

## Philosophy/Religious Studies 233: Philosophy of Religion

**[NOTE: Most course policies (attendance, late work, etc.) have been removed from this version of the syllabus.]**

<b>University of Arizona</b> <b>Spring 2014</b> <b>8:00-9:15am, TTh</b> <b>Location:</b>	Instructor: Dr. Ethan Mills Instructor's email: Office: Office hours:
---	--

### Official Course Description

Nature of religion; existence and nature of God; religion and meaning, values and knowledge.

### Detailed Course Description

Whether you love it, hate it, or are just plain baffled by it, religion is a prominent part of life for billions of people and has been part of the human experience for thousands of years. Thus, it is worthy of philosophical attention. We'll focus on general issues in philosophy of religion, but our main points of reference will be Christian and Buddhist religious traditions. We'll also have some discussion of other religious traditions such as Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism. Here are some questions we'll consider: What is religion? Can reasoning or experience give good grounds for religious belief? Should you have faith even without good reasons? Should you ever believe that a miracle has occurred? Does God exist? How can a good God exist if there's so much suffering in the world? How should we react to suffering? Do non-Western religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism challenge Western conceptions of religion? How do gender issues affect religion? Is there a conflict between religion and science? What should we make of the diversity of religions? Is religion a good thing for humanity?

This is a philosophy class, which means that students should expect to grapple with difficult texts in order to understand and evaluate the arguments in those texts. This requires that you think for yourself about whether the conclusions of those texts are worth accepting. My concern as your instructor is not *what* you think or whether you accept any particular religious or philosophical view. My concern is *how* you think; that is, whether you make a conscientious effort to give good reasons for your beliefs, whatever those beliefs happen to be. Philosophy of religion involves the critical examination of many people's most deeply held beliefs. This examination can sometimes be a difficult and uncomfortable process, but it is, I think, extremely worthwhile both as an exercise in critical thinking and as an avenue for personal growth and reflection.

### Course Objectives

Like any philosophy course, this course will develop your abilities to read carefully, analyze arguments, and think critically about difficult ideas. More specifically, you should be able to engage in educated discussions about major topics in the philosophy of religion, including developing your own informed opinions on the topics and authors we'll discuss.

### Textbook and Additional Readings

*Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings, Fourth Edition.* Eds. Michael Peterson, William

Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach and David Basinger. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.  
ISBN: 9780195393590

There will also be additional readings available to download from the D2L page for this course, which can be accessed on <http://d2l.arizona.edu>.

***Assignments and Grading***

Assignments	Due dates	Possible Points
Six Online Quizzes		60
Three Graded In-Class Activities (five points each)		15
Three Short Reaction Papers (twenty points each)		60
One Final Paper		50
Participation	Every class	15
		<b>Total 200</b>

***Tentative Schedule***

Readings marked “PR” are in *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.* (our textbook). Those marked “D2L” are on this course’s D2L page.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics, Readings, and Assignments</i>
<b><i>Introduction; Background: Christianity and Buddhism; The Nature of Religion</i></b>	
Thurs. Jan. 16	Introduction, syllabus, etc.
Tues. Jan. 21	<i>Philosophy of Religion</i> (our textbook; hereafter PR): “Introduction” (p. 1-4) and D2L: Martin Luther King, Jr., “A Tough Mind and a Tender Heart”
Thurs. Jan. 23	D2L: Siderits, “Early Buddhism: Basic Teachings” In-Class Film: <i>The Story of India</i>
Tues. Jan. 28	D2L: Smith, “Christianity”
<b>Thurs. Jan. 30</b>	<b>D2L Quiz #1</b> PR: Dennett, “An Evolutionary Account of Religion” (p. 10-18) <b>Graded In-Class Activity #1</b>
<b><i>Religious Experience: Mysticism and Perceiving God</i></b>	
Tues. Feb. 4	James, “Religious Experience as Feelings Forming the Root of Religion” (p. 43-50) *I encourage students to read the introduction to each part as we cover it (for example, p. 35-39 for Part Two), but doing so is not required.
Thurs. Feb. 6	PR: Saint Teresa of Jesus, “Religious Experiences” (p. 40-42) and D2L: Al-Ghazali, “Deliverance from Error”
Tues. Feb. 11	PR: Alston, “Religious Experience as Perception of God” (p. 51-58)
<b>Thurs. Feb. 13</b>	<b>D2L Quiz #2</b> PR: Martin, “Critique of Religious Experience” (p. 68-78) <b>Short Reaction Paper #1</b>
<b><i>The Nature of the Divine</i></b>	
Tues. Feb. 18	PR: Aquinas, “God is Omnipotent” (p. 138-140) and Pike, “Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action” (p. 144-149)
Thurs. Feb. 20	PR: Boethius, “God is Timeless” (p. 150-152) and <i>The Upaniṣads</i> , “Ātman is Brahman” (p. 160-162)
<b><i>Traditional Western Arguments for the Existence of God</i></b>	
Tues. Feb. 25	PR: Anselm, “The Classical Ontological Argument” (p. 169-170) and PR: Gaunilo, “Critique of Anselm’s Argument” (p. 171-173)

