

Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 2321-01 CID 0102 Turnitin ID 2579365
Spring 2009

MW 11:00 – 12:15 p.m.
Academic 8

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Academic O-3

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Conference hours: MWF 8:30 - 8:55 a.m.; MW 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.; T 5:45 - 6:30 p.m.; and by appointment 979 830 4412

Course Description

Philosophy of Religion surveys basic religious issues including the relationship between reason and faith, proving the existence of and characterizing the nature of God, the problem of evil, man's predisposition for religious and mystical experience, and the meaning of religious language, symbols, and ceremony. Three semester hours credit.

Texts

Yandell, Keith E. Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Recommended

Armstrong, Karen. The History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rev. ed. New York: Modern Library, 2002.

Armstrong, Karen. The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions. New York: Anchor, 2007.

Fowler, H. Ramsey, and Jane E. Aaron. The Little, Brown Handbook. 10th ed. New York: Longman, 2007. (9th suffices)

A college-level dictionary should always be within reach.

Course Objectives

Philosophy 2321 requires the student to become familiar with the representative problems that define an intellectual approach to man's understanding of both his own spirituality and the associated constructs underlying the problematic nature of "one of the most fundamental and persuasive aspects of human civilization," including

the relationship between faith and reason	religious meaning
the nature of religious belief	language
the nature of transcendent entities	symbols
omnipotence	narratives
omniscience	place/space
omnibenevolence	religious experience: veridical and delusory
infinitude	sensory-based experience
arguments for the existence of a God defined by the theistic tradition	mystical experience
teleological arguments	the unanimity thesis
cosmological arguments	the nature of religious traditions
ontological arguments	exclusivism
the problem of evil	inclusivism
the theistically conceived Absolute	pluralism
free will	the traditions
theodicy projects	the primal traditions
universal justice	Hinduism • Buddhism
the nature of suffering	Confucianism • Taoism
	Judaism • Christianity • Islam

Course Requirements

The student is required to bring the texts and a college-level dictionary to every class meeting.

The student is required to take notes while preparing for class.

The student will compose and submit

five three-to-four-page papers (MLA-format) and

one 1500-word researched and documented overview of an aspect of a wisdom tradition (approval required).

The student will complete three major examinations (essay and objective) and a final.

The student should prepare himself for not a few unannounced quizzes.

NB: All written assignments must be submitted in order for the student to earn credit for the course; the longer paper must reflect a sincere, original effort in order for the student to earn credit for the course.

Grade Determination

note-taking and participation, including use of dictionary	10%
three major examinations	30%
five three-four-page response essays	35%
1500-word documented, researched paper	10%
final examination (required to earn credit)	15%

Important Dates: Tentative

23 February	major examination
11 March	major examination
15 April	major examination
29 April	researched paper due
12 May	final examination

All written assignments must be submitted in a timely fashion for the student to earn credit for the course. Biweekly essays not submitted in a timely fashion will earn a zero. Neither essays nor the researched explication will be accepted via e-mail.

First essay submitted on _____	Fourth essay submitted on _____
Second essay submitted on _____	Fifth essay submitted on _____
Third essay submitted on _____	Fifteen hundred-word essay due on Wednesday; 29 April

The student should retain for his or her own folder, in addition to returned essays, photocopies of all essays, etc. submitted.

Due Dates

No late work is accepted without severe penalty unless the student and the instructor agree on a different due date well in advance of the original due date. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments are due at the beginning of the class. Severe penalty means one letter grade off for each calendar day the assignment is late.

Grading Criteria

The **A** paper represents original outstanding work; it shows careful thought, fresh insights, and stylistic maturity. Having practically no mechanical errors to distract the reader, it is free of jargon, clichés, and other empty language. Word choice is marked by a high degree of precision and a varied, advanced vocabulary; sentences are structured in a manner that creates interest and rhetorical power. The tone is appropriate for the designated audience. The reader moves through the **A** paper effortlessly because of its effective transitions, lucid organization, and thorough, purposeful development. Having finished, the reader feels that he has learned something, that he has received some unexpected and welcome illumination. In the **A** paper all research material is correctly documented, and formatting adheres to current standards of the Modern Language Association. Directly quoted passages are gracefully integrated into the text with appropriate attribution.

The **B** paper is significantly more than competent. Besides being almost free of mechanical errors, the **B** paper delivers substantial information and makes cogent, fresh arguments--that is, in both quality and interest-value. Its specific points are logically ordered, well developed, and supported, and unified around a clear organizing principle that is apparent early in the paper. The **B** paper's relatively few syntactic, usage, and mechanical errors do not seriously distract the reader, but the language, while neither trite nor bureaucratic, probably lacks the candor and the precision of the most memorable writing. Its transitions, while appropriate, emphasize the logical turnings of the writer's mind, making the reader occasionally more aware of the efforts taken to unify and control an idea than of the idea itself. In the **B** paper all research material is correctly documented, and formatting adheres to current standards of the Modern Language Association. Directly quoted passages are integrated into the text with appropriate attribution.

