God and Persons: Philosophical Reflections (PHL 320 N)
Summer, term 2, July 9-27, 2007
Instructor: Eugene E. Selk

Humanities Center, rm. 107
office hours: By appointment, and before class. I will be in the
classroom 15 to 30 minutes before class.
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If I am not in, leave a message on voice mail.
department facsimile 280-3359
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Required texts:

Books to be purchased in the bookstore or elsewhere:


Readings available on Blackboard:

Aquinas. Selections from the Summa Theologiae.


A note on using the web outlines. I highly recommend printing the web outlines for the day and bringing them to class. Then use them to fill in your notes. Remember that, for the most part, the outlines are only skeletons. They will not suffice by themselves to prepare for exams.

Outline of course
This calender is a guide, not an unchangeable schedule. I may adjust it occasionally. Our goal is learning, not strict adherence to a schedule. The dates of exams and papers are, however, fixed.

7/9 1. General introduction I

Syllabus, texts, assignments, & grading.

General introduction II

Definitions and theories of religion and theology, and the interrelationship between religion, theology and philosophy.

Read: Durkheim’s sociological reduction of religion, in Peterson, 8-12. Trigg’s critique of reductionist accounts of religion, in Peterson, 13-20.

2. Arguments for the existence of God

Read: Anselm’s ontological argument, in Peterson 176-180. Aquinas’ causal and design arguments (nos. 2 & 5). On Blackboard.

Plantiga’s argument against arguments for God, in Peterson, 261-273.

7/10   Discussion: video “Does God Exist?” - Intelecom # 10

3. Religious faith and reason

7/11   Read: Kierkegaard on different types of truth, in Peterson, 118-123.
       Clifford on the ethics of religious belief, in Peterson, 104-110.
       Aquinas on religious faith & reason, in Peterson, 92-96.
       Pascal’s wager, in Peterson, 101-104.

paper # 1 - due Thursday, July 12

7/12   Read: William James on the right to believe, in Peterson, 110-118.
       C.S. Lewis, "On the Obstinacy of Belief." On Blackboard.
       Evans on dialog between commitments & critical reflection, in Peterson, 123-130.

4. Miracles

Read: David Hume sets the stage, in Peterson, 473-481.

Exam # 1 - Friday, July 13

5. The problem of evil

7/16   Read: Augustine sets the stage, in Peterson, 292-296.
       Hick's soul-making theodicy, in Peterson, 341-354.
       Whitney’s aesthetic solution to the problem of evil. On Blackboard.
       Haught’s process proposal, in John Haught, Responses, questions 69-75, 87-89.

7/17   Film: Shadowlands

6. Religious Experience

7/18   Read: Saint Teresa, in Peterson, 32035.
       William James on mysticism, in Peterson, 35-45.

catchup

Discussion session on the video: “Can We Know God Through Experience?” Intelecom # 11 & catchup

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**paper # 2 - due Thursday, July 19**

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### 7. Mind & Body, and Human Destiny


Hick on resurrection, in Peterson, 529-539.

Sri Aurobindo on rebirth, in Peterson, 545-546. (tentative)

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**Exam # 2 - Friday, July 20**

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### 8. Science & Religion

7/23 Read: Gould on NOMA, in Peterson, 549-559.

Dawkins on religion & science, in Peterson, 559-563.


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### 9. Religious diversity

7/24 Read: Borland on exclusivism. *handout*

Dalai Lama on inclusivism, in Peterson, 584-588.

Rahner on inclusivism, in Peterson, 5597-607.

Hick on pluralism, in Peterson, 607-617.


And catchup
10. The meaning of life

7/25  Read: Selection from Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science*
R.M. Hare, “Nothing Matters.” On Blackboard.
Selection from Camus’ *The Myth of Sisyphus.* On Blackboard.
Teilhard de Chardin, "Reflections on Happiness." On Blackboard.

Discussion of film: “What is the Meaning of Life?” (Intelecom # 26)

7/26       catchup

Exam # 3 - Friday, July 27

Course requirements

1. Attendance & participation. I will take attendance regularly, and attendance together with the quality of your participation will count for 7% of your total grade. For each unexcused absence, 15 points will be subtracted from your attendance and participation grade (on a 100 point scale).

Participation includes coming to class on time, being prepared for class, being attentive and respectful of others, and volunteering to ask and respond to questions. It also includes not dominating the discussion and being sensitive to the desires of others to comment or ask questions. Good participation means being aware of the dynamic of the class as a whole.

2. Papers. Two short (two to three pages) comment and reflection papers will be assigned. These papers will be assigned near the end of the class discussion of one of the major topics of the course. You will receive a handout with details on the topic of the paper well before the paper is due.

You must cite sources using the proper form, even if the sources are from the course textbooks. The form of the references and bibliography is to follow the MLA parenthetical style. See any of the following: Laurie Kirszner and Stephen Mandell, *The Brief Holt Handbook*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace College, 2000), Part 9, chapter 34, and Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th ed. (NY: MLA, 2003). For a brief overview of the MLA parenthetical style, see the page on the course web site or the following web sites:

University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center

Purdue University - the Owl
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/

Late papers will be penalized one-half of a letter grade; papers over two days late will be penalized a full letter grade.

