

**PHIL 3652**  
**Topics in Contemporary Western Philosophy: Philosophy of Religion**

**Course Outline**

**Time : Thu 3:30pm-6:15pm**

**Location: ELB304**

**Course overview (as shown on CUSIS)**

The philosophy of religion aims to use philosophical methods to inquire into religious concepts. This course centers on the discussions of religion by Western philosophers and addresses four main topics in the philosophy of religion:

- (I) Arguments both for and against the existence of God.
- (II) The epistemology of religion: What standards should we apply when evaluating reasons for religious belief? Which reasons are justified?
- (III) The metaphysics of divine attributes, such as omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence.
- (IV) The debate surrounding religious pluralism and exclusivism: Is it possible that all major world religions are correct? How is it possible to endorse only one of them?

**Learning outcomes (as shown on CUSIS)**

The aims of this course are as follows:

- (1) Upon completing this course, students will understand both monotheistic and atheistic worldviews and will be capable of forming their own judgments.
- (2) Philosophy of religion places a strong emphasis on philosophical arguments compared to other areas of philosophy. Upon completing this course, students will hone their skills in developing and critically assessing these arguments.
- (3) Upon completing this course, students will have surveyed historically influential texts and viewpoints in the realm of religion and philosophy.
- (4) Given that many foundational figures in the history of Western philosophy based their philosophies on religious viewpoints, students will be better equipped to study the broader history of Western philosophy upon completing this course.

**Topics**

The four main topics as outlined in the course overview.

**Learning activities**

- 1. Lectures
- 2. Tutorials
- 3. Assignments
- 4. Term paper

**Assessment scheme as prescribed on CUSIS (revise if necessary)**

<i>Task nature</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Weight</i>
Tutorials	Active attendance and participation in tutorials	20%
Assignments	3 x summaries and discussions	30%

Term paper	Around 2000 words in English (or 3000 words in Chinese)	50%
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### Grade Descriptor

Please refer to: [http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade\\_descriptors.pdf](http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf)

### Recommended learning resources

- **Text books:**

Oppy, Graham & Scott, Michael 2010, *Reading Philosophy of Religion*, Malden: Blackwell

- **Recommended readings:**

Bayne, Tim 2018, *Philosophy of Religion: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Swinburne, Richard 2004, *The Existence of God*, 3rd edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mackie, John 1982, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments For and Against the Existence of God*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Oppy, Graham 2006, *Arguing about Gods*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

### Course schedule

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Teaching Mode</i> <i>Online / in-campus</i>	<i>Required reading</i>
1	Introduction	in-campus	N/A
2	Anselm's ontological argument	in-campus	Anselm, Proslogion, ch. II, in textbook pp. 70-81.
3	Aquinas's cosmological argument	in-campus	Aquinas, Summa theologica, the second way, in textbook pp. 81-93.
4	Paley's teleological argument	in-campus	William Paley, Natural theology (selection), in textbook pp. 103-116.
5	J.L. Mackie's and William Rowe's formulations of the problem of evil	in-campus	John Leslie Mackie, 'Evil and omnipotence', in textbook pp. 138-151. William Leonard Rowe, 'The problem of evil and some varieties of atheism', in textbook pp. 151-160.
6	J.L. Schellenberg's problem of divine hiddenness	in-campus	Chan, L.C., 'Introduction: Philosophers' Rational Inquiries into the Hidden Divinity' (導讀：理性哲學家對隱匿的上帝之探問), in Chinese Translation of J. L. Schellenberg's Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason (神的隱匿與人的理性), Taipei: National Taiwan University Press.
7	Pascal's Wager	in-campus	Blaise Pascal, Pensées, 'Pascal's wager', in textbook pp. 93-103.
8	William Clifford's 'The ethics of belief'	in-campus	William Clifford, 'The ethics of belief', in textbook pp. 175-186.
9	William James's	in-campus	William James, 'The will to believe', in textbook

	'The will to believe'		pp. 187-204.
10	Omnipotence and the problem of the stone	in-campus	C. Wade Savage, 'The paradox of the stone', in textbook pp. 238-248.
11	The Euthyphro dilemma	in-campus	Norman J. Kretzmann, 'Abraham, Isaac and Euthyphro : God and the basis of morality', in textbook pp. 257-270.
12	Public holiday		
13	John Hick's religious pluralism	in-campus	John Hick, The interpretation of religion (selection) , in textbook pp. 70-80, in textbook pp. 282-293.
14	Alvin Plantinga's defence of religious exclusivism	in-campus	Alvin Plantinga, 'Pluralism: a defense of religious exclusivism' (selection) , in textbook pp. 293-309.

#### Contact details for teacher(s) or TA(s)

<b>Teacher</b>	
Name:	Lok-Chi Chan
Office location:	TBA
Telephone:	TBA
Email:	lokchan@ntu.edu.tw

<b>TA</b>	
Name:	
Office location:	
Telephone:	
Email:	

#### Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at [http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academic\\_honesty/](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academic_honesty/)

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.