

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

Course Syllabus

PHIL 4330-001: Comparative Religious Philosophy

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Office Hours: T/Th 12:30-2:00

Required Textbook:

Readings in Philosophy of Religion: East Meets West, by Andrew Eshleman

Course Overview:

A study of traditional categories of the philosophy of religion with reference to such religions as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity

Course Outcomes:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to...

1. articulate a basic understanding of the importance of philosophy
2. list the central questions of the philosophy of religion
3. present the views of a religious tradition other than their own
4. compare and contrast different religious perspectives
5. compare and contrast Eastern and Western philosophical ideas
6. discuss the relationship between faith and reason
7. analyze issues in the study of religion
8. evaluate a philosophical argument

Grading Scale:

A=90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%, F=less than 60%

Grading:

ESSAYS (3 @ 100 points each) = 200 points (lowest dropped)

PRESENTATION (1 @ 100 points) = 100 points

ATTENDANCE = 50 points
TOTAL = 350 points

Assessment

Essay

This assignment requires writing a 2000-3000 word essay, which can be in the mode of interpretive, persuasive, or compare and contrast. Be sure to discuss your topic with the instructor before beginning work.

PAPER/PRESENTATION RUBRIC (100 POINTS)	
0-35 points	Are the ideas in the paper/presentation well-supported or well-argued? The paper makes its case, is well-organized, carefully researched, and contains clear reasoning or evidence.
0-35 points	Are connections made with readings in the course? Student makes multiple, relevant connections (with citations) to the textbook. It must include three direct quotes from the textbook with proper citations. Outside research is encouraged but is not a substitute for the minimum citations to the textbook.
0-15 points	Does the project demonstrate clear and deep understanding of philosophy? Careful philosophical thinking is demonstrated throughout the essay or presentation, showing that the student comprehends the readings.
0-15 points	Is the paper well-written? Grammar is polished, and citation style conforms to Chicago Manual of Style .

General Requirements

- 2000-3000 words
- Double-spaced
- No cover page
- Name and title at the top center of first page
- Page numbers on the bottom right of each page
- Standard twelve-point font (e.g. Times New Roman)
- One-inch margins
- .docx, rtf, or pdf file formats only
- The introduction should be no more than half a page.
- The conclusion should be no more than half a page and only review the main points.
- No inflammatory or disrespectful language

Additional points will be deducted for late papers and papers that don't satisfy the "basic requirements" above. Cases of plagiarism earn an automatic zero and a possible F in the course. Plagiarized papers may be sent to UT Tyler Judicial Affairs to receive additional consequences. Please review the A.I. and Plagiarism policy in the Start Here module in Canvas.

If you receive help from the Writing Center on an early draft and use the information to revise your paper, I will award you five extra credit points in the extra credit column, which amounts to half a letter grade on the paper. In order to receive extra credit, you must opt in to "email instructor" when you visit the Center. If I don't receive an e-mail from the Writing Center, you will not receive credit. The Writing Center is often busy, so you must plan ahead and make an appointment. No exceptions will be made if you are too late in making your appointment.

Project

The end-of-semester project will be an in-class presentation which will follow the same instructions and grading rubric above. More information will follow.

Attendance

At the start of the semester, each student has fifty points for attendance and one free unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence after the first is penalized five points per day against the attendance grade up to fifty points. Excused absences will not count against the fifty points but need to be accompanied with documentation (e.g. a doctor's note). This documentation must be submitted when the student returns to class and no later. After losing fifty points, no further points will be deducted even if there are more absences. Students may not see points deducted in the grade book immediately or even until the end of the semester, so it is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of attendance points remaining and make sure that the attendance sheet is accurate on a weekly basis.

Course Policies:

Late work policy: Assignments must be submitted in Canvas by the deadline. A penalty of half a letter grade per day up to two letter grades will be assessed for late assignments. This penalty will be waived only under special circumstances (e.g. a serious illness accompanied by a doctor's note).

Communication policy: The best way to communicate with the instructor is through UT Tyler e-mail or in Canvas. Students can expect replies within 48 hours excluding weekends and holidays. Students who do not receive a reply within this timeframe should attempt to contact the instructor again.

Class conduct policy: The subject matter of this class can make some people hot under the collar. This said, all comments and behavior must be classroom appropriate. What does “classroom appropriate” mean? It does *not* mean that students cannot express unpopular opinions. It means practicing reasoning and logical argumentation. It means being civil and listening with respect. Insults, snide comments, name-calling, cutting someone off, derogatory tones, sarcasm, ridicule, cussing, vulgarity, personal attacks, racial slurs, misogynistic remarks, etc. will not be allowed. If you are unsure about what counts as disrespectful, consult the instructor or the Golden Rule. The instructor will act as the final word on what is or is not classroom appropriate. Violators may be ejected from the class.

Cell phone (distraction) policy: Mobile devices can be used during class if it is related to what is going on in class. If you have an electronic textbook or plan to take notes on your device, please let me know early in the semester. They are permissible as long as they don’t distract you or your classmates from the lesson.

