



NEW ORLEANS
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



LEAVELL
COLLEGE

Philosophy of Religion: PHIL5301-01/6000 **Theology and History Division**

Spring2021 (H293)

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Note: Please contact Casey Evans for all Blackboard-related questions and me for all content-related questions. ALWAYS include your name, Student ID, and Course Code (PHIL5300-01/6000) in every email.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A philosophical examination of fundamental religious beliefs and concepts with primary focus on the claims and warrants of Christian theism. Lectures and readings address classical and contemporary perspectives on the relationship of faith and reason, the nature of religious language, arguments for the existence of God, religious experience, the nature and persistence of evil, miracles, death and immortality, and the relationships of Christianity and other religious traditions. The course constitutes a call to intellectual accountability in relation to issues of ultimate concern to Christian faith. Prerequisite: None.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of the semester, the student will:

1. The student will examine and assess key concepts and issues in philosophy and synthesize their connection with Christian thought.
2. The student will explain and defend intellectually responsible answers to objections to the Christian faith.
3. The student will demonstrate robust critical thinking skills and logical argumentation through research and writing.

COURSE TEXTS

The following textbooks are required:

(PACI)—Dew, James K., Jr., and Paul M. Gould, *Philosophy: A Christian Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019. ISBN: 9780801097997

(PRSR)—Peterson, Michael, et. al, *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 5th Edition. Oxford, ISBN: 9780199303441 (*If you get a different edition of this text, it is YOUR job to secure and read any selections not available in your edition.*)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Quizzes (20% of final grade).** Quizzes are over the lectures and the readings. There is almost always at least 1 quiz per week, but often there are 2 per week. All quizzes are cumulative, so you will need to stay fresh on everything. There are 27 total quizzes and there are no make-ups, even for excused absences. The lowest 4 quiz grades will be dropped. All quizzes are open-note, but closed book. You may, however, take as many notes from the readings as you like and use those notes in the quizzes, but you may not use the books in the quizzes. Each quiz is only open for 5 minutes so be ready and studied up!

Reading quizzes are for the reading of that week, due before class starts on Thursday. Lecture quizzes are for the lecture material covered the week before, due before class starts on Thursday.

2. **Exams (each exam 20% of final grade, 40% total).** Exams will be given over material from the lectures and assigned reading. Exams consist of multiple choice, true/false, matching, and/or short essay. Like the quizzes, everything is cumulative. Like the quizzes, they are open note, but closed book. Again, feel free to take notes from the readings as you read. You may use whatever notes you take for the exams, but you may not keep the books open.
3. **Attendance and Participation (15% of final grade).** In addition to the lectures and readings for the course, students are expected to be present at all class meetings each week and engage with the lecture material. Students who are “present” in the discussion but do not participate will receive very little credit for that session. I EXPECT YOU TO ASK QUESTIONS!

There will also be a single discussion forum available in Blackboard for all students in the course. Students registered for the Flex option of the course are required to ask at least 3 questions throughout the semester and engage with other students in the course. On-campus students are also welcome and encouraged to participate in this discussion forum.

4. **Position Paper (20% of final grade).** Students will write a 10-12 page position paper dealing with one of the topics covered in the course. The student will write a paper expressing her/his position on that issue. It is imperative that the student (1) clearly states his/her position and (2) clearly makes a case for his/her position in the paper. Higher grades will be given to those papers that incorporate some research and demonstrate clear argumentation. See rubric on Blackboard for more details and for due date.
5. **Book Review (5%).** Students will write a 5-page book review of one of the books listed below. Students should spend no more than 1 page summarizing the book. The remaining 4/5 pages of the review should critically interact with the content of the book. Please see the book listing below, appended to this syllabus, for a list of books available for the book review.

GRADING SCALE

A: 93 – 100

B: 85 – 92

C: 77 – 84

D: 70 – 76

F: below 70

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week		Lecture	Reading	Assignments
1	January 21	Lecture 1: What is Philosophy of Religion?	Reading 1: PACI, p. 1-10; PRSR Dennett (p.10-17), Trig (p. 21-26)	Quiz: Reading 1
2	January 28	Lecture 2: Reason and Argumentation		Quiz: Week 1 Lecture
3	February 4	Lecture 3: Faith and Reason	Reading 3: PACI, p. 57-71; PRSR Aquinas (p. 96-99), Kierkegaard (p.120-124)	Quiz: Week 2 Lecture Quiz: Reading 3
4	February 11	Lecture 4: Religious Language Lecture 5: Religious Epistemology	Reading 4: PACI, p. 11-14, 15-25; PRSR Alston (p. 52-58), Martin (p. 68-78)	Quiz: Week 3 Lecture Quiz: Reading 4
5	February 18	Lecture 6: Miracles	Reading 5: PACI, p. 190-205; PRSR Hume (p. 465-471), Swinburne (p. 479-483)	Quiz: Week 4 Lecture Quiz: Reading 5 Book Review Due
6	February 25	Lecture 7: Cosmological Arguments Lecture 8: Teleological Arguments	Reading 6: PACI, p. 163-177; PRSR Craig (p. 161-169), Paley (p. 177-179), Hume (p.180-186)	Quiz: Week 5 Lecture Quiz: Reading 6
7	March 4	Lecture 9: Ontological Arguments Lecture 10: Moral Arguments	Reading 7: PRSR Anslem (p. 133-134), Gaunilo (p.)134-137, Lewis (p. 197-200)	Quiz: Week 6 Lecture Quiz: Reading 7
8	March 11	Lecture 11: Argument from Experience	Reading 8: PACI, p. 116-130; PRSR Plantinga (p. 207-216), Pargetter (p. 217-222)	Quiz: Week 7 Lecture Quiz: Reading 8
	March 18	Spring Break		
9	March 25	Lecture 12: Argument from Meaning		Midterm due on

