

Seminar in Divine Hiddenness

I Instructor Information

Name: Dr. Bradley Rettler

Office: Ross Hall 128

Office Hours: Tuesday 11-12, Wednesday 11-12, Thursday 1-2, and by appointment

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Classroom: RH 135

Meeting Times: W 3:10-5:40

II Course Description

In 1993, JL Schellenberg published *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*. This was contemporary philosophy's introduction to the argument from divine hiddenness. The argument targets religions where God is powerful and cares about whether people believe in God. If such a God exists, the argument goes, then God would be powerful enough to show everyone that God exists, and would desire to do so. But, there are people who don't believe in God – and not because of any recalcitrance on their part, but simply because they don't think there's enough evidence. The existence of such people is incompatible with the existence of a perfectly loving God.

We will begin the course with Schellenberg's updated version of the argument. Then we will read a number of responses, as well as different ways of stating the argument.

III Required Readings

- 1) *The Hiddenness Argument* by JL Schellenberg
- 2) *The Hiddenness of God* by Michael Rea
- 3) Additional readings will be posted in the "Files" section of Canvas.

IV Evaluation

You have option to take Track 1 or Track 2 below. You should feel to choose whichever track you think will be most interesting for you.

Track 1:

Participation: 15% of your grade will be for attendance, class participation, and question/comment submission. Each meeting day, by noon, you will submit at least two questions or comments on the reading. These should be phrased as clearly and precisely as possible, and will help guide our discussion.

Paper: 80% of your grade for the course will be for one original paper of approximately 5,000 words. The paper will be an argumentative essay, where you stake out a new position, or offer a new argument or new objection. This should be the kind of paper the main idea of which could be published in a philosophy journal (though of course it needn't be quite that good). It should engage with and show mastery of the relevant literature, including at least 10 references.

Meetings: Additionally, 5% of your grade will be for coming to office hours these three times during the semester:

1) By March 1, you'll come to office hours for about a half hour to talk about divine hiddenness. You should have some idea of what response you want to give or objection you have to a previous response or something like that. We'll talk your thoughts. I'll give you further reading that isn't on the syllabus.

2) By March 21, we'll meet again. You should have read most of the further reading. We'll talk about it and your thoughts on it. I will give you a bit more reading.

3) By April 15, we'll meet for (at least) a third time. You should have done all of the reading I've assigned, and more besides. You should have also started working on the paper. We'll talk through your argument thus far.

4) I'll read drafts if and only if they're submitted by April 17.

Track 2:

Participation: 15% of your grade will be for attendance, class participation, and question/comment submission. Each meeting day, by noon, you will submit at least two questions or comments on the reading. These should be phrased as clearly and precisely as possible, and will help guide our discussion.

Critical Reports: 30% of your grade will be for critical reports. Five times during the semester, you will write a one-page critical response paper and email it to me by 11:59pm the night before class. The paper should be half a page of giving, in premise-conclusion form, an argument from the reading, and half of a page of offering an objection to a premise of that argument.

Paper: 25% of your grade will be for your final paper. This paper will be approximately 2,000 words, and will be on a topic related to the course. You will meet with me around the halfway point of

the semester (mid-March) to talk through potential topics. I will read one-page outlines if and only if they are submitted by April 17.

Final Exam: 30% of your grade will be for a final exam comprised of a half dozen or so short essay questions on the readings.

V 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.

VI Expected Schedule

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

The readings are to be done **by the day** for which they are scheduled.

- Jan 29: No Class: Dr Rettler in Tucson
- Feb 5: Schellenberg, Preface, chapters 1-4
- Feb 12: Schellenberg, chapters 4-8
- Feb 19: Rea, Preface and chapters 1-3
- Feb 26: No Class: Dr Rettler in Liverpool
- March 4: Rea, chapters 4-6
- March 11: Rea, chapters 7-9
- March 18: No Class: Spring Break

The Experiential Problem: A Distinct Problem?

- March 25: Wolterstorff – “The Silence of the God who Speaks”
Panchuk – “The Shattered Spiritual Self”
Optional: Fales – “Journeying in Perplexity”

Framing the Problem

- April 1: van Inwagen – “What is the Problem of the Hiddenness of God?”
Rettler – “Four Problems of Divine Hiddenness”
Optional: Kvanvig – “Divine Hiddenness: What is the Problem?”

Greater Goods Responses

April 8: Keller, "The Hiddenness of God and the Problem of Evil"
Morris – "The Hidden God"

Reasonable Nonbelief

April 15: Henry – "Does Reasonable Nonbelief Exist?"
Lehe, "A Response to the Argument from the Reasonableness of Nonbelief"
Optional: Henry – "Reasonable Doubts about Reasonable Nonbelief"

Skeptical Theism

April 22: Howard-Snyder – "Divine Openness and Creaturely Nonresistant Nonbelief"*
Swenson and McBrayer – "Skepticism about the Argument from Divine Hiddenness"

Professor Charity Anderson

April 29: Anderson – Divine Hiddenness: Defeated Evidence

Other Responses

May 6: Cullison – "Two Solutions to the Problem of Divine Hiddenness"
Rea – "Divine Hiddenness, Divine Silence"