

Philosophy of Religion

I Instructor Information

Name: Dr. Bradley Rettler
Office: Ross Hall 128
Office Hours: Tuesday 1-3, Thursday 11-12, and by appointment
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Classroom: BU 129
Meeting Times: TR 9:35-10:50

II Course Description

Philosophy of religion is the attempt to answer questions about God, religion, and religious experience. Some of the questions that we'll be discussing this semester are:

1. Does God exist?
2. Is the existence of God compatible with the existence of evil?
3. Does our existence give us reason to believe in God?
4. Is the existence of God compatible with God's hiddenness?
5. Can we make sense of goodness without God?

III Required Readings

All readings will be posted on the website. There is no textbook.

IV Evaluation

Participation: 20% of your grade. This includes coming to class, having (i) carefully done the reading, (ii) prepared an outline of the argument, (iii) prepared questions about anything you didn't understand, and (iv) prepared objections to or arguments for the premises of the author's argument. It also includes being involved in class discussion by sharing your thoughts, and by listening to your colleagues' thoughts.

While perfect attendance does not guarantee a perfect score on this portion, excessive absences guarantees an imperfect one. You are permitted 2 absences without a university excuse. (To have an absence excused, see your Dean.) Each subsequent absence will take 5% off your participation grade.

Critical Responses: 30% of your grade. Six times during the semester you will write a one-page critical response paper and email it to me by 11:59pm the night before the class for which the reading is assigned. At least one paper must be on fine-tuning, one on the

argument from evil, one on the moral argument, and one on the hiddenness argument; the remaining two can be on any of those topics, or on the readings from the poll. The papers will contain a brief summary of the argument of the paper (half a page), and then one objection to a premise of that argument (half a page). Each will be 5% of your grade. Late papers will be 10% off if turned in after 11:59pm but before class, and 50% off if turned in after the class but before the final exam.

Final Paper Outline: 10% of your grade. You will write a half-page to 1 page outline of the argument for your final paper. It is due March 29. I will return it to you with comments, and may suggest that (or require that) you meet with me to discuss it. Late outlines will be 10% off per day late.

Final Paper: 20% of your grade. You will write a 1500-2000 word final paper on a topic related to philosophy of religion. You can write on any topic we discuss in class, or have another topic approved by me. Papers are due on the last day of class – May 9. Late papers will be 10% off per day late.

Final Exam: 20% of your grade. You will have a final exam comprised of 4-6 short essay questions on the readings. It will take place on the regularly scheduled exam day and time. If you cannot make it or have a conflict with the scheduled exam time, you must alert me by May 1 so we can make alternate arrangements. If you do not, late exams will 20% off per day late.

Extra Credit: You may write as many extra critical response papers as you want, and I will substitute their grades for the grades of your lowest papers (if they are higher). They must be emailed by 11:59pm the night before we discuss the paper to which they are responses. Late extra credit critical response papers will not be accepted.

Extra Credit 2: If you present one of your critical response papers to the class, you will automatically receive a perfect score on that response. You can only do this once. You must notify me that you'd like to present when you email your paper by 11:59pm the night before.

V Honor Code

All students are expected to abide by the Academic Honor Code. Students are not allowed to write papers together, although verbal discussion of one's papers (with anyone) is not only permitted but encouraged. Any use of outside sources for specific ideas or arguments must be properly cited. Plagiarism is easily detectable and will absolutely not be tolerated. The University provides guidelines on what constitutes plagiarism here: http://www.uwyo.edu/generalcounsel/_files/docs/uw-reg-6-802.pdf. You are **strongly encouraged** to read that document. If you have any doubt about the appropriateness of any action, please check with me.

VI Students with Disabilities

I am happy to accommodate students with disabilities. Students desiring accommodations on the basis of physical, learning, or psychological disability for this class should

view their options at <http://www.uwyo.edu/udss/> and contact Disability Support Services. They are located at 128 Knight Hall, and can be reached by email at udss@uwyo.edu or by phone at 307.766.3073.

VII Title IX Office

If you or someone you know would like help related to an experience of sexual violence including sexual assault, harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking or other type of non-consensual sexual conduct, please contact Jim Osborn by phone at 307.766.5200 or by email at report-it@uwyo.edu. I am (along with nearly all faculty and staff members) a mandatory reporter; if I learn of any incident of sexual violence or misconduct, I am legally required to report it.

VIII Support

There are a variety of ways to get extra academic help at UW. You can drop-in to the STEP Tutoring Center at Coe Library, get e-tutoring on your writing, and visit the Writing Center in Coe Library.

