

PHILOS 1850

Introduction to Philosophy of Religion

Place: McPherson Lab 1041

Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:10–12:30

Instructor: Eric de Araujo

Office: University Hall 214

Email: dearaujo.3@osu.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:40–2:20

Texts & Materials

Required Textbooks:

- *Exploring Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd Edition, Steven M. Cahn (EPR)
- *Science and Religion: Are they Compatible?*, Daniel C. Dennett and Alvin Plantinga (SR)

You will read several philosophy texts in this course. Most of them are in the EPR anthology. We will end the course by reading the SR text. There is a schedule of readings below. There might be reasons to change the readings. If I add readings outside the texts, they will be posted on Carmen.

Bring either text to class when appropriate. You will want a notebook with which to take notes. As mentioned below, you are not allowed to use laptops to take notes.

Course Description

This is an introduction to some of the issues in Philosophy of Religion. For reasons we will discuss in class, the issues will mostly be limited to those related to monotheistic religions (especially Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and within the analytic philosophy tradition. These issues include attributes of the divine, arguments for and against God's existence, and the relationship between the natural and the supernatural. I want you to leave the course with an understanding of how these issues fit into the broader field of Philosophy of Religion. You will examine and critique philosophical views, and learn how to develop and articulate your own. I also want you to be better positioned to represent and analyze arguments, whether they be of a religious or general nature.

Course Goals & Objectives

A. You will be able to contribute to philosophical debates by:

Constructing an original argument, identifying the main conclusion of others' arguments, identifying the support given for a conclusion, evaluating the arguments of others, situating issues within the field of Philosophy of Religion, communicating philosophical views to others, and anticipating and defending views from objections.

B. You will understand what some of the main issues in Philosophy of Religion are and what some of the arguments for positions within the debate are by:

Articulating arguments for some main positions within debates about divine attributes, arguments for and against God's existence, and the relationship between the natural and supernatural.

And by situating issues within the broader field of Philosophy of Religion, communicating philosophical views to others, and explaining why philosophical debates about religion are relevant in contemporary society.

C. You will recognize why there is philosophical debate concerning religion by:

Explaining the implications of views, relating views to issues you find important, explaining why others have written on these issues, and explaining why philosophical debates about religion are relevant in contemporary society.

D. You will be able to comprehend and critique others' views by:

Identifying the main conclusion of others' arguments, identifying the support given for a conclusion, evaluating the arguments of others, representing the logical structure of arguments, and determining what evidence is relevant to a conclusion.

This course meets the *General Education Goal and Expected Learning Outcomes* for “Cultures and Ideas” in the following ways:

E. (*General Education Goal*) “Students [will] evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; and interpretation and evaluation” by:

Evaluating the arguments of others, situating issues within the broader field of Philosophy of Religion, explaining the implications of views. explaining why others have written on these issues, and explaining why philosophical debates about religion are relevant in contemporary society.

- F. (*General Education Outcome*) “Students analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression” by”

Situating issues within the field of Philosophy of Religion, explaining the implications of views, explaining why others have written on these issues, and explaining why philosophical debates about religion are relevant in contemporary society.

- G. (*General Education Outcome*) “Students evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior” by:

Evaluating the arguments of others, explaining the implications of views, and situating issues within the field of Philosophy of Religion.

Schedule

Here is the schedule we hope to follow. The first table lists the topics and associated readings. You should read the material before the first day of discussion. Reading reflections can only be turned in on *the first day* we discuss that reading. The second table lists when major assignments are due and when quizzes will occur. The schedule is subject to change and I will communicate changes via email or using Carmen.

