

# PHILOSOPHY AND WORLD RELIGIONS

**INSTRUCTOR:** SAMUEL A. TAYLOR  
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**OFFICE HOURS:** 2:30-4 TU & TH, 3-4 W, OR BY APPOINTMENT

**COURSE:** PHIL 1007-001  
**SEMESTER:** SPRING 2015  
**MEETING TIME:** 2-2:50 M,W,F  
**LOCATION:** ABAH 235

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course aims to examine the teachings and practices of several major world religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam), and at teaching students how to think philosophically about many of the important topics in contemporary analytic philosophy of religion. Among the questions that we will consider are: How is faith related to reason? Are there good arguments to believe that God exists? Can religious experiences provide justification for religious beliefs without the need of argument? Does the existence of evil make belief in God irrational? When is it reasonable, if ever, to believe that a miracle occurred? Is religious exclusivism a reasonable position in today's world? Are religion and science in conflict? *This course satisfies the Humanities and the Global Perspectives Liberal Education requirements.*

**GOALS & OBJECTIVES:** By studying these topics students will gain a wide range of knowledge and develop various skills whose value extends beyond the classroom. There are five main goals of the course. The first two are specific to course material; the last three pertain to general skills necessary for success in any field.

- Achieve an understanding of influential views, arguments, and problems in philosophy of religion.
- Develop a critical perspective on those views, arguments, and problems.
- Improve one's ability to interpret texts and reconstruct arguments.
- Improve one's ability to *evaluate* arguments.
- Improve one's ability to carefully and clearly communicate ideas and arguments both verbally and in writing.

**OUTCOMES:** The American Philosophical Association, in its official statement on outcomes assessment, observes that: "The basic aim of education in philosophy is not and should not be primarily to impart information. Rather it is to help students learn to understand various kinds of deeply difficult intellectual problems, to interpret texts regarding these problems, to analyze and criticize the arguments found in them, and to express themselves in ways that clarify and carry forward reflection upon them." Originally published in *The Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 69:2, pages 94-99.

**TEXTS:** The *required* texts are:

- Brodd, et al: *Invitation to World Religions* (Oxford University Press). ISBN: 978019973843-4
- Peterson, et al: *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings* 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (Oxford University Press, 2014). ISBN: 9780199303441 (if you can find a used copy of the 4<sup>th</sup> edition cheaper then this will work but one or two articles may be missing).

## GRADING SCALE:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
100-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-60	59-0

**GRADING & EXPECTATIONS FOR THE COURSE:** I'll use plus/minus grading. Your final grade will be calculated on the basis of 1 paper, 3 exams, and 3 of 4 pop-quizzes.

**PAPER:** 15% of your grade comes from one approximately 3-4 pages paper assignment. You can write your papers a topic from *either* of the two groups of readings indicated on the course schedule *but not both*. Papers during these two sections will have different topics from which to choose and will also have different due dates.

**EXAMS:** 70% of your grade comes from 3 exams (20% for the 1<sup>st</sup>; 25% for the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>). Exams test you on material from readings and lecture via true/false, multiple-choice, and short-answer questions.

**QUIZZES:** 15% of your grade comes from your 3 best of 4 pop quizzes (5% each). *These won't be announced and can **only** be made up with documentation of an excuse allowed under the university's official policy (see link below).*

**LATE POLICY:** Unexcused late papers will receive a 3% grade penalty for *EACH* 24-hour period that they are late. Unexcused missed exams will receive a 3% grade penalty for *EACH* 24-hour period that passes prior to the completion of a make-up exam.

**PARTICIPATION:** Participation in class and on the Moodle discussion forums can raise your final grade *up to 1/3<sup>rd</sup>* of a letter grade.

*ATTENDANCE:* Attendance will not *directly* affect your grade. However, attendance can affect your grade indirectly as indicated regarding pop-quizzes and participation. More importantly, this class is difficult and you will not do well if you don't attend regularly.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** I will use turnitin.com. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism and cheating will result in a zero for the assignment and will be reported to the university. I expect that you understand what constitutes plagiarism, but if you are unsure then please see the university's student academic integrity webpage (see link below). *Trust me... Plagiarism is not in your best interest; I will catch you!*

**NOTES ABOUT THE SCHEDULE:** Readings are to be done *before* the class period for which they are listed. A link to readings with a "\*" can be found on Moodle. This schedule is tentative and may be altered depending on how class discussion develops. I will announce reading assignments daily in class and on Moodle.

