

Course Description:

Unlike most Philosophy of Religion courses, this course will not be concerned with the question of whether it is rational to believe in God. Rather, without directly arguing for God's existence or non-existence, we will consider *what we mean by the term "God"*, and *what difference it would make if God existed or didn't exist* with regard to morality and the meaning of life.

Topics:

Part I: What is God?

1. *The history of the concept of God:* What do philosophers mean by the term "God"? And how would you go about philosophizing about such a thing?

Part II: What difference could God make?

2. *The possibility of theistic ethics:* Could God be the source of value?
3. *God and the meaning of life:* What difference could God's existence/non-existence make to the meaning of life?

Texts:

Gilson, Etienne. *God and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Yale, 2002)
Hare, John E. *Why Bother Being Good? The Place of God in the Moral Life* (IVP, 2002)
Martin, Michael. *Atheism, Morality, and Meaning* (Prometheus, 2003)
Cottingham, John. *On the Meaning of Life* (Routledge, 2002)

Requirements:

1. *Film Analysis #1:* Explain in 2-3 pages the concept of God in the film *Pi* (**due Jan 27**).
2. *Book Review:* Choose one of the following books and evaluate it in 5-7 pages, making sure to explain the author's concept of God as well as the author's philosophical and theological methodology before criticizing the author's conclusions (**Due Feb 1**):
 - Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *On The Nature of the Gods*. (Penguin, 1985), **Books II and III**.
 - Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Contra Gentiles, Book I: God*. (Notre Dame, 1997), **Ch 1-36, 97-102**
 - Kant, Immanuel. "Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion" in Wood and Giovanni eds., *Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge 1996), **entire**
 - Peacocke, Arthur. *Theology For a Scientific Age* (Fortress, 1993), **Ch 1-8 (Optional: Intro.)**
3. *Position Paper:* Write 2-3 pages describing and defending your own theory of God's relationship to ethics (**due Feb 17**).
4. *Film Analysis #2:* Explain in 2-3 pages what the film *Crimes and Misdemeanors* has to say about God and the meaning of life (**Due Mar 18**).
5. *Term Paper:* Explain in 5-7 pages the difference it would make if God existed as described in the optional book from your Book Review (see requirement 2 above). You should focus on the significance of God to either morality or meaning (but not both), making reference to the relevant sections of the Hare, Martin, and Cottingham texts. (**Due March 18**)

Course Schedule:

Tues. 1/4/05 – Preface to Course

Thurs. 1/6/05 – Introduction to Philosophical Theology [*Read: Handout*]

Part I: What Is God?

Tues. 1/11/05 – Concepts of God in Classical Philosophy [*Read: Gilson, 1-37*]

Thurs. 1/13/05 – The Medieval Concept of God [*Read: Gilson, 38-73*]

Tues. 1/18/05 – Reconceptualizing God for Modern Philosophy [*Read: Gilson, 74-144*]

Thurs. 1/20/05 – Looking for a Postmodern God [*Read: First Half of Optional Book*]

Tues. 1/25/05 – Watch movie: *Pi* [*Read: Second Half of Optional Book*]

Thurs. 1/27/05 – Discuss *Pi* [*Turn in: Film Analysis #1*]

Part II: What Difference Could God Make?

Tues. 2/1/05 – Introduction to God and Morality [*Turn in: Book Review*]

Thurs. 2/3/05 – Atheistic Ethics [*Read: Martin, 21-112*]

Tues. 2/8/05 – Divine Command Ethics [*Read: Martin, 113-155*]

Thurs. 2/10/05 – Hare's "Moral Gap" Argument [*Read: Hare, 7-93*]

Tues. 2/15/05 – An Alternative Place for God in Ethics [*Read: Hare, 94-211*]

Thurs. 2/17/05 – Other forms of Theistic Ethics [*Turn in: Position Paper*]

Tues. 2/22/05 – Atheism and the Meaning of Life [*Read: Martin, 185-212*]

Thurs. 2/24/05 – Theism and the Meaning of Life [*Read: Martin, 213-252*]

Tues. 3/1/05 – The Problem of Meaning Without God [*Read: Cottingham, 1-63*]

Thurs. 3/3/05 – God and the Meaning of Life [*Read: Cottingham, 64-104*]

Tues. 3/8/05 – Start watching movie: *Crimes and Misdemeanors* [none: work on paper 2]

Thurs. 3/10/05 – Finish watching movie, and discuss [none: work on paper 2]

Fri. 3/18/05 – NO FINAL EXAM [*Turn in: Film Analysis #2*

and: Term Paper]

Course Policies:

1. No late papers will be accepted.
2. Attendance and class participation are mandatory and will affect your grade.
3. At the end of each class, the student should turn in a half-sheet of paper with one question or comment about the content of that class.