



**Texas A&M**  
**UNIVERSITY**  
**Central Texas**

RELS 4315  
*Philosophy of Religion*  
Fall 2017

Class Location: FH 311  
Class Hours: M 6-9  
Instructor: Floyd Berry, PhD  
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Office Hours: MTWR 2-5  
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### 1.0 Course Description

Students examine religious phenomena and concepts of God, miracles, truth claims of religion and religious traditions, the problems of evil and suffering, the afterlife, and religious ethics. One assesses the relationship of religion and philosophy and the perspective of philosophy for an understanding of religious experience.

### 2.0 Accessing Canvas

This is a lecture course with online components in Canvas. The student accesses Canvas on the TAMUCT website ("Search myCT").

### 3.0 Course Objectives

1. Students will be able to discuss the overlap as well as the distinctions between philosophy and religion.
2. Students will be able to discuss arguments for and against the existence of God.
3. Students will be able to discuss the problems associated with evil and suffering and how they relate to a concept of God.
4. Students will be able to critique religious belief in regard to living a moral life.

### 4.0 Textbook

#### 4.1 Required for Course

Davies, B. (2004). *An introduction to the philosophy of religion* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Oxford.

Rushnell, S. (2001). *When God winks: How the power of coincidence guides your life*. New York: Atria.

#### 4.2 Recommended but Not Required

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author. NOTE: *This work will be referred to as the APA manual in this syllabus and in the course.*

- Buber, M. (1970). *I and thou* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). New York: Scribner's.
- Davies, B. (Ed.). (2000). *Philosophy of religion: A guide and anthology*. Oxford.
- Davies, P. (1992). *The mind of God: The scientific basis for a rational world*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- De Chardin, P. T. (1959). *The phenomenon of man* (B. Wall, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Gingerich, O. (2006). *God's universe*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap.
- Glynn, P. (1999). *God the evidence: The reconciliation of faith and reason in a postsecular world*.
- Hume, D. (1777/1956). *The natural history of religion*. Stanford.
- Kant, I. (1793/1960). *Religion within the limits of reason alone* (T. M. Greene & H. H. Hudson, Trans.). New York: Harper.
- Keller, T. (2008). *The reason for God: Belief in an age of skepticism*. New York: Riverhead.
- Kierkegaard, S. (1843/2005). *Fear and trembling* (A. Hannay, Trans.). New York: Penguin.
- Kurtz, P. (Ed.). (2003). *Science and religion: Are they compatible?* Amherst, NY: Prometheus.
- Moody, R. A. (1975). *Life after life: The investigation of a phenomenon – Survival of bodily death*. New York: Bantam.
- Moody, R. A. (1977). *Reflections on life after life*. New York: Bantam.
- Russell, B. (1997). *Religion and science*. New York: Oxford.
- Shook, J. R. (2010). *The God debates: A 21<sup>st</sup> century guide for atheists and believers*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Taliaferro, C. (2009). *Philosophy of religion: A beginner's guide*. Oxford: Oneworld.
- Weatherhead, L. D. (1969). *Life begins at death*. Nashville, Abingdon.

## 5.0 Course Requirements

### 5.1 Exams (400 pts)

The student will take two exams, a mid-term and a final. Each exam is valued at 200 points. The student has a maximum of two hours to take the exam, given immediately after roll call. The exam window closes, however, when two hours have elapsed. The mid-term exam will receive comments from the instructor and returned to student via the message feature of Canvas. The exams are essay in nature, and the student must access a computer terminal at the library and use Microsoft Word to complete the two exams. Use of books, notes, or the internet (except for use of Canvas when submitting work) is forbidden during these two exams. Students are advised to review their work before submission. Submission will be as an attachment to the message feature of Canvas. The following rubric will guide the instructor in grading exams.

