

# Intro to Philosophy of Religion

Phil. 383  
M/W/F 9:05-9:55  
Bartlett 301

## Instructor Information

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Office Hours: M/W 10:00-11:00

## Course Description

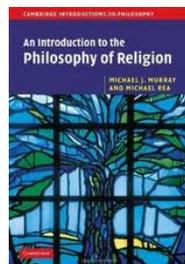
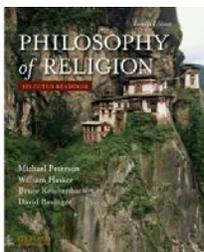
In this course, we will cover some of the central topics in the philosophy of religion. We'll begin by discussing the nature of God. In particular, we'll discuss the nature of the divine attributes and whether they are consistent. Next, we'll discuss the central arguments for and against God's existence (the ontological argument, the cosmological argument, the design argument, and the problem of evil). After that, we'll discuss some issues in religious epistemology; in particular, we'll discuss whether we can be justified in believing in the existence of God even if we lack good arguments supporting this belief. Finally, we'll discuss the problem of Hell—more specifically, we'll discuss whether it's possible for a perfectly good being, such as God, to send anyone to Hell.

## Textbook

Two books are required for this course:

- 1) *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Ed. Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger. Oxford University Press, 2010.
- 2) *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (Cambridge Introductions to Philosophy)*. By Michael Murray and Michael Rea. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

The books look like this:



Both books are available at the Textbook Annex.

Many of the assigned readings will come from these books. The ones that do not will be put on Moodle.

## **Overview of Course Requirements**

Exam 1: 10%

Exam 2: 20%

Exam 3: 20%

Term Paper: 25%

Homework Assignments: 15%

Attendance/Participation: 10%

## **More Details about Course Requirements**

Exams:

The exams will be in-class bluebook examinations. They will cover material that we discuss in class. The first exam will cover slightly less material than the other two. Tentative dates of the exams: Exam 1 (Sept. 23); Exam 2 (Oct. 21); Exam 3 (Nov. 25).

Make-Up Exam Policy: No make-up exams will be permitted unless you let me know well ahead of time that you're going to miss the exam and have a legitimate excuse.

Term Paper:

The term paper is your chance to think beyond what we talk about in class. It's your chance to actually do some philosophy. I will be giving potential term paper topics throughout the semester, though you may write on anything related to the course that you want (provided that you get your topic approved by me ahead of time). The paper will be about 5-6 pages in length and will be due during finals week.

Late Paper Policy: Late papers will be accepted, but they will be penalized.

Homework Assignments:

There will be frequent written homework assignments based on the readings. These will be graded mostly on completion and are designed to get you to do the readings and think about them prior to class.

Attendance/Participation:

I will take attendance regularly. You are required to come to class. You should also plan to participate regularly.

Quizzes: I reserve the right to give a pop-quiz if I find that people aren't doing the readings.

Book Requirement: Please bring the assigned reading with you to class.

## **Other Stuff**

Office Hours:

I encourage you to come to my office hours and talk to me about the class. Don't be afraid to ask me your questions! If you are not available to meet during my office hours, I'd be happy to arrange another time to meet with you.

**PowerPoint:**

I may use PowerPoint from time to time. However, I won't distribute the PowerPoint presentations. If you miss class, get the notes from a friend.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

You can find the UMass academic honesty policy here:

<[http://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/index.php](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/index.php)>.

Acts of academic dishonesty will be subject to the maximum penalty allowed by this policy.

**Moodle:**

Check it often. I will use it regularly to make announcements and post readings.

**Laptops/Smartphones:**

Using these things during class is distracting and negatively impacts class discussion. Please do not use them.

**Schedule:**

Here is a list of readings we will likely cover this semester:

Aquinas, "God Is Omnipotent"

Mavrodes, "Some Puzzles Concerning Omnipotence"

Frankfort, "The Logic of Omnipotence"

Pike, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action"

Boethius, "God is Timeless"

Anselm, "The Classical Ontological Argument"

Rosen, "Anselm's Ontological Argument"

Gaunilo, "Critique of Anselm's Argument"

Aquinas, "The Classical Cosmological Argument"

Mackie, "Critique of the Cosmological Argument"

Paley, "The Analogical Teleological Argument"

Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence"

Rowe, "The Evidential Argument from Evil"

Hick, "Soul-Making Theodicy"

Lewis, "Evil for Freedom's Sake"

Plantinga, "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology"

DeRose, "Voodoo Epistemology"

Pargetter, "Experience, Proper Basicity, and Belief in God"

Hasker, "The Case of the Intellectually Sophisticated Theist"

Feldman, "Evidentialist Theories of Knowledge and Justification"

Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger, "Knowing God without Arguments: Does Theism Need a Basis?"

Alston, "Religious Experience and Religious Belief"

Lewis, "Divine Evil"

Adams, "Problem of Hell: A Problem of Evil for Christians"

Davis, "Universalism, Hell, and the Fate of the Ignorant"

Sider, "Hell and Vagueness"

Murray and Rea, *Intro to Philosophy of Religion*, chaps. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6

This list is tentative. It may change some depending on how fast we move through the material.

I won't make a more precise schedule at this time; it's too hard to predict how long it will take us to get through each reading. I will announce in class whenever there is a new reading assignment.