

Course Description

Philosophy 240: *Faith & Reason: Philosophy of Religion*

UCFV Calendar: Religion is hailed for giving value to our lives where science and humanism fail, and it is condemned as a crutch, an illusion, a mere hedging of bets. What is the special character of religion? Is it appropriate to ask for evidence in religion, for example, in support of the existence of God, or does religion rely on special experiences of revelation and miracles? These questions raise many further issues such as the nature of God, the possibility of an afterlife, and the nature of good and evil. Responses to these and other questions given by people such as Plato, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, and Freud are examined in lectures, films, discussion, and writing. (UCFV Calendar)

PHIL 240 is part of the Religious Studies program at UCFV.

This *Course Description* provides routine information, and describes the objectives and methods for the course. Read it carefully, asking questions as needed.

It should be viewed as a **contract** but can be altered for individual students in extraordinary circumstances.

If I make a special arrangement with you, explain it in a note or e-mail message and ask me to sign or confirm it; show it to me to remind me of our arrangement.

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Contact Information

Instructor: Paul Herman (based in Chilliwack, British Columbia, CANADA)

BA, University of California, Santa Barbara; All PhD. work completed except thesis, UBC.

Teaching: UBC; Carleton University; Fraser Valley College & UCFV 1975-present.

Telephone & E-mail

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E-Mail: through the *WebCT Course Website* and paul.herman@ucfv.ca

The best times to talk to me on the telephone are mornings, but you can try me any time from not too early in the morning to not too late in the evening.

Outside of class, I prefer that you ask all questions that are not personal (*i.e.*, any question you don't mind others knowing you are asking) **through the *WebCT Course Website Bulletin Board-Discussion area*** so that others can also benefit from them.

I usually check my e-mail in the morning and early evening.

Please put the course number (PHIL 240) in the subject line whenever you e-mail me at paul.herman@ucfv.ca. Otherwise, I may fail to deal with your message quickly.

If you have not heard back from me within a day, please try again by e-mail or other means.

I usually check the *Course Website* once a day, typically early afternoon.

Mail: Paul Herman

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CANADA

Course Website

1. Open your web browser and go to the following URL: www.ucfv.ca/online.htm.
2. From the *UCFV Online* homepage, click on *Login here to your Supplemental Course*.
3. Click on [Continue on to UCFV Login](#).

Enter the following login information:

WebCT ID: Your Student Number. Password: Your Student Number

From your *MyWebCT* page, change your password. Otherwise, anyone who knows your Student Number can access the course website and do silly things (or worse) in your name.

4. You should now be in your *MyWebCT* page with your course in the upper left section of the page. Click on the course title to go to the home page inside of your course.

If you have technical difficulties, click on *Technical Support* on the upper right of your screen or call (604) 864-4666.

Office Hours

Abbotsford: Friday, 9:00-9:30 am and 1:00 pm, D3091

Chilliwack: Wednesday, 11:30 am.

Talk to me during office hours about your problems with an assignment, areas of interest you would like to pursue, my marking of your work, etc. If these times are not convenient for you, we can arrange to meet at other times.

Since I am often out of my office (but usually close to it) or talking to students during the above times, it is best (but not essential) to make an appointment.

The Course

The fundamental purpose of philosophy courses should be to help you think better for yourself. Better thinking can produce a better life.

We look at ideas from the past in order to see where some of our current ideas come from. You may be surprised to find that you share beliefs with, for example, Plato, St. Thomas Aquinas, or Jean-Paul Sartre. But the emphasis is on formulating and revising your own ideas and providing them with a reasonable basis so that you can defend your own conclusions. If you take our investigations seriously and personally, they can be a soul-searching experience.

Prerequisites: 15 credits of university-level course work

Major Areas

The course pursues the following fundamental questions in the philosophy of religion:

- What is religion and what are crucial religious beliefs?
- What evidence supports and what evidence opposes various religious beliefs?
- Is it important to embrace some religious belief? Does it matter which one?

Goals of the Course

At the end of this course, my intention is that you will:

- Be able to describe basic positions on a broad range of issues about the nature of religion and religious beliefs.
- Correctly use philosophical terms and concepts in conversations and informal course work;
- Communicate orally and in writing your critical thinking in depth and in an organised, disciplined manner about some major issues in the philosophy of religion.
- Be able and motivated to use the skills and knowledge from this course as a productive way to think about religion in everyday life.

