

# THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

## Course Syllabus

PHIL 4330: Comparative Religious Philosophy (meets with RELI 4353)

Spring 2020

Meeting Time: MWF 10:10-11:05 a.m.

Room: TBA

Credit Hours: 3

Prerequisites: None

Instructor: Gregory L. Bock, Ph.D.

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### Required Textbook:

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

### Catalog Description:

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 Percents:

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

### Grading:

Paper 1:	100 points
Paper 2:	100 points
Initiator Posts:	90 points (10 @ 10 points each, lowest dropped)
Response Posts (online students only):	45 points (10 @ 5 points each, lowest dropped)
Attendance (on-ground students only):	45 points
TOTAL:	340 points

### Assessment:

**Discussion Board Assignment:** You'll make weekly contributions to the discussion board. For on-ground students, a minimum of one initiator post is required. For online students, one initiator post and five response posts are required (in lieu of a class attendance grade). Online students must spread out their posts over three days, for example 1 initiator post on Wednesday night, 2 response posts on Thursday, and 3 response posts on Friday.

**INITIATOR POSTS** (everyone): You'll write one initiator post each week. An initiator post is one that starts a thread based on the discussion prompt on the discussion board. A good post will answer the question completely and accurately and make connections to class readings, demonstrating your understanding and ability to synthesize all course material.

The post must be at least 300 words. There's no maximum word count, but keep in mind that grades are not based on quantity of words but on comprehension and critical thinking. The grading rubric below shows exactly what is expected.

Initiator posts are due by Wednesday night.

If you only use course material to quote from, quotation marks and parenthetical citations are enough, for example: "yada, yada" (Peterson et al., 23). If students use even one outside source – like the excellent [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) – a reference list for *all* sources must be included at the end of the post and must follow Chicago Manual of Style (CMS). See [here](#) for CMS examples, and see how proper citations affect the grade in the rubric below. I expect multiple references in your post to course readings, but I don't require outside sources.

You must post first in order to view other posts. The edit function will be disabled. If you want to edit after posting, you may reply in the thread with corrections or request that I delete the post. There must be a very good reason for deletion. For grading purposes, I consider your first post to be the initiator post even if it is blank or incomplete.

Late initiator posts can be turned in for a lower grade before the board officially closes on Sunday evening. A late penalty of half a letter grade per day applies in each case unless accompanied by a valid excuse (e.g. a doctor's note that indicates a serious illness). *Technical issues are not valid excuses for late work unless they are the university's fault.*

**RESPONSE POSTS** (online students only): In addition to the weekly initiator post, you'll write at least five response posts each week (for a total of 6 weekly contributions: 1 initiator post + 5 response posts = 6). A response post is one that replies to a classmate's post and continues the conversation. One that ends the conversation or just says "I agree" in so many words does not qualify as a response. To avoid conversation-stoppers, posts should state an opinion, make connections to the reading and include at least one question to help the conversation continue. The minimum word count for **each** response post is 50 words. If you are very active on the discussion board and far exceed the minimum requirements, you will receive extra credit. On-ground students who satisfy the response post requirements will receive extra credit.

Response posts are due by Sunday night.

The penalty for not spacing out your posts over three days will be applied to the response post grade as a two-letter-grade deduction.

Late response posts will not be accepted. Once the board closes on Sunday night, there are no further opportunities to complete the assignment, so it's advisable to post early to avoid unforeseen events such as technical problems on Sunday night. *Technical issues are not valid excuses for late work in an online course unless they are the university's fault.*

Discussion boards will remain unlocked for the duration of the semester to encourage ongoing conversation; however, posts that come in after Sunday night won't be graded.

I will be active on the boards and hope to be involved in some rich conversations. Be sure to return regularly to the threads to reply to questions and comments, especially in your own thread. Learn how to search for posts, including mine, by using the search function on the board. When I reply to a post, I often take a contrary position as devil's advocate. My response to your posts should be interpreted as "constructive" and an opportunity to strengthen your argument. It doesn't mean that I don't like you or am opposed to your point of view. It is nearly impossible to figure out my philosophy, politics, or ethics from my posts. If I express a point of view, I do so for teaching purposes, to help you think more carefully about your own position and extend the conversation.