				Blackboard (3.28) Quiz: Week 8 Lecture
10	April 1	Lecture 13: Problem of Evil	Reading 10: PACI, p. 178-179; PRSR Rowe (p. 365-373), Plantinga (p. 338-356)	Quiz: Week 9 Lecture Quiz: Reading 10
11	April 8	Lecture 14: Problem of Hell Lecture 15: Divine Hiddenness	Reading 11: PRSR Hume (p. 317-323)	Quiz: Week 10 Lecture Quiz: Reading 11
12	April 15	Lecture 16: Trinity	Reading 12: Article on BB	Quiz: Week 11 Lecture Quiz: Reading 12
13	April 22	Lecture 17: Life after Death	Reading 13: PACI, p. 144-162; 206-221; PRSR Swinburne (p. 497-505); Dew Articles (On BB)	Quiz: Week 12 Lecture Quiz: Reading 13 Paper Due
14	April 29	Lecture 18: Omniscience Lecture 19: Omnipotence	Reading 14: PRSR Pike (p. 250-255), Aquinas (p. 244-246), Mavrodes (p. 247-249)	Quiz: Week 13 Lecture Quiz: Reading 14
15	May 6	Lecture 20: Doubt and Uncertainty	Reading 15: PACI, p. 40-56;	Quiz: Week 14 Lecture Quiz: Reading 15
16	May 13	Lecture 21: Religious Diversity Questions or Discussion	Reading 16: PACI, p. 223-254; PRSR Hick (p. 614-621), Rahner (p. 606-613)	Final Exam due on Blackboard

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

1. Attendance Policy: NOBTS follows the attendance policy as stated in the NOBTS catalog.
2. Policy for Late Submissions: There are no make up quizzes or exams. Students are given very large windows of time before the close of quizzes and exams. Students may turn papers in up to two weeks late of the due day, with a letter grade and a half per week they are late.

3. Plagiarism Policy: A high standard of personal integrity is expected of all NOBTS students. Copying another person's work, submitting downloaded material without proper references, submitting material without properly citing the source, submitting the same material for credit in more than one course, and committing other such forms of dishonesty are strictly forbidden. *Although anything cited in three sources is considered public domain, we require that all sources be cited.* Any infraction may result in failing the assignment and the course. Any infraction will be reported to the Dean of Graduate Studies for further action.
4. Classroom and Online Decorum: Each student is expected to demonstrate appropriate Christian behavior. The student is expected to interact with other students in a fashion that will promote learning and respect for the opinions of the others in the course. A spirit of Christian charity is expected at all times. Electronic devices should be used only for classroom purposes as indicated by the professor.
5. Special Needs: If you need accommodations for a disability, please set up a meeting with the professor for consideration of any modifications you may need.
6. Emergency Plan: In the event the NOBTS schedule is impacted due to a natural event, go to the seminary's website for pertinent information. Class will continue as scheduled through the Blackboard site. Please note announcements and assignments on the course's Blackboard site.
7. Technical Assistance:
For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:
 - Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
 - BlackboardHelpDesk@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Blackboard Learning Management System NOBTS.Blackboard.com.
 - ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for general technical questions/support requests.
 - www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.
8. Help for Writing Papers at "The Write Stuff"
NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY (Not for Book Review!)

- Corduan, Winfried. *No Doubt About It: The Case for Christianity*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997. ISBN 0805416471.
- Reese, William L. *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought*. Expanded ed. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996. ISBN 1573926213.
- Audi, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Bush, L. Russ, III. *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991. ISBN 0310518210.
- Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy*. Vol.1, *Greece and Rome*. Westminster, MD: Newman, 1959.
- Craig, Edward, ed. *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: 1998.
- Edwards, Paul, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York: Macmillan, 1967.
- Gaarder, Jostein. *Sophie's World—A Novel About the History of Philosophy*. Translated by Paulette Møller. New York: Berkley Books, 1991. ISBN 0425152251.
- Honderich, Ted, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Lavine, T. Z. *From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophic Quest*. New York: Bantam Books, 1984. ISBN 0553251619.
- Roth, John, ed. *World Philosophers and Their Works*. 3 vols. Pasadena: Salem Press, 2000.
- Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972. ISBN 0671201581.
- Sahakian, William S., and Mabel Lewis Sahakian. *Ideas of the Great Philosophers*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966. ISBN 1566192714.
- Windelband, Wilhelm. *A History of Philosophy*. Vol.1, *Greek, Roman, and Medieval*. New York: Harper & Row, 1958.

Recommended Books to Review

- Evans, C Stephen. *Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account*. Reason and Religion Series. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1998.
- Feinberg, John S. *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil*. rev. and expanded ed. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004.
- McCall, Thomas H. *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010.
- McCann, Hugh J. *Creation and the Sovereignty of God*. Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.
- Morris, Thomas. *Our Idea of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991.
- Nagasawa, Yujin. *Maximal God: A New Defence of Perfect Being Theism*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Plantinga, Alvin. *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Stump, Eleonore. *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Ward, Keith. *The Evidence for God: The Case for the Existence of the Spiritual Dimension*. London, England: Daron, Longmann and Todd Ltd., 2014.
- Williams, Clifford. *Existential Reasons for Belief in God: A Defense of Desires and Emotions for Faith*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011.