Schedule of Readings

Topic	Subtopic	Reading	Read By
Overview of Philosophy of Religion & Arguments		“What is Reason?” in EPR	1/12
Divine Attributes	Goodness	“God and Goodness” & “A Modified Divine Command Theory” in EPR	1/17
	Omnipotence	“Some Puzzles Concerning Omnipotence” & “The Logic of Omnipotence” in EPR	1/19
	Forgiveness and Love	“God and Forgiveness” & “God as Lover” in EPR	1/31
	Ontological	“The Ontological Argument” & “The Ontological Argument: A Critique” in EPR	2/2
		“The Ontological Argument: A Reassessment” in EPR	2/14
	Cosmological	“The Five Ways” & “The Cosmological Argument” in EPR	2/16

Arguments for and against God's Existence		"The Cosmological Argument: A Critique" in EPR	2/21
		"The Kalam Cosmological Argument" in EPR	2/23
	Teleological	"The Evidence of Design" & "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (II, V–VII)" in EPR	2/28
		"The Argument from Design" & "Darwin and Design" in EPR	3/7
	The Problem of Evil	"Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion" & "Hume on Evil" in EPR	3/9
		"The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism" in EPR	3/23
		"Why God Allows Evil" & "Knowledge, Freedom, and the Problem of Evil" in EPR	3/28
The Natural and the Supernatural	Miracles	"Miracles as Evidence Against the Existence of God" & "Do Miracles Occur?" in EPR	4/4
	Science and Religion	Chapters 1 & 2 of SR	4/11
		Chapters 3 & 4 of SR	4/13
		Chapters 5 & 6 of SR	4/18

Schedule of Assignments

Date	Major Assignment Due	Goals
1/12	Find an Argument	A, D
1/17	Critique an Argument	A, D
1/19	Reflection on Religion	C
2/9	Essay 1 Draft	A, B, D
	Peer Review	D
2/14	Quiz 1	B, G
3/2	Essay 1 Revision	A, B, D
3/9	Quiz 2	B, G
4/6	Essay 2 Draft	A, B, D
	Peer Review	D

4/20	Quiz 3	B, G
	Course Reflection	C, E, F, G
Exam Week	Essay 2 Revision	A, C, D

Grading

<i>Argument Practice</i>	8%	<i>Reading Reflections</i>	10%
<i>Find an Argument</i>	4%	<i>Minimum of 9 (otherwise only the 9 highest scores are counted)</i>	
<i>Critique an Argument</i>	4%	<i>Quizzes</i>	18%
<i>Essays</i>	48%	<i>Quiz 1</i>	6%
<i>Draft of Essay 1</i>	3%	<i>Quiz 2</i>	6%
<i>Draft of Essay 2</i>	3%	<i>Quiz 3</i>	6%
<i>Peer Review of Paper 1</i>	3%	<i>Reflection Papers</i>	6%
<i>Peer Review of Paper 2</i>	3%	<i>Reflection on Religion</i>	3%
<i>Revision of Essay 1</i>	18%	<i>Course Reflection</i>	3%
<i>Revision of Essay 2</i>	18%	<i>Participation</i>	10%

Course Mechanics

I have planned the course to begin with some basic philosophical and argumentative skills and build up to the point where you can make your own philosophical contributions. We will look at several debates in Philosophy of Religion as we go. Here are some of the ways we will do that:

Argument Practice

In the first few weeks I want you to become comfortable with reading, summarizing, and critiquing arguments. We will have several in class activities and homework assignments that will give you practice with these skills.

Discussion

Doing philosophy is like having a conversation on a topic with a lot of people. This makes in-class discussion a great way to practice doing philosophy. Discussion is an opportunity for you to ask questions about the reading, offer your own views and criticisms, and respond to the views of your peers. My job is to make the views we are looking at clear to the class and to facilitate a dialogue between you, your peers, and the philosophers we are reading.

I want everyone to grow more comfortable contributing to our in-class discussions. Trying out your ideas with your peers helps improve them. I will offer several ways for you to participate. These will range from large discussions with the whole class to conversations with a partner. In an effort to give everyone an opportunity to participate, I am open to trying different things so that everyone can make a contribution. Again, please contact me if there are any concerns about your contributions to the class.

Reading Reflections

Our discussions in class will be based on the readings we have for each topic. Your contributions to the discussion will be improved by having done the reading before class. To help ensure you are prepared for our discussions, you will write short reflections on the readings prior to class. You will need to complete these reflections for 10 of the readings. Expectations will be communicated in class and on Carmen.