Arriving late (tardy) or leaving early policy: Arriving on time can sometimes be challenging, but it is better to be late than never. However, late arrivals and early departures can be disruptive to others in the classroom. For this reason, please don’t make a habit of it.

Extra credit policy: Extra credit can be earned during the semester when the occasion arises. Extra credit is never given upon request of a student. When an opportunity appears, the instructor will announce it to the whole class.

“It is what it is” final grade policy: Grades are final once the final grade percentage has been posted in Canvas at the end of the semester. No changes will be made unless the instructor has made a mistake. Grades are not bumped up unless the student is within .5% of the next letter grade. For example, an 89.5% is an A. An 89.4% is a B. No extra credit opportunities will be given during finals week or the week prior. The conditions for an “incomplete” are stated in the university handbook: “(a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all course work or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor; and (c) the student presents these reasons prior to the time that the final grade roster is due.” The terms and deadline for satisfying an “incomplete” will be set by the instructor.

[UT TYLER HONOR CODE](#)

I embrace honor and integrity.
Therefore, I choose not to lie, cheat or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

Calendar of Topics

MODULE 1: Introduction to Philosophy of Religion

8/24: Syllabus and self introductions

8/26: What is philosophy of religion? (3-10)

8/28: Ninian Smart: "The Nature of a Religion and the Nature of Secular Worldviews" (available in Module 1)

8/31: "The Divine Attributes: What is God Like?" (21-30)

9/2: "The Female Nature of God" (31-35)

9/4: "God as Creative-Responsive Love" (36-42)

MODULE 2: The Attributes of God

9/7: "The Vedic-Upanisadic Concept of Brahman" (43-51)

9/9: "Emptiness in Mahayana Buddhism" (52-58)

9/11: "Reality and Divinity in Chinese Philosophy" (59-66) | Ethics Day -- extra credit opportunity

9/14: "How the Supreme Nature Exists through Itself" (67-68)

9/16: "Of the Unicity of God" (69) | "The Omnipotence of God" (70-71) | "Thinking and Speaking about God by Analogy" (72-73)

MODULE 3: The Existence of God

9/18: "A Cosmological Argument for God's Existence" (91-96)

9/21: "Al-Ghazali and the Kalam Cosmological Argument" (97-101)

9/23: "Cosmological Arguments" (102-106)

9/25: "How the Existence of God Explains the World and Its Order" (107-112)

9/28: "Are We the Outcome of Chance or Design?" (113-120)

9/30: "The Message of the Mandukya Upanisad" (121-125)

10/2: "Antirationalism in Zhuangzi and Kierkegaard" (126-140) | "Truth is Subjectivity" (151-154)

10/5: "Truly There is a God" (141) | "Whether God Exists" (142-143) | "Evidence of Design" (144-145) | "On the Argument from Design" (146-150)

10/7: **FIRST ESSAY DUE** | *no class -- student/teacher meetings instead*

MODULE 4: Faith and Reason

10/9: "The Will to Believe" (162-171)

10/12: "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?" (172-178) | "Plantinga on Belief in God as Properly Basic" (179-182)

10/14: "Religious Experience Justifies Religious Belief" (183-190) | "Do Mystics See God?" (191-199)

10/16: *no class -- instructor at conference*

10/19: "Mystical Knowledge" (200-217)

MODULE 5: The Problem of Evil

10/21: International Ethics Day | "Evil and Omnipotence" (232-239) | "The Logical Problem of Evil" (240-244)

10/23: "An Irenaean Theodicy" (245-255)

10/26: "The Evidential Problem of Evil" (256-264)

10/28: "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice" (265-272)

10/30: *no class -- instructor at conference* | "Samkara's Theodicy" (273-278)

11/2: "Karma, Rebirth, and the Problem of Evil" (279-290) | "Evil as a Privation of Good" (291-292) |

11/4: **SECOND ESSAY DUE** | *no class -- student/teacher meetings instead*

MODULE 6: Life after Death

11/6: "A Naturalistic Case for Extinction" (306-310) | "Brain Science and the Soul" (311-312)

11/9: "The Resurrection of the Dead" (313-325)

11/11: "The Idea of Reincarnation" (326-334)

11/13: "Not-Self, Karma, and Rebirth" (335-342)

11/16: "Nondualistic Problems of Immortality" (343-348)

MODULE 7: Religious Diversity

11/18: PRESENTATIONS | "A Religious Understanding of Religion" (364-373)

11/20: PRESENTATIONS | "In Defence of a Contented Religious Exclusivism" (374-382)

THANKSGIVING

11/30: PRESENTATIONS | "John Hick and the Question of Truth in Religion" (383-389)

12/2: PRESENTATIONS | "A Process Approach to Pluralism" (390-394)

12/4: PRESENTATIONS | "A Dynamic Unity in Religious Pluralism" (395-404)

FINALS WEEK: THIRD ESSAY DUE