

**PHL 302/ RS 300 PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION Fall 2004 University of Detroit Mercy**  
**DR. GAIL PRESBEY, Instructor**

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Office Hours: Monday, 11-11:50 am, and 1-1:50 pm; Wednesday, 11-11:50 am, and 5:30-6:30 pm; Friday, 11-11:50 am, and 1-1:50 pm. Other times by appointment.

**Required Text** (Available in bookstore):

David Stewart, *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion*. Fifth Edition. Prentice Hall

ISBN 0-13-019519-7

Various photocopies listed below.

**PURPOSE OF THE COURSE**

To explore the topic of religion from a philosophical perspective. Themes include: religious experience and truth claims; religious pluralism and truth claims; gender and religious language; arguments for and against the existence of God; the problem of evil; and the possibility of life after death. These topics will be approached from many different perspectives, drawing on works of authors whose backgrounds are Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, African, and atheist. The course draws upon both analytic (Hick, Flew, Hare, Mitchell) and continental (Kierkegaard, Weil, Nietzsche) authors, as well as American pragmatist (James). Students will be encouraged to apply the subject matter to an analysis of their own lives. Students will also be guided in a research project where they will be able to follow up on whichever themes of the course are of most interest to them.

**Reading Schedule**

Note: If we get behind schedule, some of these readings will be dropped.

9/8: Introductions, review of syllabus

9/10: For Self Examination, Kierkegaard, excerpt (xerox)

9/13: Personal Experience of God, Radhakrishnan (xerox) pp. 141-147.

9/15: Radhakrishnan, cont., and excerpt, "Hindu Ascetics" (video)

9/17: Of Miracles, Hume (xerox).

9/20: God and Human Experience, Davies (xerox) pp. 356-361.

9/22: Why 'Knowing God by experience' is... open to question, Martin (xerox) pp. 362-369.

9/24: Can we know God by Experience? Donovan (xerox) pp. 370-376

9/27: Donovan (xerox) cont. pp. 376-381

9/29: Simone Weil (xerox) pp. 428-431.

10/1: Religious Pluralism/ the Pluralistic hypothesis, John Hick, pp. 37-45. (Note: university-wide schedule changed due to mass, so we'll meet at 10-10:25 a.m.).

10/4: Hick cont., and retrospective, pp. 45-50.

10/6: The Female Nature of God, Reuther, pp. 322-329.

(No class 10/8)

10/11: Chapter Four introduction, "Arguments for God's Existence" pp. 117-121.

10/13: The Ontological Argument/ The Most Perfect Being, Descartes, pp. 122-130.

10/15: Descartes, finish. The Quest for Certainty: al-Ghazali and Descartes, Gotz (xerox), pp. 1-5

10/18: Gotz, cont. pp. 5-13.

10/20: The Cosmological Arguments, pp. 131-136.

(10/22 and 25 - no class)

10/27: The Argument from Contingency, Taylor, pp. 136-144.

(10/29 - no class)

11/1: The Design Argument/ Natural Theology, 145-153.

11/3: Life's Goal is to Achieve Greatness/ Joyful Wisdom, Nietzsche, pp. 60-65.

(11/5 and 8: no class)

11/10: Introduction chapter 5, God and Evil pp. 165-171

11/12: The Source of Evil: Divinity or Humanity, Kirwen (xerox), pp. 26-54

11/15: The Value of Soul-Making Theodicy/ Evil and the God of Love, Hick, pp. 172-181.

11/17: Introduction to Chapter Six, Opinion, Belief, Knowledge, pp. 215-220.

11/19: Belief and Falsification: the Falsification debate, Flew, pp. 221-227

11/22: Hare, Mitchell, and Flew cont., pp. 227-233.

11/24: Will and Belief/ The Will to Believe, James, pp. 234-245.

(Thanksgiving break)

11/29: James cont. pp. 245 (bottom)-252.

12/1: God in Search of Man, Heschel (xerox), pp. 136-144

12/3: Chapter 3 introduction, Religion and Death pp. 85-87 and The Finality of Death, Letter to Menoeceus, Epicurus, 98-102.

12/6: The Hope for Resurrection/ I Corinthians, St. Paul pp. 103-108; plus excerpts from Resurrection, Judgment and the Hereafter, Lari (xerox).

12/8: Everlasting Life: Remembrance or Resurrection, Kirwen (xerox), pp. 107-131

12/10: Death in Buddhism/ The doctrine of No-soul, Rahula pp. 109-113.

12/16, 11 am - 12:50 pm: final exam session, share summaries of your research findings.

**GRADING:** There are 100 possible points.

50 points - in-class reading quizzes (2 points each for 25 authors).

20 points - midterm essay, 4-5 pp typed double spaced.

