



Philosophy of Religion: PHIL 5300-Online
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Theological and Historical Division
Spring 2023 Online

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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.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the semester, the student will:

1. Examine and assess key concepts and issues in philosophy and synthesize their connection with Christian thought.
2. Explain and defend intellectually responsible answers to objections to the Christian faith.
3. Demonstrate robust critical thinking skills and logical argumentation through research and writing.

Required Textbooks

(PACI) Dew, James K., Jr., and Paul M. Gould, *Philosophy: A Christian Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-801-09799-7

(PUT) Allen, Diogenes, and Eric O. Springstead, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, 2nd Ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-664-23180-4

(READER) Allen, Diogenes, and Eric O. Springstead, eds. *Primary Readings in Philosophy for Understanding Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992. ISBN: 978-0-664-25208-3

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Quizzes (20%)

Quizzes cover the lectures and the readings. There are typically two quizzes per week. All quizzes are cumulative, so you will need to stay fresh on all the content on a weekly basis. There are 30 total quizzes and the lowest 5 quiz grades will be dropped. All quizzes are open-note, but closed book. You may 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 prepared! Your 25 highest quiz grades will count for **20%** of your overall grade.

2. Discussion Forums (15%)

An essential part of the philosophical process is ‘dialectic’ – the practice of asking one another good questions in pursuit of truth and wisdom. In a typical classroom setting, dialectic happens verbally and face-to-face; our predominantly on-line class requires that we foster robust interaction in Discussion Forums on Canvas. To pursue the goals of critical thinking, community building, and philosophical examination, then, we will host a major Discussion Forum question each week of the semester. The Discussion Forum will be open from Monday through Saturday. The Forum will have a prompt – typically a couple of open-ended questions that are intended to provoke reflection, clarity in thought, and precise articulation. Each student will be required to post: (1) A personal response to the Forum prompt by **Friday night**; and (2) Critical interactions with two classmates’ Forum posts by **Saturday night**. Your initial Forum post should follow a “2x4” model: at least two paragraphs long, with at least four sentences in each paragraph. Responses to classmates will be at least 150 words, and should engage with the content and provide meaningful feedback (i.e., please don’t say “this is a good point” or “I agree” or “well said” – ENGAGE the ideas).

3. Analytical Book Review (15%)

Students will write an analytical review of one of the books listed in the Selected Bibliography (last page of syllabus). Book reviews will be 1500-2000 words in length, formatted in Turabian style. Your book review should be approximately half summary, half analysis. That is, spend the first half of your book review articulating the purpose, structure, and primary contours of the book; spend the second half evaluating the book, adjudicating how successful the author(s) has been at accomplishing their goals and persuading their readers. The book review is due **Saturday, February 25 @ 11:59 P.M.**, and will be submitted via Canvas. A grading rubric for your Book Review is posted on the Canvas book review assignment page. Your book review is worth **15% of your total grade**.

4. Position Paper (25%)

An essential part of growth as a Christian philosopher is articulating and defending positions on crucial topics and questions. To pursue such growth, each student will be required to write a philosophical position paper on a topic of particular interest to you which we have discussed (or will discuss) this semester (e.g., What is truth? Can we know anything? Does science provide privileged knowledge? Are miracles possible? Do humans have free will? Do we have souls? Is there life after death? Does God exist? If God is good, why is there evil?).

