



CAMOSUN COLLEGE
School of Arts & Science
Humanities

Phil 205, Philosophy of Religion
Fall, 2014

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: Tues, Weds, and Fri: 9:30 - 10:20; Wed and Thurs: 11:30 - 12:20
(c) Location: Young 320
(d) Phone: 370 3518 Home: 383 8164 Email: shirleyk@camosun.bc.ca

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 Type, Weighting. Rows include Mid-term Exam (25%), Final (25%), Paper (20%), Seminar debate (20%), and Participation (10%).

5. Grading System

Table with 3 columns: Percentage, Grade, Grade Point Equivalency. Rows show percentage ranges from 90-100 down to 0-49 and corresponding grades from A+ to F.

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 fifty minutes long, closed-book and worth 25% of your course grade. You should bring your course outline, a dictionary and a style guide. You will be asked to answer the study question that is randomly pulled out of a hat at the beginning of the exam. 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. 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.

**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 be redundant. Nevertheless, you must hand in the original paper with the rewrite.

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. Use, MLA, Times New Roman, 14-point font (because my eyes are old).

Defend the view that there is a supernatural being (or energy, etc.) or defend agnosticism or atheism. There is no need to explain the *cause* of your position (your personal history) unless it is part of the *justification* of it. Your paper 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.

If you are at a loss as to what arguments have been made on the topic, see the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (both of which are online).

**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 but feel free to use the classroom computer.

If you are at a loss as to what arguments have been made on the topic, see the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (both of which are online).

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.

## Lecture and Seminar Schedule

Sept. 2 Administration

### WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

Sept. 4 “Philosophy East and West” by Stewart and Blocker

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

### FAITH VS. REASON

Sept. 9 Pascal

Sept. 12 Kierkegaard

Sept. 16 Clifford

Sept. 19 William James

### CLASSIC ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Sept. 23 Donovan

Sept. 26 Plantinga

Sept. 30 Anselm Versus Gaunilo

Oct. 3 Aquinas

Oct. 7 Hume - “Critique of the Design Argument”

### FIRST NATIONS SPIRITUALITY

Oct. 10: **Guest lecturer:** Dr Barbara Waterfall

### MIRACLES

Oct. 14 “Hume’s ‘Of Miracles,’”

Oct. 17 Buddhism (**Guest lecturer:** Kelsang Zopa)

### NEITZSCHE

Oct. 21: Nietzsche

Oct. 24: **MIDTERM**

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

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

### THE MEANING OF RELIGIOUS CLAIMS

Oct. 31: Flew, Hare, and Mitchell

**PAPERS DUE**

Nov. 4: Flew, Hare, Mitchell and Flew cont’d

### THE POSSIBILITY OF AN AFTERLIFE

Nov. 7: Auronbindo

Nov. 11 **HOLIDAY!**

Nov. 14 Price

I RETURN YOUR MARKED PAPERS

Nov. 18: Badham

### CREATIONISM VS. EVOLUTION

Nov 21: Murphey, cont’d

**REWRITES DUE**

Nov. 25: Gish

Nov. 28: Kitcher

Dec. 2: Kline

Dec. 5: Review

REWRITES RETURNED TO YOU

## 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 supremely powerful?
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. According to Hume, under what circumstances should we believe a report of a miracle?
20. What four reasons does Hume give for saying there have there never been good grounds for believing a report of a miracle?
21. How does Kelsang Zopa the possibility of reincarnation?
22. What does Neitzsche mean when he claims that God is dead?

## Study Questions for Final

1. Some people claim that Islam is not sexist but that it does condemn homosexuality. Is this position subject to the objection that such people are taking cultural influences into account when reading the Quran and the Hadith in relation to sexism but not in relation to homosexuality?
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. What must a young earth creationist say about the journey of marsupials to Australia, according to Kitcher?
18. Explain the difference between theory<sub>O</sub> and theory<sub>S</sub>, according to Kline.

## Seminar Topics

### Sept. 2/4

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

### Sept. 9/11

Come with what you think are useful distinctions between religion and spirituality and between agnosticism and atheism. Alternatively, argue that no such distinctions can be made. Bear in mind the difference between the connotation and denotation of terms.

### Sept. 16/18

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

### Sept 23/25

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

### Sept 30/Oct. 2

The view that belief in creator gods is an evolutionary by-product of agent detection is the best of the evolutionary explanations for religion.

### Oct. 7/9

People have some free will.

### Oct. 14/16

The view that people are reincarnated is indefensible.

**Oct. 21 Tues (A) group only** – If a person is certain that in the afterlife, people are rewarded with infinite bliss for believing in the true god and punished with infinite pain for not doing so, then that person would be immoral for exercising religious tolerance.

### Oct. 28/30

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

### Nov. 4/6

The following argument is strong: since we feel emotions because of the perception of our body reactions, (e.g. my heart is beating fast, my blood pressure has risen, I'm breathing faster- therefore I am scared or anxious) and since we do not have bodies in the afterlife, we cannot be happy in the afterlife.

### Nov. 13 (Thurs sem only (B group))

If a person is certain that in the afterlife, people are rewarded with infinite bliss for believing in the true god and punished with infinite pain for not doing so, then that person would be immoral for exercising religious tolerance.

### Nov. 18/20

1. The capacity for empathy is more important for moral goodness than is being religious.
2. When one person morally wrongs another person, a third party cannot somehow 'neutralize' the moral wrong. Thus, Christ couldn't make up for our sins by dying on the cross.

### Nov. 25/27

The following argument is strong:

- P1. We can only be judged for what we have control over.  
P2. We have control only over our actions.  
P3. Beliefs are not actions.  
C4. Therefore, we cannot be judged for our beliefs, but only for our actions.

### Dec. 3/5 Review

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

1. Do not use the first or second person on your exams or paper. You may use them in your debates though. 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

**Marking Notation**

- 3<sup>rd</sup> p = you were supposed to be writing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person  
sp = incorrect spelling  
pd = pronoun disagreement                      gr = error in grammar  
punct = punctuation                              dm = dangling modifier                              ss = sentence structure is incorrect  
ww = wrong word  
cap = you used capital or lower case letters incorrectly                              rep = repetition  
ab = you used an abbreviation                      frag = sentence fragment  
rhet ? = rhetorical question                      cl = clarity  
run on = sentence needs to be divided up

**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](http://www.camosun.bc.ca/divisions/pres/policy/2-education/2-5.html)