

Introduction to Philosophy of Religion PHIL5300

Fall 2018

Tuesday 2:00 a.m.-4:50 p.m.

Bunyan 203

Professor: Dr. Robert B. Stewart

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Seminary Mission Statement

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

Course Description

A philosophical examination of the fundamental religious beliefs and concepts of Christian theism. Lectures and readings address classical and contemporary perspectives on the relationship of faith and reason, arguments for the existence of God, religious experience, the nature and persistence of evil, miracles, death and immortality, the nature of religious language, and issues related to postmodernism, pluralism, and the New Age worldview. The course constitutes a call to intellectual reflection and accountability in relation to issues of ultimate concern to Christian faith.

Core Values Addressed

The course will address the core value of *Doctrinal Integrity* and *Mission Focus* directly and *Spiritual Vitality* indirectly. Reflection on the philosophical issues is intimately related to reflection on the nature of God, Scripture, Christian faith, evangelism, and the doctrine of Creation. For the Christian, philosophy is ultimately a matter of loving God with the mind (Matthew 22:37-40).

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will read broadly on issues in philosophy of religion.
2. Students will become familiar with issues related to philosophy of religion by completing course assignments.
3. Students will demonstrate the ability to think philosophically by completing Philosophy of Religion worksheets.

Class Policies

Late Work will be penalized 10 points per office day up to 5 days. No assignment may be submitted after 5 office days without prior permission of the professor.

Grades will be assigned on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale.

The final grade will be determined accordingly:

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Quiz Average | 15% |
| Book Review | 20% |
| Worksheet #1 | 30% |
| <u>Worksheet #2</u> | <u>35%</u> |
| | 100% |

Borderline Grades will be determined by the numerical grade received, unless the professor's subjective evaluation of the student's promptness and faithfulness in class attendance, positive attitude and contribution in class discussions, and preparedness and attentiveness in class warrants special consideration.

Course Requirements

1. Philosophy of Religion Worksheets. Students will complete 2 worksheets of not less than 22 pages nor more than 30 pages in length (1 inch margins, 12 Times New Roman or comparable font) over assigned questions related to course reading and lectures. Students may cite other sources where appropriate. Citations from the primary sources (Brian Davies or Melville Stewart or Gregory Ganssle) are to be parenthetical, while other sources are to be documented in footnotes according to Turabian. **Worksheets are to be submitted to the professor IN CLASS on the due date. Late worksheets will be penalized 10 points per office day late. No worksheet more than 5 office days late will be accepted.**

Here is a rough guide to paper grades.

A Paper: Demonstrates a *superior* grasp of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, and presents very good, clear, and thoughtful arguments, with very few, if any, significant grammatical and/or form and style problems.

B Paper: Demonstrates a *good* grasp of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, presents an argument that exhibits good reasoning, with minimal significant grammatical and/or form and style problems.

C Paper: Demonstrates an adequate though perhaps limited understanding of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, mixed with a significant number of incorrect claims, presents weak arguments, contains significant grammatical or structural problems.

D Paper: Demonstrates significant misunderstandings of factual matters, uses poor logic or fallacious reasoning (if any) to argue points (e.g., merely makes a series of unconnected assertions), fails significantly with respect to technical specifications.

F Paper: Failure to submit a paper, a paper that commits plagiarism, or a paper that presents no argumentation.

2. Quizzes will be given over the course lectures and assigned readings in the primary text. They will be graded in class. One or more quiz grades will be dropped. **Under no circumstances will any quiz ever be given in advance or as a make-up!**

3. Book Review. Students are required to write a book review on one of the optional texts for the class during the semester. The review must be of a book listed by the instructor for reading reviews unless the instructor has approved another book. Reviews may be written over the optional texts. The review should include: (1) biographical data concerning the author; (2) an identification of the major elements of content; (3) an assessment of the author's aim or purpose; (4) an evaluation of the degree of its fulfillment; and (5) a critical evaluation of the book *which includes some documented research on the general topic*. Students should cite the work of others in the critique section. Guidelines for research papers are given in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th edition. A thorough review should be in the neighborhood of 8-12 pages. **Book reviews are to be submitted to the professor IN CLASS on the due date. Late book reviews will be penalized 10 points per office day late. No book review more than 2 office days late will be accepted.**

4. Reading Inventories listing all required and optional reading done for the course will be due with the final worksheet. Failure to read all assigned readings will result in a decrease in the final score for the course.

Extra Credit

Extra Credit may be earned in one of five ways. All extra credit will be added to the final grade.

(1) Defend 2018 Apologetics Conference. Students may earn a full letter grade increase in their grade (except for low failing grades) by registering and attending the conference, which runs from January 8-12, 2018. Students may also take some NOBTS courses through the conference.

(2) Additional Reading. Extra credit may be earned for significant reading over and above the class assignments within the field. Consideration will be given not only to the amount but also to the quality of material read. **No extra credit will be given for additional reading if all the assigned readings have not been read.**

(3) Special Events sponsored by various NOBTS divisions may also be considered for extra credit with the approval of the professor. **Registering and attending the SW Regional ETS/EPS meeting (Friday afternoon parallel papers and Saturday plenary) will earn students 6 points.**

(4) *Critiquing Movies*. Extra credit may be earned for critiquing movies that have particular issues related to philosophy or philosophy of religion. See professor for more information.

The maximum amount that a student may receive for any single activity is 3 points. Students will not be given credit for more than 2 extra credit activities (6 points total).

