



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

**FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

**PHIL 331 Lec 1
Philosophy of Religion
Spring Term 2018**

Course Outline

Lectures: MW 18:00 – 20:45; SB 105

Instructor: Brandon Beasley

Office: SS 1239

Office Phone: 403-220-6465

Email: bbeasley@ucalgary.ca

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 13:00 – 14:00 or by appointment.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of religion. We will be examining topics such as: the nature of religion; the existence and nature of God or gods; the problem of evil; whether and what sort of evidence there is for belief in the divine and/or supernatural; the relationships between reason, religion, and science; religion and morality; and religious pluralism.

Prerequisites: Religious Studies 205 or a previous course in Philosophy; or consent of the Department.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Understand the nature, purpose, and methodology of philosophy, and its relevance to intellectual inquiry in general and our thinking about religion and religious concepts in particular.
- Acquire knowledge of the key issues, debates, and positions on the philosophical issues discussed in the course, and understand why they are important.
- Understand and critically respond to philosophical texts.
- Learn or grow the skills of philosophical writing, including critical responses to texts and the construction of an essay which argues for a position on one of course topics.
- Engage in constructive and respectful oral argumentation regarding relevant concepts, ideas, or theories introduced in the course.

Academic Accommodation

I want you to do well and succeed in this course. If you have any concerns about your ability to complete course assignments or attend class—these might be personal, health-related (including mental health), family-related (e.g. care-giving), etc.—please email me, or come see me, because I am happy to discuss this with you. The sooner I know about these, the earlier we can discuss possible adjustments or alternative arrangements for assignments, exams, and so on.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a disability or medical condition should communicate this need to **Student Accessibility Services** in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to me. The student accommodation policy can be found at: ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy.

Required Texts

Steven M. Cahn, *Exploring Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Available at the University Bookstore. Other readings may be posted on D2L.

Course Assessment

Assignments

- Six (6) Critical Responses: 5% each, 30% total (1-2 pages each); **due before or at the start of class on class days of your choosing**.
- Take-Home Mid-Term: 30%; **due June 1st**.
- Term Paper: 40% (5-8 pages, max. 2,500 words); **due June 27th**.

In cases of a significant, steadily rising trajectory, later work will be weighted more heavily than earlier work.

Course work should be printed out, **stapled**, and submitted in class or in the Philosophy Department drop-box by 4:00pm on the date the assignment is due. **Do not submit assignments by email unless I have asked you to do so (otherwise I may not get it).**

Writing and the grading thereof is a major factor in the evaluation of a student's work. However, you have some flexibility when it comes to the Critical Responses and Mid-Term, so long as you can demonstrate the appropriate knowledge and understanding. I will explain more about this in class.

There are no in-class exams and no registrar-scheduled final exam.

Grading

Assignments will be graded on a scale from A+ to F per the following standard. I will post a grading rubric on D2L. To weight assignments and calculate the final grade, these letter grades will be converted into the standard 4.0 scale:

Grade	Grade Point Value	Description
A+	4.30	Outstanding performance.
A	4.00	Excellent performance.
A-	3.70	Approaching excellent performance.
B+	3.30	Exceeding good performance.
B	3.00	Good performance.
B-	2.70	Approaching good performance.
C+	2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance.
C	2.00	Satisfactory performance.
C-	1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance.
D+	1.30	Marginal pass.
D	1.00	Minimal pass.
F	0.00	Failure. Did not meet requirements.

The arithmetic used to calculate your final grade will follow this formula:

$(\text{Each Critical Response})(.05) + (\text{Take-Home Mid-Term})(.30) + (\text{Term Paper})(.40) = \text{Final Grade}$

Note that, per University regulations, the highest possible Grade Point Value for your final course grade is 4.0, even if you are awarded an A+. However, should you get an A+ on an individual assignment, I will treat its value as 4.3.

Late Assignments

Every student is entitled to up to two (2) no-questions-asked grace days (including Saturdays and Sundays) during the semester, to be used at your discretion. You **do not** need to contact me to use these grace days. Note that by their nature, this policy doesn't apply to the Critical Responses.

Otherwise, **you must notify me** if you will be handing in work late, and depending on the circumstances you may require documentation. In the absence of the foregoing, late assignments will be penalized one grade-step per day; i.e., a B+ assignment handed in one day late would receive a B, or if two days late, a B-, and so on.

