

Course Required Materials / Texts:

Peterson, Michael; Hasker, William; Reichenbach, Bruce and Basinger, David.
Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion.
Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Course Time and Location:

9:00 to 9:55 a.m. MWF, Building G Room 110

Class Dynamics:

Assigned text readings for class meetings should be read in advance for the day assigned.

There will be a True/False **Readings Quiz** for each reading assignment at the beginning of classes designated for such an assignment. There will be 33 readings quizzes in the Spring 2011 semester. ***No make-ups on readings quizzes will be given***, but you may drop your **four** lowest readings quiz grades. (True / false questions from readings quizzes will supply material for questions on major examinations, so you will want to keep your quizzes to prepare for examinations.)

Lectures will supplement the text readings, facilitate class discussion, and provide the foundation of examination contents. Lectures will seek to inform and to challenge the student to critical consideration and knowledge of the course subject matter.

Class discussion of lectures and readings is welcomed and encouraged. Such discussion should be informed, thoughtful, respectful of the views of others, and open to new (or old) ideas and perspectives. ***Students are not required to endorse any of the personal views of the instructor or of the course text.***

Examinations

Study Guides will be provided prior to major examinations. If you fill out the study guide *substantively* and *completely* and turns in the study guide prior to the examination, a grade of '60' on the examination is assured. Even better, the use of the study guide can greatly assist you in making a grade higher than 'D' on the examination!

Major Examinations will evidence the student's mastery of the course material. Four non-comprehensive examinations will be given.

Make-up Examinations: My policy is that no make-up examinations will be given. Missed examinations, *for whatever reason*, will result in a grade of '0'. However, as the lowest of your four major examination grades will be dropped, if you miss an examination – thus receiving a '0' – that grade will be dropped. If you miss a second examination, but turn in the study guide (completely and substantively filled out) prior to the next class meeting after the exam date, you will receive a 50 for that second missed exam. Any further missed examinations will receive a grade of '0'.

Comprehensive Examination: On Class 43 (May 6) a comprehensive examination will be given. This comprehensive examination will be worth 10% of your course grade. It will consist of previous matching and definition questions from exams #1 and #2 and #3.

Course Essay

Each student will turn in a 3-5 page, double-spaced, 12 font essay on the topic:

“My Personal Philosophy of Religion.” This essay will be worth 10% of your course grade.

This is not a research paper and does not require documentation unless you utilize sources or cite material that are not your own creative work / words. Essays will be evaluated on the basis of the thoughtfulness and course-interaction evidenced by the essay. (Due Class #42 = May 4)

Attendance Policy!!!:

There are 44 class meetings in the Spring 2011 semester. There are no ‘excused absences,’ but you may miss up the FOUR class meetings (for whatever reasons) without any special penalty.

Each class missed AFTER FOUR classes will result in TWO POINTS being DEDUCTED from your final course grade.

More than ELEVEN class absences requires that you drop the course (if occurring before the official Drop / Withdrawal Deadline on April 11) or receive an ‘F’ for the course.

*Students ‘sleeping’ head down on desk, etc.), web-surfing, text-messaging, etc. during class – *or using class time for any purpose other than philosophy education* – will be counted as absent. (‘Attendance’ is more than your mere physical presence!)

* Students arriving more than 20 minutes late to class will be accorded ½ absence. (After four complete absences, each half-absence will result in a 1 point deduction from your final course grade.)

*If you do arrive late for class (after the readings quiz has been taken up) be sure and tell me at the end of class that you were present. Otherwise, you might be counted absent.

*Please tell me prior to class if you need to leave class early. I know that this is sometimes necessary, but leaving class early *for any reason* will count as ½ absence.

Cell Phones and Laptops!!!

Unless there is *a special need* that you *communicate to me* prior to the beginning of class, all cell phones should be silenced, unused and put away during class.

**Using cell phones in class* for text-messaging, web-surfing, etc. will result in the student being *counted as absent* for that class.

*Students *leaving class to take / make a cell phone call* will be counted absent.

*Students *staring down into their laps with their hands below the table* will be regarded as text messaging and will be counted absent.

