



CAMOSUN COLLEGE
School of Arts & Science
Humanities

Phil 205, Philosophy of Religion
Fall, 2009

COURSE OUTLINE

Please note: This outline will not be kept indefinitely. It is recommended students keep this outline for your records.

1. Instructor Information

- (a) Instructor: Karen Shirley
(b) Office hours: 10:30 - 12:20 on Wednesdays and Fridays
(c) Location: Young 320
(d) Phone: 370 3518 Home: 383 8164

2. Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to describe and assess
a) arguments on the role of reason in arriving at a religious or other position, b) arguments on the existence of God, c) arguments on both sides of the evolution-creationist debate and d) arguments on the possibility of an afterlife.

3. Required Materials

- (a) Texts
Handout called Philosophy 205 which is sold in the bookstore

4. Basis of Student Assessment (Weighting)

Table with 2 columns: Assessment Method and Weighting. Rows include Mid-term Exam (closed-book) .25%, Final (Final exam period - closed-book) .25%, Paper .20%, Seminar debate .20%, and Participation via questions and comments on the seminar debates .10%.

5. Grading System

Standard Grading System (GPA)

Table mapping letter grades to percentage ranges: A+ = 95-100%, A = 90-94%, A- = 85-89%, B+ = 80-84%, B = 75-79%, B- = 70-74%, C+ = 65-69%, C = 60-64%, D = 50-59%, F = 0-49%.

Temporary grades are assigned for specific circumstances and will convert to a final grade according to the grading scheme being used in the course. See Grading Policy E-1.5 at camosun.ca for information on conversion to final grades, and for additional information on student record and transcript notations.

Mid-term and Final Exams: The mid-term is one hour long, closed-book and worth 25% of your course grade. You are encouraged to bring your course outline, a dictionary and a style guide. You will be asked to answer the study question that I pull out of a hat at the beginning of the exam (20%). In addition, you will be asked to take a position on a debate topic, also chosen via the hat method (5%). You may rewrite the midterm if you want to improve your mark.

The final is not cumulative and is worth 25% of your course grade. The final will be held in the final exam period and will be two hours long. You will be asked to answer two study questions (10% each) and to take a position on a debate topic. The hat method will be used again.

The kind of answer that will count as good will depend, in part, on what the question is. Some questions call for strong arguments; some call for the application of a position to a situation; some call for careful analysis and some require that you convey someone else's reasoning. On the other hand, the following factors will matter in *all* of the answers: clarity, conciseness, spelling and grammar.

Questions with asterisks beside them are to be answered on your own.

Debates: You are required to participate in a debate which is worth 20% of your final grade.

During the first class, students will be divided into groups of two to four people. One or two people in each group will take either the pro or con position on a chosen topic. Each group will be given a topic and a date on which to debate.

You will be graded on the strength of your arguments, the knowledge you show on the topic and your ability to present your arguments in a way that helps other students understand the relevant issues.

Do not read out any part of the debate. If you do read, you will automatically lose 5 of the 20 marks. You may *occasionally* refer to notes. Do not give the class handouts.

If you are at a loss as to what arguments have been made on the topic, see the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (a reference book in the library) for a start. A good online resource is the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. See me, if you need to do so, well in advance, for additional advice. Some of the topics require knowledge of factual information. Ensure that you know this information. Once you have an idea of what issues are at stake and of some of the arguments that have been presented on the topic, you should spend time *thinking for yourself* on the topic. What do *you* think the truth of the matter is? Why?

Structure of Debates

First,

- a) Pro side: *one strong* argument in favour of the claim. (Speak for up to two minutes.)
- b) Con side: objection to the above argument. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
- c) Pro side: response to the above objection. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
- d) Con side: objection to above response or a second objection to the pro side's original argument. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)
- e) Pro side: response to the second objection. (Speak for up to thirty seconds.)

Second, repeat steps one through five above, beginning with the con side this time.

Third, pro and con sides now address points put to them by the class.

Paper: 5% will be deducted for each day the paper is late unless a doctor's note is attached to it.

You may rewrite your paper if you do not like the grade you get on it. In order to get a rewrite marked, you must submit both the original paper with the rewrite. If you radically change your paper in the process of rewriting it, some of my comments on the original paper may become redundant. Nevertheless, you must hand in the original paper with the rewrite. Rewrites are due one week after I hand back the first edition.

No title pages. If your printer allows you to do so, you may use the blank side of used paper or print on both sides of the page. The paper should not be longer than 1500 words; it may be shorter.

Defend your own religious or, if you prefer, 'spiritual' position. If you are an atheist or agnostic, defend that view. If you believe in some sort of special energy, defend that view. It should contain the strongest argument that you can find in defense of your position. It should also contain a response to at least one of the best possible objections to your position. Ensure that you include a thesis statement. You will be marked on the strength of your argument, objections and responses. Clarity and conciseness also matter as do spelling and grammar.