DISCUSSION BOARD RUBRIC (INITIATOR POSTS)	
0-20 points	The answer to the question is clear and well-supported.
0-20 points	Multiple connections made to readings, lectures, or videos for the week and ideas from previous weeks
0-20 points	Careful philosophical thinking is demonstrated through the use of references to philosophers, the raising of philosophical questions, and/or the making of philosophical distinctions.
0-20 points	Conveys respect for other points of view even if it takes a contrary position
0-20 points	Grammar is polished, and citation style conforms to Chicago Manual of Style.

Cases of plagiarism earn an automatic zero and a possible F in the course. Plagiarized posts may be sent to UT Tyler Judicial Affairs to receive additional consequences. In short, do your own work, and be careful to give credit to the original author when you quote or paraphrase.

**Papers 1 and 2:** The purpose of these argumentative essays is to allow you to spend more time examining a topic that interests you and to demonstrate that you have thought about it from different angles. You will choose one of the chapters from Eshleman to defend or critique and engage other chapters in the unit in support of your thesis. Using outside sources is permissible and encouraged, but this isn't a research paper. It's about what you've learned in this class, so the citations should primarily be to course materials. The paper must use proper citations and include a reference list that conforms to the Chicago Manual of Style. See [here](#). Use either footnotes or the author-date system and include a reference list (bibliography) on the last page.

**BASIC REQUIREMENTS:**

- 1500-2000 words (not including citations and bibliography)
- 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 or .rtf 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

The paper is a standard five paragraph argumentative essay (no more and no less than five paragraphs), which means an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The thesis statement requirement: *the last sentence* of the introduction should be the *complete thesis statement* that clearly states your point of view. The topic sentence requirement: the first sentence of each body paragraph should act as a topic sentence and state the philosophical idea being analyzed. The paper should be organized in the following way:

<u>First paragraph:</u> background and introductory material, any terms that need to be defined, and thesis statement
<u>Second paragraph:</u> first argument in support of the claim in the thesis statement
<u>Third paragraph:</u> second argument in support of the claim in the thesis statement
<u>Fourth paragraph:</u> an articulation of a contrary point of view immediately followed by the student's careful and thorough rebuttal. The contrary point of view is represented by one of the two chapters in Cohen & Wellman.
<u>Fifth paragraph:</u> conclusion, review of main points

ESSAY RUBRIC (100 POINTS)	
0-20 points	<b>Does the paper contain a clear, well-supported argument?</b> The paper is an argumentative essay, well-organized, and contains clear reasoning and evidence.
0-20 points	<b>Are connections made with other readings in the course?</b> Multiple, relevant connections are made to course material from the entire semester, whether to readings, lectures, or handouts. Students should demonstrate how much they have learned by using relevant ideas in service of their argument.
0-20 points	<b>Does the paper demonstrate clear and careful use of philosophy?</b> Careful philosophical thinking is demonstrated through the use of references to other philosophers, the raising of philosophical questions, and/or the making of philosophical

	distinctions.
0-20 points	<b>Is another point of view carefully addressed?</b> A contrary point of view is carefully considered and critiqued, including, at least, another chapter on the topic in the Eshleman book.
0-20 points	<b>Is the paper well-written?</b> Grammar is polished, and citation style conforms to Chicago Manual of Style. Also, the paper meets the thesis statement and topic sentence requirements in the instructions and is a five-paragraph essay organized in the way described above.

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.

As the rubric shows, you're not graded on your religious or moral views but whether you demonstrate good critical thinking and argumentation, as well as whether you have followed the instructions.

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.

**Attendance** (onground students only): At the start of the semester, each student has forty-five 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 forty-five 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 the forty-five 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.

### Tentative Course Schedule

Unit 1: What is Philosophy of Religion?

