

## Course Outline

### PHIL 1140 Philosophy of Religion

Spring 2022

**Course Format:** Lecture 4.0 h + Seminar 0.0 h + Lab. 0.0 h

**Credits: 3.0**

**Transfer Credit:** For information, visit [bctransferguide.ca](http://bctransferguide.ca)

#### Course Description

This course investigates proofs for the existence of God, the intellectual ground of faith, the problems of evil and suffering, religious experience, the question of miracles, the connection between ethics and religion, and recent attempts to explain the evolution of religion in biological terms.

Contemporary scepticism about religion is fuelled largely by science, especially our present understanding of biological evolution. At the same time, however, many theists vigorously challenge these scientific claims or interpret them differently. Some even argue that recent scientific discoveries support theism. We will investigate this controversy in some detail.

**Prerequisites and Corequisites:** none

#### Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Read philosophical texts, including some from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and be able to discuss their contents.
- Accurately summarise the views and arguments of major philosophers covered in the course readings.
- Demonstrate understanding of these views and arguments by writing essays that include criticism and evaluation of them.
- Write in a contemporary academic style that combines clarity and precision with simplicity and accessibility.

**Instructor:** Dr. Richard Johns

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**Web site:** <http://iweb.langara.bc.ca/rjohns>

**Zoom:** <https://langara.zoom.us/j/3475366594>

**Office Hours:**

Mon 9.30 – 10.15; 1.30 – 2

Tues 11 – 12

Weds 1.30 – 2

Thurs 1 – 2

**Class Times:**

Tues + Thurs 2.30 – 4.20

A348

**Textbook and Course Materials:**

Peterson, Hasker, et. al., *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Oxford University Press, 2014. (At Langara Bookstore)

Other readings are posted to the Langara iweb (<http://iweb.langara.bc.ca/rjohns>) for free download.

**Assessments and Weighting:**

2 Essays. (40%)

2 Midterms (30%)

(Midterms will take place, and essays will be handed in, on the **Thursday** of the week shown in the schedule below.)

Final exam, during the exam period. (30%)

**Grading:**

|    |       |    |       |   |       |
|----|-------|----|-------|---|-------|
| A+ | 90+   | B- | 68-71 | D | 50-54 |
| A  | 85-89 | C+ | 64-67 | F | 0-49  |
| B+ | 76-79 | C  | 60-63 |   |       |
| B  | 72-75 | C- | 55-59 |   |       |

**Detailed Course Schedule:**

|          |               |   |  |
|----------|---------------|---|--|
| Jan.     | 6             | Introduction and overview.<br>The cosmological argument       | PR4: (Aquinas, Mackie)                                   |
|          | 11, 13        | The cosmological and ontological arguments.                   | PR4: (Anselm, Plantinga)<br>Grossman (iweb)              |
|          | 18, 20        | Teleological arguments  | PR4: (Paley, Hume)                                       |
|          | 25, <b>27</b> | The connection between ethics and religion. <b>Midterm #1</b> | “Theocentric Morality” (iweb),<br>Kagan and Craig (iweb) |
| February | 1, 3          | Ethics and religion, problem of evil                          | PR 8: (Hume, Mackie, Plantinga)                          |
|          | 8             | Problem of evil   | Swinburne (iweb)   |
|          | <b>10</b>     | <b>Midterm #2</b>   |  |
|          | 15, 17        | Miracles  | PR10: (Hume, Mackie), Wallace<br>(iweb)                  |
|          | 21-25         | *** Spring Break ***  |  |
| March    | 1, 3          | Religious experience.   | PR 2: (Teresa, Martin)                                   |
|          | 8, <b>10</b>  | How are faith and reason related?<br><b>Essay #1</b>          | PR3: (Clifford, Pascal). PR5:<br>Plantinga               |
|          | 15, 17        | Science: friend or foe of religion?                           | PR12: (Dawkins, Kitcher, Lennox)                         |
|          | 22, 24        | Science: friend or foe of religion?                           | Plantinga (iweb)   |
|          | 29, <b>31</b> | Evolutionary account of religion.<br><b>Essay #2</b>          | Dennett (iweb), Henig (iweb)                             |
| April    | 5, 7          | Review.   |  |

PR = *Philosophy of Religion*, the assigned course text. Chapter numbers are given for each assigned reading.

As a student at Langara, you are responsible for familiarizing yourself and complying with the following policies:

**College Policies:**

[E1003 - Student Code of Conduct](#)

[F1004 - Code of Academic Conduct](#)

[E2008 - Academic Standing - Academic Probation and Academic Suspension](#)

[E2006 - Appeal of Final Grade](#)

[F1002 - Concerns about Instruction](#)

[E2011 - Withdrawal from Courses](#)

**Course Policies:**

It is the student's responsibility to understand what plagiarism is and avoid it. For detailed information about plagiarism and advice see <http://langara.ca/library/research-help/citing-help/avoid-plagiarism.html>. **Do not use a paraphrasing tool.** This usually produces nonsense, *and it's still plagiarism* unless the original text is clearly cited.

The course instructor will hold office hours at the times listed on the previous page. You are encouraged to attend these if you either have a difficulty related to the course, or are especially interested in some topic and want to know more. The instructor has set aside this time, and is very happy to interact with students.

The instructor's email address is also listed. Students may use email to ask questions of the instructor, when this is more efficient than attending an office hour. In many cases, use of email is highly convenient to both the student and the instructor. Students should use only email the instructor when necessary, however. Always first check the course outline, and Course Tools, to see if it has the information you need, and consider asking a classmate for help.