

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
Philosophy 185
Winter 2012

Dana Kay Nelkin

Office: HSS 8004

Office Hours: Tuesday 11-12 (Café Roma), Thursday 11-12 (Office) and by appointment

Phone: (858) 822-0472

E-mail: dnelkin@ucsd.edu

Web site: <http://philosophyfaculty.ucsd.edu/faculty/dnelkin>

Course Description: We will explore four related and hotly debated topics in the philosophy of religion, and, in doing so, address the following questions:

- (i) Is it rational to hold religious beliefs? Should we care about rationality when it comes to religious belief?
- (ii) Could different religions be different paths to the same ultimate reality, or is only one, at most, a “way to God”?
- (iii) What is the relationship between science and religion?
- (iv) What is the relationship between morality and religion? Must religious beliefs be true in order for morality to exist?

As we will see, the philosophy of religion leads naturally into just about every other area of philosophy, including epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and the history of philosophy, and into particular central philosophical debates such as the debate over the nature of free will. This means that you will gain insight into many fundamental philosophical issues in this course. At the same time, the subject matter can be difficult. To do well in the course and to benefit from it, you must be willing to work hard and to subject your own views (whatever they may be) to critical evaluation. Evaluating our conception of ourselves and of the world is one of the distinguishing features of philosophy.

Requirements:

- 1 short paper (2-3 pages) (10%)
- 1 midterm exam (20%)
- 1 medium paper (6-8 pages) (30%)
- 1 final exam (40%)

Note: A hard copy of your paper must be turned in, and an electronic copy uploaded to turnitin.com. (This is very easy to do, and I'll give you instructions and a password for doing so before each paper.)

Specific course topics and readings

Most readings may be found in *Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Pojman and Rea. Others may be found on our TED website.

I. Rationality and Belief

1/10: Introduction

1/12: The Cosmological Argument

Aquinas, *The Five Ways*

Clarke, *The Argument from Contingency*

Taylor, *The Cosmological Argument: A Defense*

1/17: The Cosmological Argument

Rowe, *An Examination of the Cosmological Argument*

1/19: The Teleological Argument

Paley, *The Watch and the Watchmaker*

Hume, *A Critique of the Design Argument*

Swinburne, *The Argument from Design*

1/24: The Argument from Religious Experience **[short paper due]**

Selections of Mystical Experiences

Broad, *The Argument from Religious Experience*

Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*

1/26: The Argument from Religious Experience

James, *Mysticism*

Alston, *Religious Experience and Religious Belief*

BBC report, "God on the Brain"

1/31: The Problem of Evil

Hume, *The Argument from Evil*

Liebniz, *Theodicy: A Defense of Theism*

2/2: The Problem of Evil

Hick, *Evil and Soul-Making*

Madden and Hare, *A Critique of Hick's Theodicy*

2/7: The Problem of Evil

Rowe, *The Inductive Argument from Evil against the Existence of God*

Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*

2/9: **Midterm Exam**

2/14: Rationality without Evidence
Pascal, *The Wager*
Clifford, *The Ethics of Belief*
Blackburn, *Pascal's Wager: A Critique*
James, *The Will to Believe*

2/16: The Role and Value of Rationality
Kierkegaard, *Subjectivity is Truth*
Adams, *Kierkegaard's Argument Against Objective Reasoning in Religion*

II. **Religious Pluralism and Exclusivism**

2/21: Pluralism
Hick, *Religious Pluralism and Ultimate Reality*

2/23: Exclusivism
Plantinga, *A Defense of Religious Exclusivism*

III. **Religion and Science**

2/28: Religion and Science
Dawkins, *Science Versus Religion*
Gould, *Overlapping Magisteria*

3/1: Religion and Science
Plantinga, *The Christian Argument Against Evolutionary Naturalism*

3/6: Religion and Science
Sosa, *Plantinga's Evolutionary Meditations*
Plantinga, *Reply to Sosa*

IV. **Religion and Morality**

3/8: Religion and Morality [**Paper Due**]
Plato, *Morality and Religion*

3/13: Religion and Morality
Mavrodes, *Religion and the Queerness of Morality*
Russell, *A Free Man's Worship*

3/15: Religion and Morality
No new reading

Notes

- Laptops and other electronic devices may not be used in class except for taking notes on the lecture.
- If accommodations are needed for a disability or for religious reasons, please notify me during the first class period or as soon as possible.
- The Academic Honor Code must be observed in this course.
Please note that the policies and readings described above are subject to minor change.