The **C** paper represents average college-level work. It is a competent expression of ordinary thoughts in ordinary language; its **content/focus** is general, commonplace, or trivial, or not adequately related to the assignment; its **development** is vague, incomplete, or inconsistent; its **organization** lacks adequate or appropriate transitions or relation of ideas. The **C** paper, in addition to meeting all the requirements of the assignment, exhibits a **writing style** that is basically correct and is marred by a relatively few syntactic, usage, and mechanical errors. By relying on generalities rather than precise, illustrative details, the writer of a **C** paper leaves the reader feeling not much better informed than when the reader first picked up the essay. In the **C** paper all research material is correctly documented, and formatting adheres to current standards of the Modern Language Association. Directly quoted passages are integrated into the text with appropriate attribution.

The **D** paper has only skeletal development and organization. Its serious mechanical errors, together with the awkwardness and ambiguity of its sentence structure, make the reader feel slighted, as if his time and attention were of little concern to the writer.

NB: A paper exhibiting major weaknesses in any specific area—**content, development, organization, grammar and mechanics, documentation conventions, writing style**—or, indeed, a failure to address the assignment is usually considered, at best, a **D** paper.

As writing that falls below minimal standards for college-level literacy, the **F** paper shows lack of thought and purpose, little or no organization, numerous mechanical errors, and a garbled or immature style. Sometimes inadequacy in one area is enough to fail a paper—the writer, for instance, may not have control of punctuation, producing fragments or comma splices in almost every paragraph; however, serious weaknesses usually occur in several areas of concern.

A paper should earn the grade **zero** if it contains plagiarized content in any form, including the failure to acknowledge the source of any borrowed material (summarized, paraphrased, and directly quoted) and unmarked exact wording (directly quoted from either a primary or a secondary source), whether a specific well-chosen word, a phrase (two or more words), a clause, or full sentence(s). A paper can earn a **zero** if it does not address the assigned topic or if directions have been either ignored or not followed.

Editing symbols and chapter-section references used in the marking of student papers are found on the end sheets in LBH.

The following common, inexcusable errors, absent from **A** and **B** papers, occur infrequently in **C** papers and guarantee, when they occur with any frequency, the paper's earning a **D** at best.

agr; s-v; p-a	= error in subject-verb or pronoun-antecedent agreement	Chapter 8a	-	8b
ap	= apostrophe needed or misused	23a	-	23d
cs	= comma splice	11a	-	11b
frag	= sentence fragment	10a	-	10d
fs; r-o; ro	= fused sentence; run-on sentence	11c and	21; 22	
ref	= error in pronoun reference and/or shift, including the indefinite you	12a	-	12f
sp	= misspelled word	34		
vb	= error in verb form or verb tense	7a	-	7f
ww	= wrong word	31b		
wc	= word choice: perhaps a synonym study, not a thesaurus, is the appropriate resource!			
SLN	= see lecture notes			
HUH ? (?+!)	= indecipherable intention, purpose, or meaning			

Class Attendance: Class Attendance and Participation Are Expected

The College District believes that class attendance is essential for student success; therefore, students are required to promptly and regularly attend all their classes. Each class meeting builds the foundation for subsequent class meetings. Without full participation and regular class attendance, students shall find themselves at a severe disadvantage for achieving success in college. Class participation shall constitute at least ten percent of the final course grade. It is the responsibility of each faculty member, in consultation with the division chairperson, to determine how participation is achieved in his or her class. Faculty will require students to regularly attend class and will keep record of attendance from the first day of class or the first day the student's name appears on the roster through the final examination meeting. If a student has one week's worth of unexcused absences during the semester, he or she will be sent an e-mail by the College requiring the student to contact his or her instructor and schedule a conference immediately to discuss his or her attendance issues. If the student subsequently accumulates two weeks' worth of unexcused absences, he or she will be administratively withdrawn from the class.

NB: The instructor is not responsible for ensuring that the student who elects not to attend class and who chooses not to complete a Change of Registration Card is dropped from this course. It is the student's responsibility to officially drop the class. The student should check the academic calendar for Last Day to Drop dates. The student accruing six hours of absences during the course of a long or short academic term is well on the way to ensuring his or her failing the course.