Essay Drafts, Peer Review, & Revisions

Much of the dialogue in philosophy today is done through publishing papers. I want you to be able to contribute to the philosophical dialogue by writing your own papers. Like the revision process in academic publishing, we will have a revision process with the papers you write for this course. You will bring a draft of your paper to class and provide feedback on another student's draft in class. Additionally, I will give you feedback on your drafts. That way you will have a chance to respond to this feedback in the final paper you turn in. More information will be provided during the course.

Quizzes

You will not be able to write an essay about all the issues we cover in the course. However, I want you to leave the course with an understanding of the main positions in the debates we read about. These in-class quizzes are designed to see how well you comprehend the views we cover. I will provide more information on what the quizzes will look like. Additionally, I will provide a list of terms and topics to help you review for the quizzes.

Reflection Papers

In addition to the personal significance religion has for many, it is hard to overstate its impact in human history. I hope your understanding of religion and its impact is deepened by understanding some of the philosophical issues related to religion. There are two writing assignments designed to allow you to explore the relationship between the philosophical issues we discuss and religion more broadly. At the beginning of the course you will write about what (if any) importance religion or discussion of religion has for you. At the end of the course you will reflect back on the issues we discussed and write about what you have learned from these discussions. More details about these papers will be given in class.

Office Hours

Office hours tend to be an underutilized resource (unless something is due soon). You are welcome to come and chat about anything related to the course or even philosophy in general. Office hours can be a good way to clear up misconceptions and better understand how you are doing in the course. I will make an effort to find a time to meet if you cannot make it to the scheduled times.

Policies

Discussion

One reason philosophy is interesting is because people disagree. If our in-class discussions are good, then you will be disagreeing with each other. However, this does not mean that discussions need to become especially *heated* or make people *personally uncomfortable* (though I welcome intellectual discomfort). All participants should respect one another and treat each other as intellectual peers whose views are worthy of consideration. In doing this, we should remember to critique people's *views* and not people *themselves*.

If there are participants who threaten the cooperative atmosphere of the class I will limit their participation appropriately (even if that means asking them to leave the class session). Please contact me if something occurs during discussion that I did not address. I want us to wrestle with difficult texts and ideas, but I do not want anyone attacking others personally.

Attendance

Class time is an opportunity to better understand the text we are working with, to ask questions, try out your ideas, and learn from your peers. If this is true, then attending class will help you do well in the course. Additionally, it is not possible to participate in the course without attending. Because of this, I will keep track of attendance. Merely showing up to class is not enough to participate, but poor attendance does indicate a lack of participation.

There are days when showing up is *very important*. These include days of quizzes or days when we peer review. The only opportunity to make these sorts of things up will be cases in which the absence was *unavoidable* and *verified*. If you find yourself in this situation, notify me as soon as possible and provide appropriate documentation.

Accommodations

I want everyone to be able to do philosophy. To that end, I will accommodate students who have a documented disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) and have registered with Student Life Disability Services. Please meet with me privately as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester to discuss the accommodations that will be implemented. If you have not already registered, please contact SLDS at 614-292-3307 or slids@osu.edu as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity

As far as I can tell, the opportunities for academic misconduct are during quizzes and when writing your papers. I assume you understand what it means to complete a quiz without cheating. In philosophy courses, a common breach of academic conduct on a paper is plagiarism. This includes copying another's work or failing to appropriately attribute an idea to someone. These issues will be explained further when we begin writing papers. However, you are responsible for understanding and adhering to the University's policies on academic misconduct found in the University's Code of Student Conduct. Further, I am *obligated* to report instances where I suspect academic misconduct to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM). If COAM determines that you have committed academic misconduct, the consequences can be severe. Please contact me if you are unsure about what this means or have any questions.

Here are some relevant resources on the matter:

- The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages: <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html>
- Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity: <http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.html>
- Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity: <http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/cardinal-rules.html>

Technology

Unless I explicitly say otherwise (for instance, in the case of providing learning accommodations), no technological devices (laptops, tablets, phones, etc.) should be out or in use during class. Unless you inform me of an urgent need to receive a call, phones and other notifying devices should be on silent during class. Failure to adhere to this policy can affect your participation grade.