IX Classroom Conduct

Respect one another! Pay attention when people are speaking, listen carefully before jumping in, and speak in a respectful tone. You will almost certainly disagree with people. In this course, we will explore our disagreement *together* in a structured, collaborative atmosphere. Keep this in mind.

A note on phone/laptop usage. One way to disrespect people is to distract them from what's important. So, put your phones on silent or vibrate—texting or answering your phone in class is not acceptable. Keep your mobile devices out of sight – including your own sight! If you want to take notes on a laptop, you must approve it with me at the beginning of the semester.

Both the University of Wyoming and I value an educational environment that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. The diversity that students and faculty bring to class including age, country of origin, culture, disability, economic class, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, linguistic capacity, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, worldview, and other social and cultural diversity is valued, respected, and considered a resource for learning.

X Changes

This syllabus is a guide. Circumstances may alter the reading and/or test schedules. All changes will be announced in class and posted on WyoCourses. You are required to check WyoCourses and your email at least once a week.

XI Expected Schedule

SEE WYOCOURSES FOR THE UP-TO-DATE SCHEDULE AND LINKS TO PAPERS!

INTRODUCTION

Jan 29: Introduction, Logic and Arguments
Jan 31: Collins - 'The Fine-Tuning Design Argument'

THE FINE-TUNING ARGUMENT

Feb 5: Sober - 'The Design Argument', especially 133-140
Feb 7: Weisberg - 'Firing Squads and Fine-Tuning'

Feb 12: Fine-Tuning, Concluded

THE ARGUMENT FROM EVIL

Feb 14:
Feb 19:
Feb 21: Dostoevsky - 'The Rebellion', from *The Brothers Karamazov*

Feb 26: Rowe - 'The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism'
Feb 28:

March 5: Bergmann - 'Skeptical Theism and Rowe's New Evidential Argument from Evil'
March 7:

THE MORAL ARGUMENT

March 12: Adams - 'Moral Arguments for Theistic Belief'
March 14: Antony - 'Good without God'

March 19: NO CLASS (Spring Break)
March 21: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

March 26: Zagzebski - 'Does Ethics Need God?'
March 28: Moral Argument, Concluded

THE ARGUMENT FROM HIDDENNESS

April 2: Chiang - 'Hell is the Absence of God'
April 4: van Inwagen - 'What is the Problem of the Hiddenness of God?'

April 9: Rea - 'Divine Hiddenness, Divine Silence'

April 11: Divine Hiddenness, Concluded

POLL-WINNING PAPERS*

April 16: L. Rettler - Faith, Belief, and Control

April 18: Buckareff and Plug - Escaping Hell

April 23: Lewis - Divine Evil

April 25: NO CLASS

April 30: Feldman - Reasonable Religious Disagreements

May 2: Crisp - Jesus and Affluence

May 7: Lebens - God and his imaginary friends: a Hassidic metaphysics

May 9: Open Discussion

*PAPERS FOR POLL:

M Adams - The Problem of Hell: A Problem of Evil for Christians

T Bogardus - The Problem of Contingency for Religious Beliefs

A. Buckareff & A Plug - Escaping Hell: Divine Motivation and the Problem of Hell

T Crisp – On Believing the Bible is Divinely Inspired

T Crisp - Jesus and Affluence

L Ekstrom - Suffering as Religious Experience

R Feldman – Reasonable Religious Disagreements

F and D Howard-Snyder – The Puzzle of Petitionary Prayer (and Parker and Rettler "A Possible Worlds Solution to the Puzzle of Petitionary Prayer")

D Howard-Snyder – Propositional Faith: What it is, and What it is not

S Kleinschmidt – Atheistic Prayer

S Lebens - God and His Imaginary Friends

D Lewis - Divine Evil

T Mawson - Praying to Stop Being an Atheist

T Merricks - How to Live Forever without Saving your Soul

G Pettigrove - The Dilemma of Divine Forgiveness

A Plantinga – Is Christian Belief Irrational?

M Rea - Does God have a Gender?

L Rettler - Control over Faith

T Sider – Hell and Vagueness (and Dougherty & Poston "Hell, Vagueness, and Justice: A Reply to Sider")

E Stump - Dante's Hell, Aquinas's Moral Theory, and the Love of God

J Thurow - Does Cognitive Science show belief in God to be irrational?

C Van Dyke - Eating as a Gendered Act: Christianity, Feminism, and Reclaiming the Body

P van Inwagen - I look for the Resurrection

D Whitcomb - Grounding and Omniscience (and Howard-Snyder, Rasmussen & Cullison "On Whitcomb's Grounding Argument for Atheism")

L Zagzebski - Omnibusivity (and Davison "Privacy and Control")