Laptop computers may be used in class *for note-taking purposes only* – and only if the student is *seated in one of the front two rows* of the classroom. As there is usually enough lecture content to keep you busily typing during class, students not doing so will be presumed to be using their laptops for other purposes than taking notes and will be *counted as absent* for that class.

On Dropping the Course:

Students who consider dropping the course due to excessive absences or low grades should consult with the instructor first! Mitigating circumstances and potential *may* be considered if the student is having difficulty fulfilling attendance and grade requirements of the course. *If the student does need to drop the course, it is YOUR responsibility to do so officially.*

Determination of Course Grade:

Grades will be assigned on the traditional scale of:

90 to 100	A
80 to 89	B
70 to 79	C
60 to 69	D
Below 60	F

Your course grade will be determined according to the following:

Readings Quizzes:	20%	
Examination #1:	20% **	**the lowest of these four grades will be 'dropped'
Examination #2:	20% **	
Examination #3:	20% **	
Examination #4	20% **	
Course Essay	10%	
Comprehensive Examination	10%	

Plagiarism and Cheating:

In the case of plagiarism (claiming that words and ideas of others are your own and/or not indicating the source of ideas), the student will receive a zero ('0') for the assignment.

In the case of cheating on a quiz / exam the student will receive a zero ('0') for the quiz / exam *that cannot be dropped* and counts toward their final course grade.

Honors Course

Qualifying students may take this course for honors credit. If you are not already a member of the Montgomery College Honors Program, see Professor Sam Thomas: Building G, Suite 220 Office G (Samuel.L.Thomas@Lonestar.edu) or Professor Karen Branham: Building G, Suite 121, Office H (Karin.Branham@lonestar.edu) for qualifications and requirements for the honors program and honors credit. If you are a member of the Honors program already, then set up an appointment with me to discuss the requirements for honors credit for this course.

Your Course Instructor:

Mark Weldon Whitten, 'Professor' of Philosophy and Religion
B.A. Baylor University (*magna cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa)
M.Div. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Ph.D. Baylor University

My office is located in Building G, Suite 221 Office C,
my email is mark.w.whitten@lonestar.edu,
and my phone number is 936.273.7492.

'Office Hours': You may 'drop by' without an appointment during official office hours:
MWF 9:55: to 10:30 a.m. and 11:30 to 11:55 a.m. .
T/Th 11:20 to 12:55 p.m.

Or you may call to set up an appointment during those hours—or for some other mutually agreeable time if an appointment during office hours is not possible.

Counseling:

If you find yourself in any kind of academic or personal 'distress' during the semester, please see BELS Division counselors Rachel Phelps (936-273-6157, Building G, Suite 220 Office C) or Angela Martin (936-273-7070, Building G Suite 120 Office G). They offer personal, academic, and career counseling and can put you in touch with other helpful campus resources.

Some Observations on Student Success:

1. Montgomery College and your professor are committed to doing our best to facilitate your academic success. *There are many sources of aid* for your educational quest, beginning with your professor and also available through the Learning Center and other Montgomery College programs. If you need help in your learning, seek and ask!
2. But YOU, the student, are fundamentally and ultimately responsible for your own learning!
It is vitally important that you take responsibility for your learning!
Not only will this promote your success now as a student, but it will serve to develop the personal responsibility and self-discipline that is necessary for success in your future career and in every aspect of life.
3. Becoming educated / learning is work—*often hard work*—and it may be helpful to regard being a student as your 'job' (or another job in addition to your 'real job'), requiring all of the commitment, effort, and discipline that it takes to be successful in a job.
4. So, attend class whenever possible and as required. Pay attention, be an 'active listener,' and participate in class. Take good class notes and *study adequately for examinations*. Collaborate with your fellow students in studying for examinations (study groups can be helpful!).