Course Policies

Electronic Devices

You are all adults and are best placed to know what you need to do to succeed. Some studies have shown that, for those who are able, taking notes by hand improves learning and course success.¹ However, these studies have been disputed, and aren't relevant to those with accessibility needs. So the jury is out. As such, you should make the choice that works best for you, and I won't assume anything about you based on your use or non-use of technology. However, because a significant part of class involves participation and discussion, I would hope that any devices would not distract you from full participation. Please be courteous to your classmates and be aware of how your use of devices might affect them.

Further, **please do not** use such devices to send messages, use social media, or play games during class. It is disrespectful to me and your classmates. You have lots of time to do that outside of class, so for the time we are together, let's all devote ourselves to the consideration of these fascinating philosophical questions!

Class Lectures and Discussions

I will strive to provide an environment that is equitable and conducive to constructive learning and discussion for all students. I ask that we all be respectful of class members and their contributions to the discussion regardless of ability or personal attribute. We should all remember that it is the *argument*, not the person, that is the focus of criticism—something both those advancing an argument and those critiquing it should keep in mind. Together we can explore ideas, try out arguments, disagree respectfully, get confused, dispel confusion, learn from the philosophers we read, and from each other, and hopefully have fun, too. Since this class discusses religion and related topics, it is very important that we engage each other respectfully. As I said, our focus is the propositions, theories, and arguments, not the person or creed.

¹ Pam A. Mueller & Daniel M. Oppenheimer, The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking, *Psychological Science* 25: 6 (2014), 1159-1168.

IMPORTANT DEPARTMENTAL, FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

Academic Honesty

Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is regarded as an extremely serious academic offense, the penalty for which will be an F on the assignment or an F in the course, and possibly a disciplinary sanction such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. See the relevant section K.5 on 'Academic Misconduct' in the current University Calendar <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>.

Intellectual honesty requires that your work include adequate referencing to sources. Plagiarism occurs when you do not acknowledge or correctly reference your sources. If you have questions about correct referencing, consult your instructor.

D2L Help

Desire2Learn is UCalgary's online learning management system. Important information and communications about this course may be posted on D2L. Go to <https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it> for help.

General Academic Concerns and Program Planning

Have a question but not sure where to start? The Arts Students Centre is your information resource for everything in the Faculty of Arts. Drop in at SS102, call 403-220-3580, or email ascarts@ucalgary.ca. Advisors in the ASC can also provide assistance and advice in planning your program through to graduation. Visit the Faculty of Arts website at <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/advising> for detailed information on common academic concerns

Advice on Philosophy Courses

You may find answers to your more specific questions about a philosophy degree on the Department of Philosophy's website <http://phil.ucalgary.ca>, or contact one of Philosophy's Undergraduate Advisors. Jeremy Fantl (jfantl@ucalgary.ca), Allen Habib (anhabib@ucalgary.ca), Megan Delehanty (mdelehan@ucalgary.ca).

Registration Overload/Prereq Waivers

If you are seeking to register in a Philosophy course that is full or to get permission to waive the prereqs for a course, email the Department Manager, Tram Nguyen (tram.nguyen1@ucalgary.ca). Include the specific course information and your UCID number in your request.

Writing

This course will include written assignments. All written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented. Students are also encouraged to use Writing Support Services and other Student Success Centre Services, located on the 3rd floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library. Writing Support Services assist with a variety of assignments, from essays to lab reports. Students can book 30-minute one-on-one appointments online, sign up for 15-minute drop-in appointments, and register for a variety of writing workshops. For more information on this and other Student Success Centre services, please visit www.ucalgary.ca/ssc.

Protection of Privacy

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act. The Department of Philosophy ensures the student's right to privacy by requiring all graded assignments be returned to the student directly from the instructor or teaching assistant.

Internet and Electronic Communication Devices

The instructor reserves the right to establish course policies regarding the use of devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartbooks. If allowed, these devices must be used exclusively for instructional purposes and must not cause disruption to the instructor or to fellow students. Cell phones and paging devices should be set to silent mode during lectures. Audio or video recording of lectures is not permitted without the written permission of the instructor. Students violating this policy are subject to discipline under the University of Calgary's Non-Academic Misconduct policy

Emergency Evacuation:

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints> . Please check this website and note the nearest assembly point for this course.

Other Helpful Contacts

- Safewalk and Campus Security: 403-220-5333.
- Faculty of Arts Student Representatives: 403-220-6552, arts1@su.ucalgary.ca , arts2@su.ucalgary.ca , arts3@su.ucalgary.ca , arts4@su.ucalgary.ca
- Student Union: <https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/>; 403-220-6551.
- Student Ombudsman: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>
- Campus Mental Health Strategy: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>