NB: This instructor views arriving to class late and, especially, leaving class before it is dismissed inexcusable. A student should not expect to successfully complete the course if he or she chooses not to attend class. Arriving late is grossly inconsiderate and inappropriate. Repeated tardiness can negatively affect a student's performance in this class. Leaving the room before class is dismissed—except in extremely dire circumstances—is also grossly inconsiderate and inappropriate and can negatively affect a student's performance in this class.

Conference [office] hours are reserved for students who come to class on a very regular basis: These students are encouraged to seek clarification or to pursue a line of questioning stemming from either classroom discussion or individual reading. If, however, the student's need for a conference is more along the lines of academic progress, the student—no matter how many classes he or she might have missed—should come by to discuss viable options.

Make-Up Policy

The student is responsible for all assignments, including those made during any class meeting from which the student has absented him- or herself. Any clarification of directions, etc. for any assigned work will take place during the instructor's conference hours. All assigned work is due before or on the designated day and time. Unless indicated otherwise, all assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day designated. If a student is unable to attend class on the day that an assignment is due, he or she should nevertheless ensure that the instructor receives the assignment by the designated time. In-class essays and daily quizzes can be made up only if the student's absence is excused in accordance with Blinn attendance policy. No late work is accepted without severe penalty unless the student and the instructor agree on a different due date well in advance of the original due date. Severe penalty means one letter grade off for each calendar day the assignment is late.

Manuscript Form

All papers should be written in dark ink or typed (dark ribbon, etc.) on standard-size paper—one side only—in accordance with the MLA format as outlined in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 5th or 6th edition. (See LBH and hand-outs.) Handwritten papers must exhibit an understanding of the MLA format, including adherence to margin requirements. All bibliographies and works-cited pages, as well as the researched essays, must be typed. Papers must be argued from the third-person and in the literary present tense. All essays and papers submitted must have a title that is both appropriate and adequate. This philosophy course is not a course in creative writing: Be certain that the paper's title indicates fully the paper's contents.

----- **No staples; use a paper clip. Do not align right.** -----

Scholastic Dishonesty

Pride of accomplishment is the boon of any academic achievement. It should be the goal of each student to put forth the best effort possible for each assignment; progression toward better writing is the reward of diligent application to the tasks assigned. The student who demonstrates a lack of integrity by seeking academic gain (good grades, scholarships, etc.) through avenues that circumvent the rigors and rewards of truthful scholarship will be, at some point, thwarted and ill-prepared to work within an honest system.

College policy maintains that it is "the responsibility of instructors to maintain scholastic integrity at Blinn College by refusing to tolerate any form of scholastic dishonesty. [. . .] If there is compelling evidence that a student is involved in cheating or plagiarism, the instructor should assume responsibility and address the infraction" (2008-2009 Blinn College Student Handbook 52).

Any degree of plagiarism appearing in any assignment submitted by the student will earn that student a zero for that assignment. Egregious plagiarism may result in the student's failing the course. The 2008-2009 Blinn College Student Handbook states that "sanctions may be imposed by the instructor and the division chairman: an appropriate grade penalty ranging from a grade of zero on the assignment/examination up to and including the imposition of an F for the entire course" (54). For clarification of the concept, see Joseph Gibaldi's MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th edition, which is available for in-library use at the circulation desk, and/or The Little, Brown Handbook 10e, chapter 47. And because the numerical equivalent for an F earned for an honest paper is 50, it is better to submit a poor paper than to submit a plagiarized paper.

Blinn Board Policy FLB (Local) defines plagiarism as the "appropriating, buying, receiving as a gift, obtaining by any means another's work and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of it in one's own written work." All students should be aware of the several different types--not levels--of plagiarism, including the failure to properly indicate directly quoted passages, phrasings, or significant wordings as such by the proper use of quotation marks, as well as other failures, including misattribution of cited material, as early as possible in the semester. Students should also be made aware that collusion is considered to be as egregious an offense as plagiarism is.

Blinn Board Policy FLB (Local) defines collusion as the "unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of course requirements."

Students with Disabilities

Services and reasonable accommodations are available to students with documented disabilities. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) on the Brenham campus is located in [r]oom 104 of the Administration Building 979 830 4157. The ODS provides "direct services to students with documented disabilities and [makes] appropriate referrals to other resources on and off campus. The ODS promotes awareness of the special needs and abilities of students with disabilities through educational events and outreach activities.

Decorum / Civility Statement / Civility Notification Statement

Members of the Blinn College community, which includes faculty, staff, and students, are expected to act honestly and responsibly in all aspects of campus life. Blinn College holds all members accountable for their actions and words. Therefore, all members should commit themselves to behaving in a manner that recognizes personal respect and demonstrates concern for the personal dignity, rights, and freedoms of every member of the College community, including respect for College property and the physical and intellectual property of others.