Textbooks

Required

Brian Davies, *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide and Anthology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003.

Robert B. Stewart, *Can Only One Religion Be True?: Paul Knitter and Harold Netland in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.

Optional

Mortimer J. Adler, *Truth in Religion: The Plurality of Religions and the Unity of Truth*. NC: Touchstone, 1990.

Stephen M. Barr, *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith*. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.

James Beilby, *For Faith and Clarity: Philosophical Contributions to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.

Philip Clayton, *Religion and Science: The Basics*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

William Lane Craig, *The Only Wise God: the Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge & Human Freedom*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1999.

Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea, *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Garrett DeWeese, *God and the Nature of Time*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.

Millard J. Erickson, *Truth or Consequences: The Promise and Perils of Postmodernism*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002.

Millard J. Erickson, *What Does God Know and When Does He Know It? The Current Controversy over Divine Foreknowledge*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

Jeremy A. Evans, *The Problem of Evil: The Challenge to Essential Christian Beliefs*. B&H Studies in Christian Apologetics. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013.

Mark Foreman, *Prelude to Philosophy: An Introduction for Christians*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013.

Gregory Ganssle, *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*. New York: Oxford University Press,

2001.

- Gregory Ganssle, *Thinking about God: First Steps in Philosophy*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Paul M. Gould and Richard Brian Davis, *Four Views on Christianity and Philosophy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Meghan Griffith, *Free Will: The Basics*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Douglas Groothuis, *On Jesus*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2002.
- Michael Hanby, *No God, No Science: Theology, Cosmology, Biology*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017.
- Tim Labron, *Wittgenstein's Religious Point of View*. London and New York: Continuum, 2006.
- C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.
- Michael L. Peterson, *God and Evil: An Introduction to the Issues*. Boulder: Westview, 1998.
- Michael C. Rea, *Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology: Volume 1: Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Michael C. Rea, *Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology: Volume 2: Providence, Scripture, and Resurrection*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Charles Taliaferro and Chad Meister, *The Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

***Other Optional Texts**

- Michael Loux, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- E. J. Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Alister McGrath, *A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2009.
- Alister McGrath, *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell-Wiley, 2008.
- J. P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds, *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- Alan G. Padgett, *God, Eternity, and the Nature of Time*. Reprint. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2002. St. Martin's, 1992.
- James Sennett, and Douglas Groothuis, eds. *In Defense of Natural Theology: A Post-Humean Assessment*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005.
- James Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Robert B. Stewart, *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.

Robert B. Stewart, *The Quest of the Hermeneutical Jesus: The Impact of Hermeneutics on the Jesus Research of John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008.

Robert B. Stewart, *The Future of Atheism: Alister McGrath and Daniel Dennett in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.

Robert B. Stewart, *Intelligent Design: William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.

Robert B. Stewart, *God and Cosmology: William Lane Craig and Sean Carroll in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016.

Charles Taliaferro, *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998.

Charles Taliaferro, *Dialogues About God*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009.

*Not on text request order—bookstore may or may not have these books, and generally will not have them in the section with other optional texts. Nevertheless, students may review these books without seeking professor's permission.

| UNIT 1: KNOWING AND DEFENDING GOD: PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND APOLOGETICS; LOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR BELIEF IN GOD | | | |
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| CLASS SESSION | DATE | CLASS DISCUSSION TOPIC | READING ASSIGNMENT |
| 1.1 | 8/21 | Introduction to the Course, What Is Philosophy of Religion? | |
| 1.2 | | What Is Philosophy of Religion? | |
| 2.1 | 8/28 | Introducing Logic | |
| 2.2 | | Logic; Abductive Reasoning | |
| 3.1 | 9/4 | The Use of Reason in the Christian Life; Faith and Reason | |
| 3.2 | | How Do We Know That We Know What We Think We Know? | |
| 4.1 | 9/11 | Representative Approaches to Epistemology | |
| 4.2 | | Worldviews | |
| 5.1 | 9/18 | Metaphysics/Ontology | Book Reviews Due |
| 5.2 | | Representative Approaches to Ontology/Metaphysics | |
| 6.1 | 9/25 | Atheism Defined and Critiqued | |
| 6.2 | | Atheism Critiqued | |
| 7.1 | 10/2 | The Value and Nature of Arguments for God's Existence | Worksheet #1 Due |

| CLASS SESSION | DATE | CLASS DISCUSSION TOPIC | READING ASSIGNMENT |
|----------------------|-----------------|---|---------------------------|
| 7.2 | | Arguments for God's Existence Arguments for God's Existence | |
| 8.1 | 10/9 | The Problem of Evil Introduced | |
| 8.2 | | The Problem of Evil | |
| | 10/15-19 | Fall Break | |
| 9.1 | 10/23 | Attributes of God | |
| 9.2 | | Attributes of God | |
| 10.1 | 10/30 | Science and Christianity | |
| 10.2 | | Science and Christianity | |
| 11.1 | 11/6 | Miracles | |
| 11.2 | | The Resurrection of Jesus | |
| 12.1 | 11/13 | Pluralism and the Uniqueness of Christ | |
| 12.2 | | Pluralism, Relativism and Other Religions | |
| | 11/19-23 | Thanksgiving Break | |
| 13.1 | 11/27 | The Mind-Body Problem | |
| 13.2 | | Life After Death | |
| 14.1 | 12/4 | Miscellaneous | |
| 14.2 | | Miscellaneous | |
| | | Final Worksheet Due at Final Exam Time | |