20 points - final research paper, 5 pp typed double spaced.

10 points - class participation, including in-class group work, and play performance.

**Grading Scale:** Final grade based on total points out of 100.

A 100- 93	C+ 79.5-77
	C 76.5-73
A- 92.5- 90	C- 72.5-70
B+ 89.5- 87	D 69.5-63
B 86.5- 83	D- 62.5- 60
B- 82.5- 80	F: 59.5 and lower.

**Further descriptions of the above assignments:**

**In-class Quizzes:**

Each day that we begin a new author there will be a reading quiz. The quiz will be a four-part yes or no question, asking the basic question: were the following assertions made by the author in today's reading, or not? The following statements will either be: the author's assertions (most likely paraphrased); views with which the author disagreed; or topics not addressed by the author.

In the case of the first option, answer yes; for the latter two, answer no.

If such quizzes get boring after awhile, I may decide to vary the format of the quiz, but if so, I will warn you ahead of time. You should expect and prepare for a quiz being given just before the author is covered in class (this means reading the assignments ahead of time); however, in the case of authors for which we need more than one day to cover the material, it is up to the instructor which day the quiz will be given.

Students who missed the quiz for whatever reason, or who are unhappy with their quiz grade, have a strict time limit of two weeks in which to complete a make-up assignment. The assignment consists of a one page typed and double spaced paper on the author who was covered by the quiz. The first half of the paper should be a summary of that author's main claim, and your explanation of how the author tries to justify the claim. The second half of the paper should be your personal evaluation of the author's main claim. Give reasons for your view. An upper limit of eight make-up papers per student will be allowed. The paper may not receive the full points possible if it is inaccurate or poorly written. In the case of those who took the quiz, the paper grade will take the place of the quiz grade whether it is better or worse.

### **Films: To Make up for Missed Classes**

Since we will be missing a few days of regular classes, I will assign films which we will then discuss. Please attend two of the following four films, and film discussions. Attending the film and participating in the discussion will get you two points (equals one of our 25 quizzes). If you can't attend the group showing of the film, watch it on your own and write a 1-2 pp typed paper.

Entertaining Angels - religious experience  
Ponette - faith and reason (French with subtitles)  
Stalker - religious experience (Russian with subtitles)  
Black Robe - faith and reason, religious pluralism

### **Midterm Reflective Essay**

Four to five full pages, typed and double spaced. Possible themes for the essay will be handed out ahead of time, related to the authors we have covered in class.

### **Final Assignment: Research Paper**

This assignment will test your ability to make links, synthesize, and/or critically evaluate the course material. Starting with an author or two we have covered in the second half of class, branch out from that beginning, and delve into related reading materials. Your paper should incorporate the authors we covered in class as well as your additional materials. Then come up with a personal conclusion: what you think about the topic your authors have addressed, and why. Ideally you will have read a book on your topic; if not a book, you should at least reference two scholarly articles.

Note: Those who want to go on the School of the Americas vigil at Fort Benning, GA in November (sponsored by University Ministry) can choose that topic for their research paper. The

paper can describe your personal experience as well as reference some of the research sources related to SOA. The topic is complicated, and anyone choosing this option is encouraged to attend the film and talk sponsored by CLASA on Wed. eve, Oct. 13, in Life Sciences 113, 6:30 to 9 pm. This bus leaves Friday evening, November 19, and returns Monday morning (around 7 a.m.), November 22. A small fee for transportation and hotel expenses is required.

### **Class Participation**

There are many opportunities for class participation. As we go over each author, I do not expect to just lecture on material while the class just copies what I said. Since I expect you have read the authors, I will be asking the class to tell me what the author said. Your participation at this point by volunteering answers will help the class in learning the material. Again, your volunteering of interesting reflections on the author's ideas will help the class and improve your grade.

The class participation grade can be adversely affected by absences, repeated tardiness, silence, sleeping in class, or distracting side conversations. Also, dominating class discussion so that others do not have a chance to speak is a grave shortcoming. Speak your ideas and then give the teacher a chance to solicit answers and views from others as well. Your grade can also be harmed by showing disrespect to other students or the teacher. In philosophy class, very different views will be presented, and you are encouraged to put forward whatever position you hold on the topic. But if you disagree with others, do not turn it into personal animosity. Just state your counter-argument in a way that the debate in class can continue productively.

At certain points during the semester the class will be broken up into small groups to work on a group project, usually finding answers in the reading or to a puzzle or assignment given in class. During these times you should participate, cooperating with others in reaching the group's goals. Those who do not engage in the project, who stay at a distance from the rest of the group in total silence, who decide to nap or stare at their textbook, or go for a long break to the rest room, are not properly participating. Such actions will be noticed, and will affect one's class participation grade negatively. Those who galvanize their group to engage in the project with enthusiasm will also be noticed and their grade will be enhanced.