Unit 2: Characterizing Ultimate Sacred Reality

Unit 3: The Role and Limits of Reason in Supporting Belief in an Ultimate Reality

Unit 4: The Rationality of Religious Belief in the Absence of Evidence

Unit 5: Evil and the Rationality of Religious Belief

Unit 6: Life after Death, Human Nature, and Personal Identity

## Unit 7: Making Sense of Conflicting Truth Claims

## Unit 8: Questioning the Foundations of Inquiry and Mapping New Territory

### Important Information:

#### **UT Tyler Honor Code**

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

#### **Students Rights and Responsibilities**

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

#### **Campus Carry**

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

#### **UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University**

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors.

Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products.

There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit [www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free](http://www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free).

#### **Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies**

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment

- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

### **State-Mandated Course Drop Policy**

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

### **Disability/Accessibility Services**

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

### **Student Absence due to Religious Observance**

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

### **Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities**

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

### **Social Security and FERPA Statement**

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

### **Emergency Exits and Evacuation**

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

### **Student Standards of Academic Conduct**

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

i. “Cheating” includes, but is not limited to:

- copying from another student’s test paper;
- using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed “crib notes”. The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
- using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
- collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
- substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
- paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
- falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
- taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
- misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

ii. “Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit.

iii. “Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.

iv. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

### **UT Tyler Resources for Students**

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), [writingcenter@uttyler.edu](mailto:writingcenter@uttyler.edu)
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), [tutoring@uttyler.edu](mailto:tutoring@uttyler.edu)
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)

### Course Policies:

**Late work policy:** Papers must be uploaded to Canvas by the deadline. A penalty of half a letter grade per day up to two letter grades will be assessed for late papers. This penalty will be waived only under special circumstances (e.g. a serious illness accompanied by a doctor’s note). Late initiator posts can be posted no later than Sunday of the week they are due (up to two letter grades deducted). Late response posts, on the other hand, are not permitted without a valid excuse.



**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. If it appears from my perspective that your device has become a distraction to you or those around you, I will have a conversation with you during or after class.

**Arriving late (tardy) or leaving early:** It is better to be late than never, but late arrivals and early departures can be disruptive. Please don’t make it a regular habit.

**Extra credit policy:** Extra credit may be offered by the instructor from time to time, but extra credit is not given on demand or by request. Students do not have a right to it; for example, the instructor is not obligated to provide extra credit opportunities that work with a student’s schedule or as make-up for a missed opportunity. Extra credit opportunities may only occur at certain times during the semester and will not be available during finals week or the previous week. Sometimes extra credit will be available during class time, such as in the form of a quiz. Students who are absent or tardy on these days will not be allowed to make up the extra credit.

**“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. A request for an “incomplete” may be approved only if (1) the request is made prior to the second to last exam, (2) the student has a valid reason, e.g. a verifiable medical condition, and (3) the student has a C or higher at the time the request for an “incomplete” is made. The terms of satisfying an “incomplete” will be set by the instructor.

**Additional policies and expectations:**

- Students will set up their Canvas accounts so that they will be aware of announcements sent out in the course. The instructor will use this means of communication weekly. If students have not received an announcement after the first or second week of class, they should assume something is not working correctly and should contact technical support.
- Students will e-mail the instructor with questions.
- Students will meet with the instructor during office hours or by appointment if extra help is needed on assignments.

- Students will not wait until the drop deadline to discuss lower than expected grades on assignments; instead, the student will take the initiative early in the semester to meet with the instructor to discuss ways of improving.
- Students will access the Canvas toolkit. The toolkit is intended to provide you extra study resources if you find yourself struggling with the material or if you just want to excel.
- Students will complete assignments on time.
- Students will participate in a civil and respectful way.
- Cheating on tests will not be tolerated.
- Plagiarism on written assignments will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is cheating; it is taking credit for material that is not your own whether it is copied from a classmate, textbook, or online source. Plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment and a possible F in the course. It could also mean suspension from the university. So, students should be sure to use proper citations and do their own work. If students are not sure whether something constitutes plagiarism, they should contact the instructor to ask about it before submitting the assignment. The penalty will apply whether the act of plagiarism is intentional or not.
- Students will declare that they have read and understood this syllabus by including a statement to this effect in a self-introduction post that will be posted to the discussion board “Meet Your Classmates” during the first week of class.

#### 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.