Lecture Schedule

1. Sept. 9 Administration

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

2. Sept. 11 “Philosophy East and West”
by Stewart and Blocker

FAITH VS. REASON

3. Sept. 16 Pascal

4. Sept. 18 Kierkegaard

5. Sept. 23 Clifford

6. Sept. 25 William James

CLASSIC ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

7. Sept. 30 Donovan

8. Oct. 2 Plantinga

9. Oct. 7 Anselm Versus Gaunilo

10. Oct. 9 Aquinas

11. Oct. 14 Hume - “Critique of the
Design Argument”

12. Oct. 16: Ramakrishna

THE ONENESS - OR NOT - OF THE VARIOUS RELIGIONS

13. Oct. 21 “Hume’s ‘Of Miracles,’”
(Guest lecturer: Professor J. O. Young,
Chair, UVic Philosophy Dept)

14. Oct. 23 : Buddhism (Guest lecturer:
Dr. John Conklin from Camosun)

15. Oct. 28: Islam (Guest lecturer: Dr.
Nasr Kahalifa from Camosun)

16. Oct. 30: **EXAM**

NEITZSCHE

17. Nov. 4 Nietzsche

THE MEANING OF RELIGIOUS CLAIMS

18. Nov. 6: Flew, Hare, Mitchell and

19. Nov. 13: Flew, Hare, Mitchell and
Flew cont’d

THE POSSIBILITY OF AN AFTERLIFE

20. Nov. 18: Auronbindo (PAPERS
DUE)

21. Nov. 20 Price

22. Nov. 25 Badham

23. Nov. 27: Murphey

CREATIONISM VS. EVOLUTION

24. Dec. 2: Murphey, cont’d
(REWRITES DUE)

25. Dec. 4: Gish

26. Dec. 9: Kitcher

27. Dec. 11: Kline

Study Questions for Midterm

1. What is the difference between a prudential argument and an evidential argument? Describe a prudential argument for a religious or spiritual position.
2. How does the fact that Pascal assumes that there are only two options – to believe or not to believe in the Catholic God - form the basis of an objection to his conclusion?
3. The following sentence is from *Fear and Trembling*: “Faith is precisely the paradox that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal, is justified before it, not as inferior to it but as superior - yet in such a way, please note, that it is the single individual who, after being subordinate as the single individual to the universal, now by means of the universal becomes the single individual who as the single individual is superior, that the single individual as the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute.” What does it mean?
4. Is Clifford’s ship owner analogous to the person considering religious belief?
5. Has James confused self-creating beliefs with wishful thinking?
6. Is the religious hypothesis, as described by James, momentous?
7. Explain the difference between psychological certainty and being right, as described by Donovan.
8. According to Donovan, what is the difference between accepting that there is a God on the basis of intuitive awareness and accepting that there are other minds?
9. What does Donovan conclude from his discussion of Adam and Eve?
10. What does Donovan conclude from his discussion of two doctors, “one a man and one a woman, the latter of whom has also given birth”?
11. Characterize classic foundationalism and the evidentialist objection described by Plantinga.
12. What does Plantinga mean by ‘evidence’? How is it different from ‘grounds’ or ‘justification’?
13. According to Plantinga, how can a reformed epistemologist hold that belief in God is properly basic but that belief in the great pumpkin is not?
14. What does what Donovan says about sense perception and the existence of other minds suggest in the way of an objection to Plantinga’s view that the following claims are properly basic: ‘I see a tree’, ‘that person is pleased’ or ‘I had breakfast more than an hour ago’?
15. Could an argument similar to Anselm’s be used to prove that an omni-malevolent devil exists who is the supreme?
16. What is a strong objection to Aquinas’s second way?
17. Briefly convey Philo’s main objection to arguments from analogy for the existence of God.
18. Briefly convey Philo’s main objection to *a priori* arguments for the existence of God.
19. Briefly convey Philo’s main objection to part/whole arguments for the existence of God.
20. According to Hume, under what circumstances should we believe a report of a miracle?
21. What four reasons does Hume give for saying there have there never been good grounds for believing a report of a miracle?