Standard Operating Procedure

Throughout the course, we will typically follow this procedure (often called *reflective equilibrium*):

1. I will ask you to make some judgments about some specific examples of a moral or political issue, either based on your own experience or on some reading.
We will consider your judgments in order to see some of the more general issues they raise.
2. I will provide you with some background and philosophical reading for the general issues, asking you to consider how they produce general reasons for your specific judgments.
3. We will reflect upon the reading and test general reasons by applying them to specific examples.
4. You will be asked to make some assessment of **your** judgments and general reasons for them.

There is a dialectic between our **judgments about specific cases** and the **general reasons** for those judgments. Sometimes you may change your specific judgments to fit

your general reasons. Sometimes you may change your reasons to fit your judgments. Or you may adjust both.

In most cases, there is no single correct answer that emerges from this process. However, some answers are not as good as others, e.g., because they do not deal well with the full range and depth of the issues or are not supported by good reasoning.

So, good answers require much more than merely expressing an opinion.

Co-operative Learning

You are expected to work with each other to share ideas and resources, support each other, explain material and techniques to each other, and hold each other responsible for completing the assignment. If you need help with the assignment, **first** ask each other; if you need further assistance with a **group** assignment, **the group as a whole** should request help from the instructor.

Effectiveness of Co-operative Learning

There is a lot of evidence that co-operative learning is one of the most effective ways for students to learn to think with and use course material on a daily basis because it:

- enables many people to **learn actively** at the same time;
- conforms to **'the real world'** where we do much of our work in groups such as families, committees, community boards, unions; and we are often judged by the performance of the groups to which we belong.
- requires students to **take responsibility for their own learning** and prepare for **life-long learning**;
- recognizes that students are often better than instructors at teaching each other, and that **the best way to learn is to teach**;
- provides a **community of support** where the skills and material in a course are valued and reinforced and students help each other, an environment essential to successful on-line learning;
- makes it possible to **pursue far more and more diverse interests** than could the class as a whole, and to **share results** as we could not working individually and competitively;

Students sometimes object that marking for group work is not always fair. First, I will make every effort to ensure that students are marked both on individual and on group work so that a student cannot do well as a free rider. Second, marking in the course is based on criteria, not competition: all those who meet the criteria for a grade receive the grade. So, you are not competing with each other for marks. But it is also not possible to do well in the course by free-riding. Third, I think the educational benefits are worth the occasional unfairness that may result. Finally, it is not bad to have to deal with this common feature of our world: **you** can do something to guard against unfairness. For example, if a member does not contribute to the group's work, then do not put the person's name on group assignments and journals.

Formats

Informal co-operative learning groups are temporary, *ad hoc* groups lasting for one or a few assignments. You engage in focused discussions between a few people.

These groups focus attention on the material, set a mood conducive to learning, help organize in advance the material, ensure that you are engaged in active learning, and provide closure to dealing with a unit of course material.

Formal co-operative learning groups last for several weeks to complete a specific, formal assignment. You are responsible for maximizing your own learning and that of your group mates.

Standard Co-operative Learning Procedures

1. The instructor gives you instructions and objectives.
2. You are assigned to a group, provided with materials, and perhaps given a specific role in the group.
3. The instructor explains the task, the co-operative structure, and relevant concepts or strategies for completing the assignment.
4. The instructor monitors your group to provide assistance as needed with academic material and co-operative techniques.
5. The instructor evaluates your results by referring to a set of non-competitive criteria, *i.e.*, everyone who meets the criteria does well.

Resources

Materials to buy from the [Bookstore](#):

William L. Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion; An Introduction*, Fourth Edition.

Paul Herman, *Philosophy 240 CoursePack*.

Additional Resources

If you want to delve further into the nature of philosophy and methods of reading and writing philosophy, then I recommend Jay F. Rosenberg's *The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners*, copies in the *Bookstore* (although it has become ridiculously expensive), *Library*, and *Writing Centres*.

The [Library](#) has a respectable philosophy collection, including [The Philosopher's Index](#), a bibliographic database with informative author-written abstracts covering scholarly research in philosophy published since 1940 in journals and books, including anthologies. Library staff are also a great resource.

