

PHL 367W – Philosophy of Religion

Spring 2007

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description: An examination of the nature and meaning of religion and religious expression. Philosophical and scientific critiques of religious faith and experience are considered. The nature of faith and reason, the question of the existence and nature of God, and the relation of religion and value are typical course topics.

Required Texts:

- (1) *God Matters* --an anthology of readings edited by Raymond Martin and Christopher Bernard (GM)
- (2) *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* by Brian Davies (IPR)
- (3) *Finding Darwin's God* by Kenneth R. Miller (FDG)
- (4) *Essential Sufism* edited by James Fadiman and Robert Frager

Recommended Readings:

- (1) *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings* by D. T. Suzuki
- (2) *The Tao is Silent* by Raymond Smullyan
- (3) *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon* edited by Norman J. Cohen
- (4) *Walking the Bible* by Bruce Feiler
- (5) *The Genesis of Justice* by Alan Dershowitz
- (6) *Religion Explained, the Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* by Pascal Boyer
- (7) *Can A Darwinian be a Christian?* by Michael Ruse
- (8) *The Koran*
- (9) *The Bhagavad Gita* translated by Franklin Edgerton
- (10) *Genesis, Exodus, and The Book of Job*
- (11) *The Gospel According to Luke, the Acts of the Apostles, and First Corinthians*

Grades: Final grades will be determined from the average of the grades earned throughout the semester.

A. Exams (4) – 80% There are **three unit exams** and a comprehensive **final exam**, each worth 20% of the final grade. Exams questions are taken from the study guides provided a week before the exam, and there will be time for review in class before each exam.

B. Book Reports (2) – 10% (5% each): Describe the main points, along with your thoughtful reactions to those points, of (1) a book (or set of books) from the recommended reading list above, and (2) *Essential Sufism*

C. Religious Discovery Project – 10%: Write a report on a religious tradition other than your own by sharing in experiences of those who follow that tradition by direct observation, through conversation and/or through reading.

D. Opinion Questions: For each unit, there will be opinion questions to which thoughtful and well reasoned responses are required. Each set of questions answered well will add up to 10 points to the exam for that unit. Questions not answered, or not answered well, will subtract up to 10 points from that unit's exam.

Make-Up Exams: Generally make-up exams are not given, and when they are, they are longer and more difficult. Exceptions to this general rule are possible only in **the most extreme** of circumstances, only if notification is received before or on the day of the exam, and only if appropriately documented. Another exam, over-sleeping or simply not being prepared are not acceptable reasons for being granted a make-up exam.

Notice to persons with a disability: SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center and there are no retroactive accommodations.

Student absences on religious holy days policy: Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). This request must be made in the first fifteen days of the semester or the first seven days of a summer session in which the absence(s) will occur. The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed

Schedule (subject to change)

Unit I – Religion and Rationality

Week I

January

Wed 10 – Course Overview

Fri 12 – Religion and Philosophy: Read Plato's *Apology*;
Introduction to the Philosophy or Religion (IPR), Chapter 2

Week II

Mon 15 – MLK Holiday – No Class

Wed 17 – Moral Argument, Read *God Matters (GM)* #18 and #19

Fri 19 – GM #19

Week III

Mon 22 – *Finding Darwin's God (FDG)*, c. 1-2

Wed 24 – FDG, c. 3-4

Fri 26 – FDG, c. 5-6

Week IV

Mon 29 – FDG, c. 7-8

Wed 31 – FDG, c. 9

February

Fri 2 – Faith and Evidence: GM #21, #22

Week V

Mon 5 – GM #23

Wed 7 – GM #25, #32

Fri 9 – Review

Week VI

Mon 12 – Exam I

Unit II – The Problem of Evil and Life after Death

Wed 14 – Omnipotence, GM #1, #2, IPR, c. 1

Fri 16 – Omniscience, GM #3, #4, IPR, c. 9

Eternity, GM #5, #6

Week VII

Mon 19 – GM #33, #34, IPR, c. 10

Wed 21 – GM #35, #36, #37

Fri 23 – The Free Will Defence, GM #38

Week VIII

Mon 26 – Evidential Argument, GM #39

Wed 28 – Conclusions on Evil, GM #40

Fri 2 – Death and Immortality, GM #51,
IPR, c. 13 – **LAST DAY TO DROP**

Week IX

Mon 5 – Life after death, GM #52

Wed 7 – Review – **BOOK REPORT DUE**

March

Fri 9 – Exam II

Discovery Project Proposal Due

Spring Break – March 12 -16

Unit III – God: Existence and Attributes

Week X

Mon 19 – Ontological Argument, GM #7, #8,
IPR, c. 5

Wed 21 – GM #9

Fri 23 – Cosmological Arguments, GM # 10,
IPR, c. 3

Week XI

Mon 26 – GM #11

Wed 28– GM #12

Fri 30– Design, GM #15, #16, IPR, c. 4

Week XII

April

Mon 2 – GM #17

Wed 4 – Review

Fri 6 – Good Friday – No Class

Unit IV – Religion and Ethics

Week XIII

Mon 9 – Exam III

Wed 11 – Morality, GM #53, #54, IPR, c. 12

Fri 13 – GM #55, #56

Week XIV

Mon 16 – Essential Sufism Pts 1 & 2

SUFISM BOOK REPORT DUE

Wed 18 – Essential Sufism, Pts 3 & 4

Fri 20– Essential Sufism, Pts 6 & 7

Week XV

Mon 23 – Pluralism GM #57

Wed 25 – Exclucivism GM #58

Fri 27 – Diversity GM #60

Week XVI

Mon 30 – Tolerance

Discovery Project Due

May

Wed 2 – Review

Fri 5 – Study Day

Final Exam
Wednesday, May 9, 2007
11 am – 1 pm