18. Explain the difference between theory_O and theory_S, according to Kline.

Study Questions for Final

1. What does Nietzsche mean when he claims that God is dead?
2. Describe Flew's position.
3. Mitchell says the partisan can maintain "He is on my side," as a significant article of faith. He says that this is different from making an unfalsifiable and so meaningless utterance. Is he right?
4. Describe the components of a person according to Aurobindo.
5. Describe human interaction in the afterlife, according to Price.
6. Assess Badham's "out-of-the-body eye" objection to one proof of life after death.
7. How does Murphey characterize foundationalism?
8. What are the three camps that modern theologians fall into with respect to foundationalism and the problems that each faces?
9. Describe MacIntyre's circularity argument.
10. What is the difference between Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila's criteria for distinguishing an authentic experience of God from an inauthentic one?
11. How does Murphey show that a Christian research program is falsifiable?
12. Assuming that there are inconsistencies between the research programs of science and Christianity, which program is better in light of Lakatos's criteria for choosing among competing research programs?
13. Is Gish's conception of 'observed' the same as that of the scientist? When he claims no one has ever observed evolution and so "it is not amenable to the methods of experimental science"? (See also Kline.)
14. Is evolutionary theory unfalsifiable?
15. How can the evolutionist respond to Gish's claim that 1) evolution would take "billions of times longer than the assumed five billion years of earth history" and that 2) life forms appear too abruptly in the fossil record to support evolutionary theories?
16. How can the evolutionist respond to Gish's claim that evolution contradicts the Second Law of Thermodynamics?
17. Present one of Kitcher's objections to flood geography.

Seminar Topics

Sept. 9/11

Come if you have any questions. No marks lost for not attending.

Sept. 16/18

Atheism is a religion.

Sept. 23/25

Suppose that two people are very similar, except that one is religious and one isn't. The religious person will be happier.

Sept 30/Oct. 2

Assuming that the soul is not physical, it cannot interact with the body.

Oct. 7/9

The view that people are reincarnated is indefensible.

Oct. 14/16

People have some free will.

Oct. 21/23

The claim, "I am spiritual" is unfalsifiable.

Oct. 28 – This debate will not be covered on the midterm, but on the final.

Astrology is defensible.

Nov. 4/6

If god is omniscient, which includes knowing the future, omni benevolent and the creator of the universe, no sense can be made of the standard belief that prayer influences God to do what he otherwise would not have done.

Nov. 13

Astrology is defensible.

Nov. 18/20

If, in the afterlife, one is rewarded with infinite bliss for believing in the true god and punished with infinite pain for not doing so, then religious tolerance is immoral.

Nov. 25/27

Assume that a wrong-doer's punishment somehow morally neutralizes the wrong that he or she did. When one person morally wrongs a second person, a third person's punishment cannot neutralize the wrong. Thus, Christ couldn't make up for our sins by dying on the cross.

Dec. 2/4

The concept of a Holy Trinity can be reconciled with the view that God is incomposite.

Dec. 9/11

Review

Alternative debate topic

What determines that an act is morally right is the fact that God wills it. [Debaters: assume that there is an omnibenevolent God.]

Note that failing to follow the following rules may cost you marks.

1. Do not use the first or second person on your exams. Here are two examples of the first person: “**We** cannot pass students who cannot use the English language adequately,” and “**I** cannot pass students who cannot use the English language adequately.” Here is an example of the second person: “**You** don’t realise that it is not our fault that we were not taught how to write in high school.” The following are examples of sentences written in the third person. “**People** cannot pass the buck forever.” “**One** will find that a style guide is essential in university.”
2. Do not ask rhetorical questions.
3. Do not use a pronoun which disagrees with the noun it refers to. You should try to use gender neutral language in this course, although failure to do so will not result in a lower grade. At first, this effort may result in a number of cases of pronoun disagreement. In many cases, pronoun disagreement can be avoided through the use of plural nouns. Here is an example of a sentence in which the pronoun disagrees with the noun: “**A philosopher** should not be so picky about English; **they** are not English teachers.” Here is the corrected version: “**Philosophers** should not be so picky about English; **they** are not English teachers.”
4. Do not confuse “its” with “it’s.” Since you are not allowed to use contractions, you should never use “it’s.”
5. Do not confuse “their” with “there.”
6. Do not add “ly” to “first,” “second” and so on.
7. Do not forget possessive apostrophes and do not put them in the wrong place.
8. Do not use abbreviations or a contractions.
9. Do not use “e. g.”; use “for example.”
10. Do not use “etc.”; use “and so on.”
11. Do not use “i.e.”; use “that is.” Better yet, say it clearly the first time.
12. Do not use the upper-case where the lower case is standard. 5% will be deducted from a student’s exam if he or she makes this mistake.
13. Do not misspell the following words:
 - despite
 - argument (*one* “e”)
 - philosophy
 - Socrates

LEARNING SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

There are a variety of services available for students to assist them throughout their learning. This information is available in the College Calendar, Registrar’s Office or the College web site at <http://www.camosun.bc.ca>

ACADEMIC CONDUCT POLICY

There is an Academic Conduct Policy **which includes plagiarism**. It is the student’s responsibility to become familiar with the content of this policy. The policy is available in each School Administration Office, Registration, and on the College web site in the Policy Section.

www.camosun.bc.ca/divisions/pres/policy/2-education/2-5.html