The following are on Reserve in the Library in Abbotsford or Chilliwack:

Brody, Baruch A., *Readings in the philosophy of religion: an analytic approach*. BL 51 B758, ABB/CHILL

Delaney, C. F., *Rationality and religious belief*. BL 51 R38, CHILL

Hick, John, *Classical and contemporary readings in the philosophy of religion*. BL 51 C53 1970, ABB

Klemke, E. D., *To believe or not to believe: readings in the philosophy of religion*. BL 200 T6 ABB

Kessler, Gary E., *Philosophy of religion: toward a global perspective*. BL 51 P5454 CHILL

Loades, Ann & Loyal D. Rue, *Contemporary classics in philosophy of religion*. BL 51 C6368, ABB

Martin, Michael & Ricki Monnier, *The impossibility of God*. BL 2747.3 I49 ABB

Pojman, Louis P., *Philosophy of religion: an anthology*. BL 51 P54, ABB

Rowe, William L. & William J. Wainwright, *Philosophy of religion: selected readings*. BL 51 P545 1989, ABB/CHILL

Shatz, David, *Philosophy and faith: a philosophy of religion reader*. BL 51 P5256, ABB

Yandell, Keith E., *God, man, and religion: readings in the philosophy of religion*. BL 51 Y36, ABB

If you have difficulty finding these or other works because they are always out, **tell me**. I have resources in my personal collection. So if you cannot find a particular article or material on a particular subject, **let me know**: I can probably help. Many older readings are also available on the Internet.

Internet Resources

The **Internet** also has many resources, readings, discussion groups, etc. in philosophy and on a variety of topics that we investigate in this course. Go to the *UCFV Library* [Guides to Research](http://www.ucfv.ca/library/guide.htm) (www.ucfv.ca/library/guide.htm) for philosophy and for religious studies.

An excellent philosophy Web site is [Epistemé Links](http://www.epistemelinks.com/index.aspx) (www.epistemelinks.com/index.aspx) with philosophy material especially useful for undergraduate students of philosophy such as online encyclopaedias and dictionaries, bibliographies, aides for writing better papers, etc. It has a page of [links](#) on philosophy of religion.

Help with writing, spelling, punctuation, and study skills

Writing help is available through [Writing Centres](#) (www.ucfv.bc.ca/Writing_Centre.htm) on each campus. [Paradigm Online Writing Assistant](#) (www.powa.org/argument/index.html) provides help on writing argumentative essays common in philosophy.

This [Microsoft tutorial](#) (www.microsoft.com/education/WordTutorial.msp) about writing with a word processor is Microsoft promotional material oriented towards teachers, but it still looks helpful for using a word processor as much more than an automatic typewriter.

Help with a disability that may interfere with your learning

It would be wise to discuss it with me and to see an access advisor at [Disability Services](#) (www.ucfv.ca/disabilityservices.htm) about available services at UCFV.

Work and Evaluation

See *Readings & Assignments* for due dates. **It is your responsibility to keep up with course work.** We shall try to proceed at a pace that fosters discussion and understanding of the material and issues, so due dates are subject to change with ample notice.

Your written work without your name attached to it may be used as examples in class.

Academic Appeal: Students may appeal academic decisions. See [Academic Appeal Guide](http://omega.ucfv.ca/Page1748.aspx) (omega.ucfv.ca/Page1748.aspx).

Plagiarism and Intellectual Property

You will not find the final, authoritative answer to a philosophical question in books, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, videos, or cyberspace. It is essential that you produce and justify your own conclusions.

Plagiarism is the high crime of intellectual activity. If the question of plagiarism arises, a student should be able to show that a piece of work is the student's own by producing notes and drafts, explaining and defending the work. The minimum consequence for plagiarism is a **NO CREDIT** for that piece of work. More severe penalties, including a **NO CREDIT** for the course, may be imposed. ([UCFV Calendar](http://www.ucfv.ca/calendar/2006_07/Production/index.asp) (www.ucfv.ca/calendar/2006_07/Production/index.asp); [UCFV Policy Manual](http://www.ucfv.ca/ucc/policymanual/310.12%20Student%20Conduct.pdf) (www.ucfv.ca/ucc/policymanual/310.12%20Student%20Conduct.pdf).

There are many times when you are allowed, encouraged, or required to work together. If you have doubts about when these times are, please ask me for clarification.

Intellectual property rights are still quite unclear on the Internet, and it is very easy to violate even those that are clear. Err on the side of caution. For example, forwarding someone else's e-mail message without permission may violate moral and legal standards. There are also increasingly sophisticated Internet tools for detecting plagiarism.

Use of course material from this course is permitted only for your personal, non-commercial purposes.

Final Mark

Your **Final Mark** is based on several activities explained below. You can choose to do more or less work according to your ambitions and the time you have available. You are continuously evaluated on smaller pieces of work so that you can compensate even for the occasional disaster. Your effort and achievement both count in varying ways.