### **Extra Credit Policy:**

If there is a public event on campus or in the community that is related to our course material, you can attend the event, and write a two page typed double spaced paper on it (within 13 days of the event). Events must be announced in class so that other students know that it is an extra credit opportunity. You can receive up to 3 points for your paper, depending on the quality of the entry. NOTE: Do not EXPECT 3 points for your paper if you only recount incidentals while avoiding the philosophical importance of the presentation. To receive credit, you must attend the entire event. This means staying during question and answer periods as well as the main lecture or film. NOTE: Do not save up all your extra credits and deposit them with the teacher at the end of the semester. They will only be accepted if they are handed in according to the above time frame. However, the deadline for papers for events that happen within 13 days of the last class, is the last class.

### **Policy on e-mailing papers**

E-mailing of papers should only be done in emergency, in case of illness or some other serious event which prevents the student from handing in the paper in person. A broken printer is an excuse for e mailing one paper, but not for more than one. Send your paper as an MS Word or Word Perfect attachment. Do not send MS Works attachments; rather, block and copy your paper into the body of the e mail message.

### **General Classroom Policies:**

**Timeliness:** Students should arrive to class on time. Those who, on rare occasion because of difficulties, must come in late to class, must do so quietly, using a back entrance if possible, and take the closest seat available. Repeated and/or noisy tardy entry to the classroom is bound to disrupt students' attention and will attract the attention of the teacher, and is therefore discouraged.

**Leaving the Classroom During Class:** This is to be done only due to crisis or illness. If you leave the class and return, let me know the cause of the emergency at the end of class. If you leave and don't return, let me know what happened at the beginning of the next class.

**Talking during class:** Talking to others while classroom lecture or discussion is going on is disruptive to the teacher and other students. You will be reprimanded by the teacher and asked to discontinue your conversation.

**Attendance:** Attendance at all classes except in illness or other emergency is expected. Those who miss a paper deadline, and wish to make up the paper, will need written documentation for their absence (doctor's note, tow truck receipt etc) as a precondition in order to negotiate with the teacher for a rescheduled deadline. The instructor has the right to follow up and check on the veracity of written documentation. Those who begin to lose points for missed quizzes (traffic jam, personal or family crisis, headache, etc.) are encouraged to do extra credit to make up any points missed.

**Bringing children to class:** Sometimes arrangements for child care fall through at the last moment. However, it is a university policy that children are not allowed in class. If you are interested in joining a student and faculty organization that will look into solutions to the child care problem on McNichols campus, let me know, and I will put you in touch with the group.

### **Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty**

Cheating on exams is wrong. Those found looking at others' quizzes, or consulting notes during the quiz, will receive a "0" for the quiz grade. Two cases of such cheating in the same semester will result in failing the course.

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism entails "submitting the words or style of another author or source without acknowledgment or formal documentation. Plagiarism occurs when specific phrases or entire passages, whether a sentence, paragraph, or longer excerpt, are incorporated into one's own writing without quotation marks or documentation." (UDM Policy

on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty). Do not copy sentences out of books, magazines, newspapers etc. or off the internet. Be careful when creating your paper assignments, to use your own words to express ideas, and to use quotation marks and references when using the words of others. At the same time, do not overdepend on quotes; show me that you understand what you're writing about, by translating the ideas into your own words. Using papers written by other students, your friends, strangers, or people you hire to write for you is still plagiarism. Do not do this - you will receive the same plagiarism penalty!

Those who plagiarize will get a "0" for their first plagiarized assignment, or else minus ten points, whichever is larger. This applies to extra credit papers as well. A person who plagiarizes twice in the same semester will fail the course.

Handing in extra credit papers for events which one did not attend is also academic dishonesty. Such papers will receive a "0" and a penalty of five points. It is your duty, when attending extra credit, to look for me, and to report to me in person when I am at the venue. Signature forgery is also a form of academic dishonesty. Those submitting false notes without authentic signatures or any kind of false document will face at least a 10 point penalty and possible failure of the course.

### **Policy on Incompletes**

University policy stipulates that the grade of "I" or incomplete should be used in the case of students who have already completed most of their work, but have yet to hand in some of their assignments or take the final exam. In this course, a student must have a valid emergency which made an extension necessary, and have collected at least 40 points in order to get an "I" extension. Students who have emergencies early on before they have been able to accumulate 40 points are encouraged to drop the course.

### **Accommodation for Handicapped Students:**

Any handicapped student in need of special accommodation due to his or her handicap should see me so as to arrange for alternatives that will work for us both.