5. Take good care of yourself physically and psychologically-emotionally (get adequate rest, especially the night before an examination!). Give yourself time to do your best work on projects and papers (Don't procrastinate!).
6. *Keep up with your work*—don't start 'sliding' through the semester and find yourself at the end of the semester not having the materials, information, or time to do well on final exams, papers, and projects.
7. *Be aware of how the new communication technologies* (computers and cell / smart phones – web surfing, texting, Facebook, twitter, etc.) *are affecting you*. Not only do many students spend a great deal of time using these technologies, *but the mental habits (and brain re-structuring!)* which they utilize and reinforce may actually undermine your ability to engage in the focused, sustained, analytical thinking that is so important to intellectual development and academic / career success.
8. Finally, *believe in yourself*—that you can succeed and even excel as a student—as do your best. Then take satisfaction in whatever you accomplish, for it will be your best (and YOUR BEST) is all that anyone can expect.)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Class 1: January 19 / “Welcome Philosophers!” and Course Introduction

Class 2: January 21 / “What is ‘Philosophy’?”

(We will view a video of philosophers’ testimonials)

Reading Assignment: None

No Readings Quiz

Class 3: January 24 / Some Benefits of Philosophy Education

(We will view the short videos “Joshua in a Box”)

Reading Assignment: NONE

NO Readings Quiz

Class 4: January 26 / Dynamics and Demands of Philosophical Understanding

Reading Assignment: ‘Dynamics and Demands of Understanding’ at

www.lonestar.edu/blogs/mwhitten

(click on the ‘Introduction Resources’ tab, then click on link)

Readings Quiz #1

Class 5: January 28 / What is ‘Religion? - What is ‘Philosophy of Religion’?

Reading Assignment: Text, Chapter 1, pages 1-9 and

“Religion Definitions” at

www.lonestar.edu/blogs/mwhitten

(click on ‘religion resources’ tab, then click on link)

Readings Quiz #2

Class 6: January 31 / 'The Religious Quest'

(we will view an excerpt from the movie:
"Star Trek: The Motion Picture")

Reading Assignment: Text, Chapter 15

Readings Quiz #3

Class 7: February 2 / Religious Experience

(we will view an excerpt from the movie: 'Contact')

Reading Assignment: Chapter 3, pages 27-38

Readings Quiz #4

Class 8: February 4 / Religious Experience: Mysticism

Reading Assignment: Chapter 3, pages 44-48.

Readings Quiz #5

Class 9: February 7 / Religious Experience and Belief

Reading Assignment: Chapter 3, pages 38-44

Readings Quiz #6

Class 10: February 9 / Faith and Reason

(we will view an excerpt from the movie: 'Pigeon Feathers')

Reading Assignment: Chapter 4 (all)

Readings Quiz #7

Class 11: February 11 / Faith and Reason, cont.

Reading Assignment: chapter 7:123-128 and
chapter 1, pages 9-13

Readings Quiz #8

Class 12: February 14 / Concepts of 'God': 'Perfect Being Theism'

Reading Assignment: chapter 5 (all)

Readings Quiz #9

Class 13: February 16 /EXAMINATION #1

Class 14: February 18 / Concepts of 'God': 'Advaita Vedanta'

Reading Assignment: ONLINE

Google: "The Basic Concepts of Advaita Vedanta" (Read 1-7)

Readings Quiz #10

Class 15: February 21 / "Does 'God' Exist?"

Reading Assignment: "God's Existence"

at www.lonestar.edu/blogs/mwhitten

(click on 'Religion Resources' tab, then click on link)

Readings Quiz #11

Class 16: February 23 / "Does 'God' Exist?" cont.

No Reading Assignment

No Readings Quiz

Class 17: February 25 / Arguments for the Existence of God, introduction
Ontological Arguments for the Existence of God
Reading Assignment: chapter 6:90-95
Readings Quiz #12

Class 18: February 28 / Cosmological Arguments for the Existence of God
Reading Assignment: chapter 6:95-104
Readings Quiz #13

Class 19: March 2 / Teleological ('Design') Arguments for the Existence of God
Reading Assignment: chapter 6:104-108
Readings Quiz #14

Class 20 : March 4 / 'Intelligent Design' and 'God'
Reading Assignment: chapter 6:108-112
Readings Quiz #15

Class 21: March 7 / Moral Arguments for the Existence of God
Reading Assignment: chapter 6: 112-117
Readings Quiz #16

