

Fall 2011

Dr. Jeffrey Morgan

**Philosophy 240**

**Faith and Reason: Philosophy  
of Religion**

Monday 8:30 – 11:20

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**Office Hours:** Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 11:30-12:30

**Course Text:** Meister, Chad (2009). *Introducing philosophy of religion*. Routledge.

**Calendar Description:**

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.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. To engage students in reading major philosophical writings on fundamental problems in the philosophy of religion.
2. To develop students' skills in the methods of philosophical analysis and argumentation.

3. To develop the abilities of students to respond to classic positions on issues in the philosophy of religion and to produce their own coherent, defensible positions on such issues.

**Evaluation:**

Midterm (in class)	25%
2 short papers (20%, 25%)	45%
Final Exam	25%
Participation	5%

The in-class midterm will consist of one short essay question and a few short answer questions.

The short papers (about 1000 words) will be written on topics chosen by the instructor. You will have at least two weeks to write these papers.

The take-home final will be discussed in the last few weeks of class. At this time, I can say that the best means of preparing for the final is to complete all reading and to participate wholeheartedly in class.

Students will receive up to five points for participation. Regular attendance is necessary but not sufficient for doing well on this rubric. In addition, you must contribute thoughtfully to class discussions. Quality, not quantity, of participation is favored.

**Assignment and Test Policies:**

1. Assignments should be submitted on time. If you have a bona fide excuse for submitting your paper late, then I urge you to see me. If your paper is on time, I will do my best to mark and return it the following class. If it is less than two days late (i.e., submitted by Friday afternoon by 4:00), then I will not deduct points, but marking it within a week will not be high priority for me. If it is more than two days late without a good excuse (usually supported by a doctor's note indicating that you are/were unable to complete the assignment), then I will grade the paper but my comments will be minimal.
2. If you miss the midterm, then see me as soon as possible with the reason. Supporting documents (e.g. a doctor's note) will be expected. If you have a good excuse, then an alternate midterm test and date will be arranged.
3. Do your own work. Obviously, this means that you cannot submit someone else's work as your own, by for example buying a paper, hiring someone to write your paper, or copying a paper you found on the Internet. Further, if you draw on the ideas or words of another person, then you must cite appropriately. Failing to do so

might constitute plagiarism. Penalties for plagiarism can be severe, depending on the seriousness of the infraction and the number of prior offenses committed. It is *your* responsibility to be aware of UFV's policies on academic dishonesty. They can be found at:

[http://www.ufv.ca/calendar/2010\\_11/General/RegulationsAndPolicies.htm#StudentConduct](http://www.ufv.ca/calendar/2010_11/General/RegulationsAndPolicies.htm#StudentConduct)

4. There are more specific requirements for each assignment. Failing to follow the requirements can result in loss of points or even outright rejection of the assignment, for example, if an assignment is submitted single-spaced or without adequate margins.

## Course Schedule\*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READING</b>
Sept 12	Introduction	pp. 1-4
Sept 19	Religion and the philosophy of religion	pp. 5-22
Sept 26	Religious diversity and pluralism	pp. 22-44
Oct 3	Conceptions of ultimate reality	pp. 45-64
Oct 10	<b>Thanksgiving</b>	
Oct 17	Cosmological arguments for God's existence	pp. 65-90
Oct 24	Teleological arguments for God's existence	pp. 91-110
Oct 31	<b>Midterm</b>	
Nov 7	Ontological arguments for God's existence	pp. 111-126
Nov 14	Problems of evil	pp. 127-146
Nov 21	Science, faith and reason	pp. 147-168
Nov 28	Religious experience	pp. 169-188
Dec 5	The self, death and the afterlife	pp. 189-208

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\* I reserve the right to make changes as necessary.