Thurs. Feb. 27	PR: Aquinas, "The Classical Cosmological Argument" (p. 184-186) and PR: Mackie, "Critique of the Cosmological Argument" (p. 205-211)
Tues. March 4	PR: Paley, "The Analogical Teleological Argument" (p. 212-214) and PR: Hume, "Critique of the Analogical Teleological Argument" (p. 215-221)
<b>Thurs. March 6</b>	<b>D2L Quiz #3</b> Catch up <b>Graded In-Class Activity #2</b>
<b><i>An Argument against the Existence of God: The Problem of Evil/Suffering</i></b>	
Tues. March 11 Thurs. March 13	PR: Hume, "Evil Makes a Strong Case Against God's Existence" (p. 276-281) PR: Hick, "Soul-Making Theodicy" (p. 316-323)
March 17-21	<b>SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS</b>
Tues. March 25 <b>Thurs. March 27</b>	PR: Rowe, "The Evidential Argument from Evil" (p. 324-332) <b>D2L Quiz #4</b> D2L: Barbour, "Process Thought" (Read p. 281-287 AND 293-304) <b>Short Reaction Paper #2</b>
<b><i>Theism and Atheism in Classical India</i></b>	
Tues. April 1 Thurs. April 3	D2L: Chakrabarti, "From the Fabric to the Weaver" D2L: Hayes, "Principled Atheism in the Buddhist Scholastic Tradition"
<b><i>Faith and Reason</i></b>	
Tues. April 8 Thurs. April 10	PR: Aquinas, "The Harmony of Reason and Revelation" (p. 92-95) and Pascal, "The Wager" (p. 96-98) Kierkegaard, "Truth is Subjectivity" (p. 111-114)
<b><i>Miracles; Gender and Religion</i></b>	
Tues. April 15 Thurs. April 17	PR: Hume, "The Evidence for Miracles is Weak" (p. 441-447) <i>Optional:</i> Davis, "Is it Possible to Know That Jesus Was Raised from the Dead?" (p. 433-440) <b>D2L Quiz #5</b> PR: Ruether, "Sexism and God-Talk" (p. 404-408) and D2L: Tsomo, "Buddhist Feminist Reflections" <b>Short Reaction Paper #3</b>
<b><i>Science and Religion; Religious Diversity</i></b>	
Tues. April 22 Thurs. April 24	PR: Gould, "Two Separate Domains" (p. 515-522) and PR: Dawkins, "Science Discredits Religion" (p. 523-526) PR: The Dalai Lama, "Buddhism and Other Religions" (p. 577-580) and D2L: Vaughn, "Defending a Thesis in an Argumentative Essay"
Tues. April 29 <b>Thurs. May 1</b>	PR: Hick, "Religious Pluralism" (p. 597-604) <b>D2L Quiz #6</b> (complete by Wed. April 30, 11:59pm) Catch up <b>Graded In-Class Activity #3</b>
<b><i>Is religion a good thing for humanity?</i></b>	
Tues. May 6	D2L: One of the following: Russell, "Why I am not a Christian" (focus on p. 14-23) or Ward, <i>Is Religion Dangerous?</i> Class debate! (Extra credit)
<b>Final paper due by Wed. May 7</b>	