

PHIL-134: Philosophy of Religion.

Fall 2012

John Lawless, Caldwell Hall 210B

lawlessj@live.unc.edu

Course description. This course is an introduction to the philosophy of western religion, and so will presuppose no background either in philosophy or in religious studies. In this course, we will work to sharpen students' analytical skills, and to explore particular questions associated with Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The problems we will discuss are generally associated with monotheistic religions in which God is personal, omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent, and creator of the universe. (That doesn't mean that we should have no interest in those faiths that fall outside of this scope. Students familiar with Buddhism, Hinduism, or other traditions should feel free to bring new perspectives into the discussion.)

Course Requirements. It is essential that you keep up with the readings, attend each class, and participate actively in class discussions. You must complete each assignment in a timely fashion. In order to pass the course, you must at least satisfy each of these requirements.

Five short, in-class response papers (worth a total of 15% of the final grade). Each paper will receive a mark of ✓⁺ (excellent), ✓ (complete), or ✓⁻ (inadequate).

Short argument reconstruction (10%). I will assign you a passage two weeks in advance of the due date, and ask you to explain the passage in your own words.

Two five-page papers (20% each). In these papers, I will ask you to present an author's argument in your own words, and present an objection to that argument.

One three-page paper (10%). I will ask you to respond to an objection I provide to your second five-page paper.

Final exam (10%). The exam will consist of short answers and of one short essay.

Participation (15%). This course, as with any philosophy course, will depend on your active engagement with the material in class. This will rely on you being prepared each session, but it will also depend on you making the environment one conducive to the participation of all of the members of the class – one that is open, respectful, and positive. Notice that this component of your grade is weightier than your final exam.

Attendance. Each student gets one free absence per session. Beyond that, you must speak to me about any absence, preferably beforehand. Be aware that I will be unlikely to excuse any absence that the university does not require me to excuse. For each unexcused absence, you will be docked 3 points off of your final grade. For each failure to speak with me, you will lose an *extra* 2 points off of your final grade.

The Honor System. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has had a student-led honor system for over 100 years. Academic integrity is at the heart of Carolina and we all are responsible for upholding the ideals of honor and integrity. The student-led Honor System is responsible for adjudicating any suspected violations of the Honor Code and all suspected instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the honor system. Information, including your responsibilities as a student is outlined in the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance. Your full participation and observance of the Honor Code is expected.

Required texts. You must have available a copy of C. S. Lewis' *The Problem of Pain*. All other texts will be available on the course site.

Tentative Syllabus

August 22 Eliezer Berkovitz, *God, Man, and History* (excerpt)

August 27 William James, "The Will to Believe"
William K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief"

Unit 1. Divine Attributes

August 29 Swinburne, "Omnipotent"

September 3 *Labor Day.*

September 5 Swinburne, "Omniscient"
Adams, "Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil" (excerpt)

September 10 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (excerpt)
Swinburne, "Eternal and Immutable"

September 12 *Argument reconstruction due.*
Discussion. No new reading.

Unit 2. God and Morality

September 17 William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, "God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist" (excerpt)
Adams, "Moral Arguments for Theistic Belief"

September 19 Job 1:1-12
Peter Geach, "The Moral Law and the Law of God"

September 24 Thomas Aquinas, "The First Way"

September 26 *First paper topic assigned.*
Genesis 22
Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (excerpt)
Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods* (excerpt)

Unit 3. The Problem of Evil

October 1 Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (excerpts): "The Brothers Get Acquainted" and "Rebellion," from *The Brothers Karamazov*

October 3 C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (chapters 2 and 3)

October 8 Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (chapters 4 and 5).

October 10 Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (chapters 6 and 7).

October 15 *Paper workshops.* No new reading.

October 17 *Fall break.*

October 22 *First paper due.*
Beebe, "Plantinga's Free Will Defense"
Swinburne, "Perfectly Free" (recommended)

October 24 John Hick, "The Value of 'Soul-Making Theodicy'"

Unit 4. Job

October 29 Job (complete.)

October 31 Adams, "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God"
Tod Linafelt, "The Wizard of Uz"

November 5 Review. *Second paper topic assigned.* No new reading.

Unit 5. Eternal Life.

November 7 Thomas Nagel, "Death"

November 12 Bernard Williams, "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality"

Borges, "The Immortal" (recommended)

November 14 Dan Moller, "Love and Death"

November 19 *Paper workshops.* No new reading.

November 21 *Thanksgiving break.*

November 26 *Second paper due.*

John Perry, "A Dialogue Concerning Personal Identity and Immortality" (*first night*)

November 28 Perry, "A Dialogue..." (*second night*)

December 3 Perry, "A Dialogue..." (*third night*)

December 5 Review. *Final paper topic assigned.* No new reading.