Qualities & Criteria	Poor	Good	Excellent
<b>Content</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elements of topics to be addressed</li> <li>• Information is correct</li> <li>• Coherency</li> </ul> <i>(Weight: 70%)</i>	Essay is not objective and poorly addresses the issues. The information provided is unnecessary or insufficient to discuss the issues.  (0-109 pts)	Essay is mostly objective and addresses most of the issues. Provided information is mostly necessary and sufficient to discuss the issues.  (110-131 pts)	Essay is objective and addresses all the issues. Provided information is necessary and sufficient to discuss the issues.  (132-140 pts)
<b>Quality of Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity</li> <li>• Grammar and English usage</li> <li>• Organization and coherence</li> </ul> <i>(Weight: 30%)</i>	Essay is poorly written and contains flagrant spelling and grammatical errors. Essay is poorly organized, lacks clarity, and incoherent.  (0-40 pts)	Essay is mostly well-written, without spelling or grammatical errors. Essay is organized, clear, and ideas are presented in coherent ways.  (41-55 pts)	Essay is well-written, without spelling or grammatical errors. Essay is well organized, clear, and ideas are presented in coherent ways.  (56-60 pts)

A week before each exam, the instructor will provide students with two exam questions. This practice provides the student with a week's worth of preparation. It is highly recommended that students compose some outline of how they will write their essays and commit that outline to memory. After beginning the exam, students may wish to write their memorized outlines on the blank exam questions page, given to students before they begin their exams. This practice provides coherency and organization for one's essay.

**NOTE:** The student is expected to have an adequate knowledge of the essentials of grammar, writing style, and guidelines for paper organization and referencing in accordance with the APA manual and consistent with upper-level college standing. If the student does *not* have adequate knowledge in these areas, then the purchase and use of additional books is recommended. Failure to provide written work in accordance with the essentials of acceptable, English writing style and APA guidelines will result in poor grades.

## 5.2 Class Participation (300 pts)

The students are expected to participate in class discussions, indicating an understanding of the reading material and how to apply it. Students earn a point for full attendance on a specific day (appears on time and does not leave early). Students earn an additional point for participating in class discussion. (No points are awarded on exam days, however.) Thus, the student earns 0-2 points on each class day (total of 13 days), which translates into the following grade for class participation in the course:

Points	Grade	Points	Grade
26	300	16-17	200
24-25	280	14-15	180
22-23	260	12-13	160
20-21	240	10-11	140
18-19	220	0-9	0

NOTE: If the student is tardy (appears in class after roll is called), it is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor at the conclusion of class (before leaving the classroom that evening), that the student arrived in class and would like to receive some credit for class participation. Failure to notify the instructor may result in an absence for that day.

### 5.3 Academic Honesty

During the first week of class, the student is to read the section in the syllabus on academic honesty (section 8.0) and the material at the Purdue University OWL website regarding plagiarism. The student must sign the document pertaining to academic honesty and return it to the instructor. **NOTE: Students will not be allowed to continue in the course without notifying the instructor of their comprehension of this material (by signing the document and submitting it to the instructor).**

### 5.4 Reaction Comments (300 pts)

At the conclusion of each class (except when exams are taken, students will submit a Reaction Comment (RC), due before midnight. In Canvas, the student will send an email to the instructor, reacting to material discussed or experienced in class. A paragraph or two is sufficient. Students express their reactions to something discussed or experienced in class. The reaction may be emotional, cognitive, insightful, positive, negative, or neutral. **A mere summary of material discussed in class, however, is insufficient for credit.** Students should make some comments on assigned reading or discussion, coupled with their reactions. Students shall identify their email with the headings o RC1, RC2, etc., as indicated in the course calendar (section 7.0). Using headings other than RC1, RC2, etc. may result in no credit. Obviously, students must attend class before they can react to material presented or discussed in class. RC's translate to grades as follows:

# of RC's	Grade	# of RC's	Grade
13	300	6	125
12	275	5	100
11	250	4	75
10	225	3	50
9	200	2	25
8	175	1	12
7	150	0	0

## 6.0 Grading Matrix and Conversion

### 6.1 Matrix

	Points
Exams (2 @ 200)	400
Class Participation	300
Reaction Comments	300
Academic Honesty Document	-----
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1000</b>

### 6.2 Conversion to Course Letter Grade

Points	%	Grade
900 – 1000	90 – 100	A
800 – 899	80 – 89	B
700 – 799	70 – 79	C
600 – 699	60 – 69	D
0 – 599	0 – 59	F

## 7.0 Course Calendar<sup>1</sup>

Date	Topics/Activities	Readings <sup>2</sup>	Assignments Due <sup>3</sup>
8/28	Academic honesty  Course requirements  Cont. Citations and references  Religious studies	Academic honesty/plagiarism readings (see document)  Syllabus  PowerPoint discussion  PowerPoint discussion	RC1 due
9/4	No class		
9/11	Concepts of God	D, ch 1	Academic honesty document due  RC2
9/18	Philosophy and religion	D, Introduction, ch 2	RC3
9/25 (cont.)	Cosmological arguments	D, ch 3	RC4