Your position paper must be between 2000-2500 words (five – eight full double-spaced type-written pages), *excluding* title page, footnotes, and bibliography. I give you a broad word count to aim for; hence, there are significant penalties for papers that are either too short or too long. The position paper is **due electronically (submitted via Canvas) by 11:59 P.M. on Saturday, April 15**, and is worth **25%** of your final grade. The paper will be graded on Research; Writing Style; Thesis & Structure; and Argument. *See the grading rubric in Canvas for more details.*

5. Final Exam (25%)

A comprehensive final exam will be given, and will cover material from the lectures and assigned reading. The final exam will consist of multiple choice, true/false, matching, fill-in-the-blank, and/or short essay questions. Like the quizzes, the final exam is 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. The final exam will be timed (90 minutes), and will be open from 8:00 A.M. on Monday, May 8 until 11:59 P.M. on Tuesday, May 9. Ensure that you find an uninterrupted 90-minute window of time to complete the final exam! The final is worth **25% of your final grade.**

Summary of Graded Assignments

Quizzes	top 25 of 30	20%
Discussion Forum Participation	15 @ 1%/ea	15%
Analytical Book Review	February 25	15%
Philosophical Position Paper	April 15	25%
Comprehensive Final Exam	May 8-9	25%

GRADING SCALE

- A: 93 - 100
- B: 85 - 92
- C: 77 – 84
- D: 70 – 76
- F: below 70

COURSE OUTLINE

All weekly assignments (quizzes, exams, written assignments) are due by Saturday at 11:59pm. For example, quiz on Lecture 1 will close at January 21, 11:59pm CT.

Week	Lecture	Reading	Assignments	
1	UNIT 1 January 17-21	Lecture 1: Presocratic Philosophy Lecture 2: Classical Philosophy (Plato) Lecture 3: Classical Philosophy (Aristotle)	Reading 1: PUT: Ch. 1-3 (p. 1-64); READER: Plato (p. 1-38), Aristotle (p. 39-58)	Quiz: Lectures 1-3 Quiz: Reading 1
2	January 23-28	Lecture 4: Postclassical/Early Medieval Philosophy Lecture 5: Late Medieval Philosophy	Reading 2: PUT: Ch. 4-6 (p. 65-112); READER: Aquinas (p. 98-110)	Quiz: Lectures 4-5 Quiz: Reading 2
3	January 30 – February 4 *Dr. Anderson out of country Jan 30 – Feb 9 with limited/no internet access	Lecture 6: Renaissance/Reformation Philosophy Lecture 7: Early Modern Philosophy	Reading 3: PUT: Ch. 7-9 (p. 113-168); READER: Descartes (p. 111-139), Locke (p. 140-152), Kant (p. 172-209)	Quiz: Lectures 6-7 Quiz: Reading 3
4	February 6-11 * things should run smoothly; if issues arise, please be patient!!!!!!	Lecture 8: Later Modern Philosophy Lecture 9: Enlightenment/Postmodern Philosophy	Reading 4: PUT: Ch. 11-12 (p. 187-230); READER: Heidegger, Gadamer (p. 248-280)	Quiz: Lectures 8-9 Quiz: Reading 4
5	UNIT 2 February 13-18	Lecture 10: Worldviews Lecture 11: Reason & Critical Thinking	Reading 5: PACI, p. 57-71	Quiz: Lectures 10-11 Quiz: Reading 5
6	February 20-25	Lecture 12: What is Epistemology? Lecture 13: What is Knowledge? Lecture 14: What Makes a Thing True?	Reading 6: PACI, p. 11-25	Quiz: Lectures 12-14 Quiz: Reading 6 Book Review DUE Sat., Feb. 25

7	February 27 – March 4	Lecture 15: What is Revelation and Do We Have It? Lecture 16: Reformed Epistemology Lecture 17: Intellectual Virtues	Reading 7: PACI, p. 26-56, 72-88	Quiz: Lectures 15-17 Quiz: Reading 7
8	March 6-11	Lecture 18: What is Metaphysics pt. 1 Lecture 19: What is Metaphysics pt. 2 Lecture 20: Is reality Physical or Nonphysical?	Reading 8: PACI, p. 89-103	Quiz: Lectures 18-20 Quiz: Reading 8
	March 13-18	SPRING BREAK	NO READING	NO ASSIGNMENTS
9	UNIT 3 March 20-25	Lecture 21: Universals and Particulars/Accidentals and Essentials Lecture 22: How do Things Change and Persist?	Reading 9: PACI, p. 104-130; READER: Aristotle (p. 59-82)	Quiz: Lectures 21-22 Quiz: Reading 9
10	March 27 – April 1	Lecture 23: What is Free Will and Do We Have It? Lecture 24: What is Middle Knowledge? Lecture 25: What is Philosophy of Religion?	Reading 10: PACI, p. 131-143	Quiz: Lectures 23-25 Quiz: Reading 10
11	April 3-8	Lecture 26: Are Humans Bodies or Souls? Lecture 27: Can We Survive Death pt. 1 Lecture 28: Can We Survive Death pt. 2	Reading 11: PACI, p. 144-162; 206-221	Quiz: Lectures 26-28 Quiz: Reading 11