## READINGS

<b>WEEK 1</b> INTRODUCTION	An Invitation to the Study of World Religions (INV Ch 1)	
<b>WEEK 2</b> HINDUISM	Hinduism (INV Ch. 4)	
<b>WEEK 3</b> BUDDHISM	Buddhism (INV Ch. 5)	
<b>WEEK 4</b> CHRISTIANITY	Christianity (INV Ch. 11)	
<b>WEEK 5</b> ISLAM	Islam (INV Ch. 12) <b>EXAM 1 Friday February 20th</b>	
<b>WEEK 6</b> ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE	Anselm: The Classical Ontological Argument (POR) Craig: The Kalam Cosmological Argument (POR)	Paper Topics Option-A <b>DUE FRIDAY MARCH 27<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>WEEK 7</b> ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE	Paley: The Analogical Teleological Argument (POR) Hume: The Evidence for Miracles is Weak (POR)	
<b>WEEK 8</b> MIRACLES	Swinburne: Miracles and Historical Evidence (POR) Clifford: The Ethics of Belief (POR)	
<b>SPRING BREAK</b>		
<b>WEEK 9</b> REASON AND FAITH	James: The Will to Believe (POR) Plantinga: The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology (POR)	Paper Topics Option-B <b>DUE WEDNESDAY APRIL 22<sup>nd</sup></b>
<b>WEEK 10</b> THE PROBLEM OF EVIL	<b>EXAM 2 Monday March 30<sup>th</sup></b> Mackie: Evil and Omnipotence (POR) Hick: Soul-Making Theodicy (POR)	
<b>WEEK 11</b> THE PROBLEM OF EVIL	Rowe: The Evidential Argument from Evil (POR) Ghaly: Evil and Suffering in Islam (POR)	
<b>WEEK 12</b> RELIGIOUS DISAGREEMENT	Feldman: Reasonable Religious Disagreements* Hick: Religious Pluralism (POR)	
<b>WEEK 13</b> SCIENCE AND RELIGION	<i>BUILT-IN CATCH UP DAY</i> Gould: Two Separate Domains (POR)	
<b>WEEK 14</b> SCIENCE AND RELIGION	Dennett: An Evolutionary Account of Religion (POR) Plantinga: Naturalism and Science are Incompatible (POR)	
<b>WEEK 15</b> SCIENCE AND RELIGION	<i>Selections from</i> Giffiths & Wilkins: When do Evolutionary Explanations of Belief Debunk Belief?*	

**FINAL EXAM: 12:00 PM, TUESDAY, MAY 12TH**

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## Academic Policies

**Student Conduct Code:** Appropriate classroom conduct promotes an environment of academic achievement and integrity. Disruptive classroom behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach, or student learning, is prohibited. Student are expected adhere to Board of Regents Policy: *Student Conduct Code*. [http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Student\\_Conduct\\_Code.pdf](http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf)

**Teaching & Learning: Instructor and Student Responsibilities:** UMD is committed to providing a positive, safe, and inclusive place for all who study and work here. Instructors and students have mutual responsibility to insure that the environment in all of these settings supports teaching and learning, is respectful of the rights and freedoms of all members, and promotes a civil and open exchange of ideas. To reference the full policy please see: <http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/TeachingLearning.html>

**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty tarnishes UMD's reputation and discredits the accomplishments of students. Academic dishonesty is regarded as a serious offense by all members of the academic community. UMD's Student Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <http://www.d.umn.edu/conduct/academic>

**Final Exams:** All 1xxx-5xxx courses offered for undergraduate credit should include a final graded component or end of term evaluation that assesses the level of student achievement of one or more course objectives. All final graded components are to be administered or due at the time and place according to the final exam schedule and not during the last week of class. To reference the full policy please see: <http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/FinalExams.html>

**Excused Absences:** Students are expected to attend all scheduled class meetings. It is the responsibility of students to plan their schedules to avoid excessive conflict with course requirements. However, there are legitimate and verifiable circumstances that lead to excused student absence from the classroom. These are subpoenas, jury duty, military duty, religious observances, illness, bereavement for immediate family, and NCAA varsity intercollegiate athletics. For complete information, please see: <http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/ExcusedAbsence.html>

**Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials:** Taking notes is a means of recording information but more importantly of personally absorbing and integrating the educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines instructor interests in their intellectual work product while not substantially furthering instructor and student interests in effective learning. For additional information, please see: <http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/ClassNotesAppropriateUseof.html>

**Students with disabilities:** It is the policy and practice of the University of Minnesota Duluth to create inclusive learning environments for all students, including students with disabilities. If there are aspects of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or your ability to meet course requirements such as time limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. You are also encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Resources to discuss and arrange reasonable accommodations. Call 218-726-6130 or visit the DR web site at [www.d.umn.edu/access](http://www.d.umn.edu/access) for more information.