

Date prepared: 1/22/14

Syllabus
The University of New Orleans
Dept. of Philosophy

PHIL 3480: Philosophy of Religion (3 credits)

SECTION 476 & 585: Online

Contact
Information

Instructor: Dr. Clarence Mark Phillips
Office: UNO: LA 391
Office Hours: MWF 1-2; T-Th 11-1 (and by appointment)
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Email: cmphilli@uno.edu (add 'PHIL 3480' to subject line)
Course Webpages: [Moodle](#) login page

Texts

Required:
Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, & Basinger, eds., *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings* (3rd ed.), Oxford University Press, 2007. ISBN: 0-19-518829-2

Recommended:
Hugo Bedau - Thinking and Writing about Philosophy and/or
Zachary Seech - Writing Philosophy Papers (on reserve in the UNO Library)

Course Description

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: A systematic study of such issues as implications of religious experience, attempted proof of the existence (or nonexistence) of God (or gods), the problem of divine foreknowledge, and the problem of evil.

COURSE OVERVIEW: Religion has always played a major part in the lives of human beings. Many claim that we have been religious as long as we have been conscious of ourselves as mortal creatures. And every culture in history seems to have had a system of belief that one could categorize as religious. In modern times, religious belief has undergone a series of transformations in order to accommodate both the scientific revolution and rise of new technologies. As a result, the role of religion in people's lives today is in many ways different from what it was in the past. But while people may not as actively profess their religious convictions, the vast majority of us still claim to be religious or spiritual. However, it is often unclear just what each person means when they make such claims. The object of this course will be to figure out what different people understand by such terms as "religion," "spirituality," or even "God". In short, we will be trying to figure out just what religion is, why people engage in it, and whether or not it is something about which one can have actual knowledge.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- to recognize philosophical issues
- to know the various subfields of philosophy and the sorts of questions dealt with by philosophers in those areas.
- to identify certain important figures in the history of religious thought in the West.
- to define key concepts in the domains of philosophical and theological thought.
- to understand the philosophical problems associated with religious belief.
- to understand the distinction between “is” and “ought,” and the domains of science and religion.
- to understand the problem of evil.
- to understand the reasons behind the separation of church and state.
- to present and to defend your own views regarding the issues above.
- to read philosophical texts.
- to recognize philosophical issues.
- to lead philosophical discussions.
- to write an analytical text-based argumentative essay.
- to have a clear sense of the applicability of religious thoughts to contemporary concerns.
- to be better at assessing the strengths and weakness of the arguments used to support or refute specific claims in the study of religious belief.

Grades will be based on a 100 point scale distributed as follows:

Requirement		Final grade	
Exam 1	(30%) 30 points	A	100 – 90 points
Exam 2	(30%) 30 points	B	89 – 80 points
Essay	(30%) 30 points	C	79 – 70 points
Participation	(10%) 10 points	D	69 – 60 points
		F	59 – 0 points

READINGS: Students will be expected to keep up on the weekly reading assignments for the course, and to formulate relevant questions about, and/or criticisms of, those readings.

Students will also be requested to pay close attention to current news issues (both in order to determine the relevance of philosophy of religion to our contemporary issues, and to generate a variety of possible paper topics).

EXAMS: There will be 2 in-class examinations on material from the reading and class lectures, and there will be no make-up exams.

ESSAY: Each student will also be required to write a term paper of not less than 3,000 words on a philosophical subject (related to Philosophy of Religion) of his or her choice. The paper is due on or before the last day of class, and will not be accepted late.

PARTICIPATION: Attendance and Participation in this online class will be based on the submission of weekly assignments (as well as questions regarding the material). Missing more than 3 assignments (3 weeks of class) will result in the loss of letter grade. However, because UNO does not use pluses and minuses, timely submission of all assignments may result in the change of a lower to a higher grade.

Course Policies

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the UNO Judicial Code for further information. The Code is available online at: <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu>.

DISABILITY

ACCOMMODATIONS:

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disabilities Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu>

AUDITS:

Whether an audit is successful will depend only on your class participation performance.

**CLASSROOM CONDUCT/
SEXUAL HARASSMENT:**

Feel free to say anything to me or to your peers, but tailor your remarks so as not to be uncivil, abusive, or inappropriate. NO inappropriate conduct/harassment (sexual or otherwise) will be tolerated.

GRADING:

The final grade will be based on a combination of three exams and a term paper. Since UNO does not use pluses and minuses, borderline cases will be determined by regular and timely submission of weekly assignments.

INCOMPLETES:

Incompletes are STRONGLY discouraged. Should you need to take an incomplete, arrangements must be made with me well before the last class meeting.

MAKE-UPS:

There are no make-up exams.

WITHDRAWALS:

You may withdraw from this course for any reason. Withdrawal is strictly up to you and none of my business. Look in the course listings for the last day to withdraw without a penalty — a 'W' appearing on your transcript.

PHIL 3480 Timeline
(*subject to revision*)

DAY	TOPIC/READING
Jan. 13-19	Lectures One & Two: Introduction & The Aim of Philosophy
Jan. 21-26	Lecture Three: In The Beginning (Readings: Articles on Gobekli Tepe & Alternatives to Early Burial)
Jan. 27-Feb. 2	Lecture Four: The Religious Experience (Readings: St. Teresa of Avila & William James)
Feb. 3-9	Lecture Five: The Attributes of God (Readings: Boethius, Aquinas, & John Hick)
Feb. 10-16	Lecture Six: The Arguments for God (Readings: Aquinas, Anselm, Descartes)
Feb. 17-23	Lecture Seven: Philosophy of Language; First Exam (Readings: Aquinas, Flew & Mitchell, Tillich)
Feb. 24-Mar. 2	Lecture Eight: Death (Readings: Epicurus, John Hick, Richard Swinburne)
Mar. 3-9	MARDI GRAS & SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
Mar. 10-16	Lecture Nine: Theism, Deism, & Atheism (Readings: Spinoza, Hegel, Buber)
Mar. 17-23	Lecture Ten: Reason or Emotion? (Readings: Pascal, Hume, Kant)
Mar. 24-30	Lecture Eleven: Anthropocentrism; Second Exam (Readings: Xenophanes, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Freud)
Mar. 31-Apr. 6	Lecture Twelve: Evil (Readings: Augustine, Leibniz, Voltaire)
Apr. 7-13	Lecture Thirteen: Politics (Readings: Plato, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Thomas Jefferson)
Apr. 14-20	Lecture Fourteen: Community (Readings: Marx, Weber, Kierkegaard)
Apr. 21-27	Lecture Fifteen: Evolution (Readings: Paley, Darwin, Gould, Clifford, James)
Apr. 28- May 4	Lecture Sixteen: Without God? (Readings: Russell, Sartre, Camus, James, Emerson)
May 5-9	Final Exam