Class 22: March 9 /EXAMINATION #2

Class 23: March 11 / William James' "Will to Believe" Argument
Reading Assignment: "William James' 'Will to Believe'" at
www.lonestar.edu/blogs/mwhitten
(click on 'Religion Resources' tab, then click on link)
Readings Quiz #17

March 14-20 / Mid-Semester Break / March 14-20

Class 24: March 21 / "Pascal's Wager"
Reading Assignment: "Pascal's Wager"
at www.lonestar.edu/blogs/mwhitten
(click on 'Religion Resources' tab, then click on link)
Readings Quiz #18

Class 25: March 23 / Miracles: Concept-of, Verification-of, and Evidence-from Issues
Reading Assignment: chapter 10 (all)
Readings Quiz #19

Class 26: March 25 / The 'Evidentialist Objection' to Belief in God
Reading Assignment: ONLINE at
www.iep.utm.edu/r/relig-ep.htm
Read "2. The Evidentialist Objection to Belief in God"
Readings Quiz #20

Class 27: March 28: Justified God-Belief Without Evidence?: ‘Properly Basic Belief’
Reading Assignment: chapter 7, pages 123-134
Reading Quiz #21

Class 28: March 30 / ‘God’ and Evil: The Problem(s)
(We will view an excerpt from the movie ‘Signs’)
Reading Assignment: chapter 8:145-154
Readings Quiz #22

Class 29: April 1 / Responses to Evil: ‘Defense’ and (the Failure of?) ‘Theodicy’
(We will view another excerpt from the movie ‘Signs’)
Reading Assignment: chapter 8:154-167
Readings Quiz #23

Class 30: April 4 / the ‘Divine Hiddenness’ Argument for Atheism
Reading Assignment: ONLINE at
www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Reli/ReliDran.htm
Read “Non-Belief as Support for Atheism”
Readings Quiz #24

Class 31: April 6 / The ‘Resurrection’ of Jesus of Nazareth: Claims
Reading Assignment: ONLINE
William Lane Craig
“Contemporary Scholarship and the Historical Evidence
for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth”
(read from paragraph eleven to the conclusion of the essay)
at www.leaderu.com/truth/1truth22.html
Readings Quiz #25

Class 32: April 8 / The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth: Criticisms
Reading Assignment: ONLINE
Keith Parsons
“Why I am Not a Christian” (Read chapters 4,5 and 6)
at www.infidels.org/library/modern/keith_parsons/whynotchristian.html
Reading Quiz #26

April 11 = Last Day to Withdraw and Receive a ‘W’ = April 11

Class 33: April 11 / EXAMINATION #3

Class 34: April 13 / Life After Death?: Options and Issues
Reading Assignment: Chapter 11 (all)
Readings Quiz #27

Class 35: April 15 / Religious Pluralism and Truth
Reading Assignment: chapter 14 (all)
Readings Quiz #28

Class 36: April 18 / Religious Language and Truth
Reading Assignment: chapter 12 (all)
Readings Quiz #29

Class 37: April 20 / Science, Religion and Truth
Reading Assignment: chapter 13 (all)
Readings Quiz #30

April 22-24 / Spring Holiday / April 22-24

Class 38: April 25 / Science and Religion, cont.
Reading Assignment: None
No Readings Quiz

Class 39: April 27 / Religion and Ethics
Reading Assignment: chapter 15, pages 313-319
Readings Quiz #31

Class 40: April 29 / Religion and Ethics, cont.
Reading Assignment: chapter 15, pages 319-323
Readings Quiz #32

Class 41: May 2 / Religion and Ethics – Politics
Reading Assignment: chapter 15, pages 323-331
Readings Quiz #33

Class 42: May 4 / Course Conclusion
Course ESSAYS DUE

Class 43: May 6 / Comprehensive Examination
1) What is 'Philosophy' and 'Philosophy of Religion'?
2) Lonergan's 'Dynamics & Demands of Understanding'
3) Matching: Major philosophers from exams 1-3

Class 44: May 11 (Wednesday) / 9:00 to 10:50 a.m.
EXAMINATION #4