Your **Final Mark** is calculated on the following basis:

Attendance and Class Contribution	5%
Individual Prep & Co-op Work	25%
Seminars	20%
Essays	50%

Except for *Individual Prep & Co-op Work* assignments, assignments are marked on this scale:

A+ = 4.33	B+ = 3.33	C+ = 2.33	P = 1
A = 4.00	B = 3.00	C = 2.00	NC = 0
A- = 3.67	B- = 2.67	C- = 1.67	

Letter grades for cumulative *Individual Prep & Co-op Work* are assigned by making the highest score an A+, about 50% of the highest score a C-, with other marks scaled accordingly.

All assignments are marked according to how well the work met the **criteria** explained in the assignment, not according to a distribution curve (*i.e.*, **not**, for example, 10% As, 20% Bs, etc.).

Audit Grade requires attending at least 80% of the course. ([UCFV Calendar \(www.ucfv.ca/calendar/2006_07/Production/index.asp\)](http://www.ucfv.ca/calendar/2006_07/Production/index.asp); [UCFV Policy Manual \(www.ucfv.ca/ucc/policymanual/350.08%20Course%20Audit.pdf\)](http://www.ucfv.ca/ucc/policymanual/350.08%20Course%20Audit.pdf)).

Attendance and Class Contribution (5% of Final Mark)

Please ask questions and contribute to class sessions, especially to your co-op work. Of course, quality, not mere quantity, of class participation is desirable. However, **it is better to err on the side of boldness than of caution**.

Each student starts with a C in this area and adds or subtracts from it. The only way to subtract from it is by being obnoxious to others in class or by regularly not attending.

Otherwise, your **Individual Prep & Co-op Work** mark is a good indicator of attendance and class contribution unless you make additional significant contributions to the class as a whole, *e.g.*, through general discussion in class. Your facility in presenting work to the class also counts towards this part of your mark.

Lack of civility to any members of the class is not tolerated. UCFV policy empowers an instructor to dismiss from the course a student who disrupts the class.

Individual Prep & Co-op Work (25% of Final Mark)

Do the assigned readings and other preparation assignments, send the required messages, and be ready to ask questions, to agree or disagree with the reading and with others' comments, and to participate in co-operative work.

Typically, each preparatory assignment is marked on a scale from 0 to 4 points.

More demanding assignments may be marked on a multiple of this scale. The success of the course depends upon your individual preparation, so **an assignment may be turned in up to two days late but with a penalty of one point.**

Seminars (20% of Final Mark): See [Seminars on Religious Hypothesis](#) in the *CoursePack*.

Seminar marks are based on *Individual Preparation* (25%) and on attendance at preparation (25%) and presentation (50%) sessions.

Each member of a group receives the same mark for preparation and presentation sessions attended. For example:

Individual Preparation	B	x 25% = 0.75
Preparation session	Absent	x 25% = 0
Presentation session	A	x 50% = 2.0
Seminar mark		= 2.75 = B-

Essays (50% of Final Mark): See [Essay Assignments](#) in the *CoursePack*.

You are assigned to write a series of essays through the term.

You may submit drafts for my comments and your subsequent revisions.

You may do an essay as a **group** of no more than three persons with each person receiving equal credit.

Your essays should be **critical**, not merely historical or exegetical. In other words, good critical thinking shows your awareness of some of the relevant thinking by others on the problem, but **above all**, it should express **your** well-reasoned views on the problem and its solution. For more guidance about critical thinking and writing for this course, see [Methods of Inquiry](#) in the *CoursePack* and under **Course Content**.

Non-sexist language is expected in your written work. (For further explanation, see [Writing without Gender Bias](#) in the *CoursePack*.)

Essays may be handed in as hardcopy or sent to me as an e-mail attachment in either MS Word or .RTF format, by midnight of the due date, double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides.

Essay assignments are not accepted more than one week late. Late essays are marked down one mark, *e.g.*, a B is marked down to a B-. (**Exceptions** are possible in extraordinary circumstances.) If you do not hand your hardcopy essay to me in person, it should be time stamped in some manner, *e.g.*, by the time that you e-mail it to me, by someone at UCFV to whom you hand it in; otherwise, I will assume it was turned in when I pick it up.

If I am unable to download and read your essay because you forgot to attach it or for other apparently technical reasons that are not my fault, **the essay is marked as late**. So, it is wise to submit your essay by late afternoon of the due date so I can notify you about technical problems before it is marked as late.

Keep a copy of all essay work you turn in for comments or for marking.