12	April 10-15	Lecture 29: Cosmological/Teleological Arguments Lecture 30: Ontological Arguments Lecture 31: Moral Arguments	Reading 12: PACI, p. 163-177; READER: Anselm/ Aquinas (p. 83-97)	Quiz: Lectures 29-31 Quiz: Reading 12 Term Paper DUE Sat April 15
13	UNIT 4 April 17-22	Lecture 32: Miracles pt. 1 Lecture 33: Miracles pt. 2	Reading 13: PACI, p. 190-205; READER: Hume (p.153-171).	Quiz: Lectures 32-33 Quiz: Reading 13
14	April 24-29	Lecture 34: Problem of Evil pt. 1 Lecture 35: Problem of Evil pt. 2 Lecture 36: Problem of Evil pt. 3	Reading 14: PACI, p. 178-179	Quiz: Lectures 34-36 Quiz: Reading 14
15	May 1-6	Lecture 37: Divine Hiddenness Lecture 38: Metaethics Lecture 39: Normative Ethics	Reading 15: PACI, p. 223-254	Quiz: Lectures 37-39 Quiz: Reading 15
	May 8-9	FINAL EXAM – 90-minute open-notes, closed-book final exam on Canvas. Exam will be open (available) from 8AM on Monday until 11:59PM on Tuesday.		FINAL EXAM

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

1. Attendance Policy: Students are expected to engage regularly with course content through the learning management system and other course delivery methods. Students who fail to participate consistently in course activities may receive a grade of “F” for the course.
2. Policy for Late Submissions: All late work (quizzes as well as written assignments) will receive an automatic penalty of 20%. Late work must be turned in no later than the final day of classes (May 3), and late written assignments will receive less substantive feedback. Note: Exams **must** be taken within the prescribed window – there will be no late exams permitted, regardless of circumstance.
3. Plagiarism Policy: A high standard of personal integrity is expected of all Leavell College 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. Writing Assistance: NOBTS maintains a Writing Center (“The Write Stuff”) designed to improve students’ English writing skills. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a stronger writer.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Technical Assistance: For general NOBTS technical help, go to www.NOBTS.edu/itc/Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu Website with access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.
Canvas.NOBTS.com Click on the “Help” button for technical questions/support requests regarding the Canvas System. You can also email questions to Canvas@nobts.edu.
ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for general technical questions/support requests.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY (Appropriate Book Review Texts have an *asterisk)

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Bush, L. Russ, III. *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991.

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*Davis, Stephen T. and Eric T. Yang. *An Introduction to Christian Philosophical Theology: Faith Seeking Understanding*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020.

*Evans, C Stephen. *Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account*. Reason and Religion Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998.

*Feinberg, John S. *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil*. rev. and expanded ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.

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*McCall, Thomas H. *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2010.

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*Nagasawa, Yujin. *Maximal God: A New Defence of Perfect Being Theism*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017.

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*Ward, Keith. *The Evidence for God: The Case for the Existence of the Spiritual Dimension*. London, England: Daron, Longmann and Todd, 2014.

*Williams, Clifford. *Existential Reasons for Belief in God: A Defense of Desires and Emotions for Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011.