10/2	Design arguments	D, ch 4	RC5
10/9	Ontological arguments	D, ch 5	RC6
10/16	Mid-term exam		
10/23	Experience and God	D, ch 6	RC7
10/30	God winks	R, Introduction, chs 1-4	RC8
11/6	God winks	R, chs 5-10	RC9
11/13	Omnipotence and Omniscience	D, ch 9	RC10
11/20	God and evil	D, ch 10	RC11
11/27	Morality and Religion	D, ch 12	RC12
12/4	Life after death	D, ch 13	RC13
12/11	Final exam		

<sup>1</sup> Events are subject to minor revision

<sup>2</sup> **D** = Davies, *Philosophy of Religion*; **R** = Rushnell, *When God Winks*

**ch** = chapter, **chs** = chapters, **pp** = pages

<sup>3</sup> All assignments are due at 6:00 p.m.

### 8.0 Academic Honesty

TAMUCT expects all students to maintain high standards of personal and scholarly conduct. Students guilty of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, self-plagiarism (“recycling”), or collusion. The instructor shall initiate action for each case of academic dishonesty and report it to the Associate Director of Student Conduct. Zero points will be assigned for any course product that violates academic honesty. The student should access this link for more information: <https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/studentconduct/academicintegrity.php>.

### 9.0 Disability Support

If students believe that this course may present barriers to learning due to a disability, they must contact Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831 in Warrior Hall, Ste. 212. For more information, students may visit their website at <https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/access-inclusion/>. Any information that the student provides is private and confidential and will be treated as such. The instructor cannot accommodate students’ disabilities unless they communicate with Access and Inclusion first.

### 10.0 Diversity in the Classroom

Respect for cultural and human biological diversity are core concepts within the social sciences. In this course, each voice in the classroom has value in contributing to class discussion. The student should respect the different experiences, beliefs, and values expressed by one’s fellow students and instructor, and refrain from derogatory comments about other individuals, cultures, groups, or viewpoints. In this course we welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, citizenships, disabilities, education, ethnicities, family statuses, genders, gender identities, geographical locations, languages, military experiences, political views, races, religions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and work experiences.

**11.0 Writing Center**

The University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University-Central Texas is a free workspace open to all TAMUCT students. The UWC is located in Warrior Hall, Rm 416. The Center is open 11 am - 6 pm, Monday-Thursday during the term. Students may work independently in the UWC by checking out a laptop that runs Microsoft Office Suite and connects to WIFI, or by consulting the resources on writing, including all of the relevant style guides. Students may also arrange a individual session with a trained and experienced writing tutor. Tutorials can be arranged by visiting the UWC. Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process. Sessions typically last 20-30 minutes. While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will help students develop more effective creative and revision strategies.

**12.0 Late Work**

As a rule, make-up work for exams and annotated bibliographies. In rare instances, however, a make-up for the mid-term exam may be offered, but with a 20-point deduction (evidence pertaining to a serious emergency will be considered for such a makeup). *In no instance will a make-up be offered for the final exam, and in no instance will a make-up for an exam be given after two weeks from the original exam date.* To be considered as a prospect for making up an exam, the student must contact the instructor within 24 hours of having missed an exam for purposes of making it up. A request for make-up, of course, may or may not be granted. The final course grade will be posted within a few days of the final exam; therefore, *no incompletes will be awarded for this course.* If the student foresees that he or she will be unable to complete the course, then the student should either drop the course or accept the posted grade.

**13.0 Modification of the Syllabus**

This syllabus may be revised in minor ways at the discretion of the instructor. The student is responsible for noting any changes in the syllabus. More than likely, a change in the syllabus will pertain to events in the course calendar (sect. 7.0). If modified, the revised course calendar will be posted on Canvas and will replace section 7.0 of the syllabus.

**14.0 Contact with the Instructor**

The student should contact the instructor via the message feature of Canvas about any topic or issue that pertains to the course.

**15.0 Announcements**

The student is responsible for checking Canvas on a near-daily basis for ongoing announcements pertaining to the course.