after Faith: The Case for Secular Humanism* (Yale, 2014).
- Chad Meister, *Introducing Philosophy of Religion* (Routledge, 2009).
- Thomas V. Morris (ed.), *God and the Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason* (Oxford, 1994).
- Daniel L. Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion* (Oxford, 2014).
- Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Fortress, 1995).
- William L. Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction*, fourth ed. (Wadsworth, 2007).
- Charles Taliaferro & Paul J. Griffiths (eds.), *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology* (Blackwell, 2003).
- Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited* (Harvard, 2002).
- William J. Wainwright, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford, 2005).