If a student is asked to leave the classroom because of uncivil behavior, the student may not return to that class until he or she arranges a conference with the instructor; it is the student's responsibility to arrange for this conference.

Participation

Students are encouraged, indeed expected, to actively engage the subject matter—an engagement that reflects the student's interest in academics and his or her willingness to join in productive discussion.

Electronic Device Policy

The 2008-2009 Blinn College Student Handbook Online states that "[a]ll the functions of all personal electronic devices designed for communication and/or entertainment (cell phones, pagers, beepers, iPods, and similar devices) must be turned off and kept out of sight in all Blinn College classrooms and associated laboratories. Any noncompliance with this policy will be addressed in accordance with the Blinn College civility policy (Administrative Policy). Additionally, any communication understood by the instructor to be in the nature of cheating will have consequences in accordance with this Blinn College policy section regarding academic dishonesty [FLB (Local)]. Students exempted from this policy section include active members of firefighting organizations, emergency medical services organizations, commissioned police officers, on-call employees of any political subdivision of the state of Texas, or agencies of the federal government. Exempted students are expected to set the emergency-use devices on silent or vibrate mode only. [. . .] Any student violating this policy shall be subject to discipline, including suspension, in accordance with [Blinn College Board Policy] FM" (51).

Other Considerations

The College will use e-mail to contact students about any and all important issues and concerns, including attendance issues. Students should check their Blinn College e-mail accounts on a regular basis, especially if they are wondering whether they have been administratively dropped from a class for non-attendance. Refer to <http://www.blinn.edu/acadtech/studentemail/index.htm> for additional information about student e-mail accounts.

Because the nature of the course and the nature of the presentation both invite classroom discussion, any potential impediment to the free flow of ideas cannot be allowed; therefore, **no mechanical recording of class meetings is allowed**. See instructor.

The Internet cannot be considered a final, authoritative source of information; therefore, the Internet and information obtained therefrom should not contribute to any aspect of the research for any paper associated with this course unless it has been cleared with the instructor well beforehand.

The student will be held responsible for all assignments, even reading assignments not actually discussed during scheduled class meetings. Class meetings are designed to further understanding; therefore, class time will be spent exploring—not explaining—the assigned reading. In short, the student must come to class prepared to discuss any and all aspects of the assigned reading.

The student should bring to the classroom setting notebook paper, highlighter(s), functioning pen, dictionary, the Yandell textbook, and all handouts. The student should not at any time rely on borrowing; borrowing will be construed as a sign of ill preparedness, which, in turn, affects the student's participation grade.

In an effort to enhance student engagement on the Brenham campus, **The Writing Room** provides, free of charge, a supportive, non-directive environment for all students at any stage of the writing process. Located in room 14 of the Academic Building, The Writing Room, while not providing proofreading or editing services, does provide activities for idea invention, computers and computer programs that simplify the task of composing, reference books to help students find the answers to their questions, and English consultants to offer feedback to students as they learn to identify both the strengths and weaknesses of their own writing. While computers in The Writing Room are available on a walk-in basis, students are encouraged to make appointments in advance to meet with Writing Room consultants.

In-class testing will be handwritten; **no laptops for testing**.

Consumption of food and drinks is not allowed in Blinn College's library, classrooms, and labs

Tentative Course Outline Tentative

Schedule of Readings

Spring 2009

The student is responsible for understanding the vocabulary found in the readings, the very words (familiar and unfamiliar to the student) that constitute the philosophical concepts and arguments. The student should annotate his or her textbook carefully. Dates listed are dates by which the assigned reading should have been read.

Yandell = Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction

W	21	January	course introduction
M	26	January	Yandell, Chapter 2: What Is the Philosophy of Religion?
W	28	January	Yandell, Chapter 7: Monotheistic Conceptions of Ultimate Reality
M	2	February	Yandell, Chapter 7: Monotheistic Conceptions of Ultimate Reality Armstrong, Chapter 1: In the Beginning . . .
W	4	February	Yandell, Chapter 8: Nonmonotheistic Conceptions of Ultimate Reality
M	9	February	Yandell, Chapter 9: Arguments against Monotheism
W	11	February	Yandell, Chapter 9: Arguments against Monotheism
M	16	February	Yandell, Chapter 10: Arguments for Monotheism
W	18	February	Yandell, Chapter 10: Arguments for Monotheism
M	23	February	examination
W	25	February	Yandell, Chapter 12: Arguments concerning Nonmonotheistic Conceptions 1
M	2	March	Yandell, Chapter 12: Arguments concerning Nonmonotheistic Conceptions 1
W	4	March	Yandell, Chapter 13: Arguments concerning Nonmonotheistic Conceptions 2