3. Dialogue days. On most class days, I will hand out questions on one or two of the readings to be covered in the following day’s class. Write out your answers and bring them to class. The discussion of these readings will be based on your discussion of the questions. **Make two copies of**
**your answers.** I will collect one copy at the beginning of class. Use the other copy for the class discussion. These will be graded lightly (i.e., normally, you will get the full points for each completed question-sheet). However, if you did not take the assignment seriously (flippant answers or answers which clearly show a failure to read carefully), I will give less than full points.

Late dialogues defeat the purpose of these questions (class discussion). Accordingly, dialogues handed in late will receive a C.

4. **Discussion sessions.** Several times (3 to 4) during the term we will hold discussion sessions. The discussions will normally be on a film from the series, *The Examined Life* (Intelecom, 1998). You will be given questions to answer, and a leader will be assigned to each group. The leader is responsible for eliciting from the group answers to the questions. The answers will be projected for the entire class to review and critique. Leaders will be assigned a grade. Each member of class will have at least one turn at leading a group.

5. **Principal deadlines**
   - paper # 1 - Thursday, July 12
   - exam # 1 - Friday, July 13
   - paper # 2 - Thursday, July 19
   - exam # 2 - Friday, July 20
   - exam # 3 - Friday, July 27

6. **Exams and grading**
   There will be three exams. They will be non-cumulative, and the last of the three exams will be the final.

   All items will be graded on a 100 point scale with the following breakdown for each letter

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-93</td>
<td>92-86</td>
<td>85-79</td>
<td>78-72</td>
<td>71-62</td>
<td>61-54</td>
<td>53-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   Grading of dialogue questions

   - EX - excellent  96% (I will occasionally give EX+, 100%)
   - GO - good 85%
   - OK - okay 70%
   - PO - poor 0%

   There will be approximately 10 sets of dialogue questions during the semester. I will use the mean of your grades on these to determine your grade for the 18% which this counts toward your final grade.

   The following is the weighting of each of the course requirements. There is **no extra credit** for this course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Totals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>three exams at 16 % each</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two papers at 10% each</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dialogue questions</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussion leader</td>
<td>07%</td>
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<tr>
<td>attendance and participation</td>
<td>07%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Incompletes & extra credit.** No extra credit is available. Except for very special circumstances, I do not give incompletes.

BEST WISHES FOR A GOOD SUMMER SESSION!

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**CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**
A good learning environment requires treating your instructor and classmates with respect. This includes, arriving on time, raising your hand to speak, not dominating the discussion or questions, not wearing a hat in class, not putting your feet on the desk in front of you, and not gathering papers and bags before the class has ended.

**STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY**
In keeping with the mission of Creighton University, academic honesty is expected of students in this course. "'Academic or academic-related misconduct' includes . . . unauthorized collaboration or use of external information during examinations; plagiarizing or representing another’s ideas as one's own; furnishing false academic information to the University; falsely obtaining, distributing, using or receiving test materials; falsifying academic records; . . . misusing academic resources; defacing or tampering with library materials; obtaining or gaining unauthorized access to examinations or academic research material; soliciting or offering unauthorized academic information or materials. . ." (Creighton University Bulletin: 2002-2003 Undergraduate Issue, 87-88) It is a requirement of the College of Arts and Sciences that all serious violations of academic honesty must be reported to the Dean’s office. A violation of academic honesty may result in a dramatic lowering of the course grade or failure.
Standards for evaluating the writing assignments

A paper
- good flow from thesis statement, arguments and reflections, to the conclusion
- good personal reflections
- no grammar or spelling mistakes
- no awkward phrases
- smooth transitions
- well-organized; good movement from introduction, body, & conclusion
- correct use of the MLA style with sources at the end of the paper

B paper
- adequate personal reflections
- few grammar or spelling mistakes
- relatively smooth transitions
- occasional use of colloquialisms
- well-organized; good movement from introduction, body, & conclusion
- correct use of the MLA style with sources at the end of the paper

C paper
- few personal reflections
- grammatical and/or spelling errors
- many awkward or tangled phrases
- use of colloquialisms
- excessively ambiguous or incoherent sentences
- no clear flow from introduction, through body, to conclusion
- ambiguity about who is speaking (you? the author you are discussing?)
- jumps without transitions or connections with what precedes
- incorrect use of the MLA parenthetical style

D paper
- many items from the C paper plus
- only marginally on the topic assigned

F paper
- Items under the C paper and the D paper plus
- using sources without any references (plagiarism)
Standards for evaluating participation

**strengths**
- attendance
- indication that you have read the material beforehand by appropriate questions and comments
- responding to the professor’s and classmates’ comments

Comments indicate background reading, reflection, and analysis

**weaknesses**
- failure to attend, chronically late
- inability to use material which was to be read before class
- no response to professor’s and classmates’ comments
- comments indicate little reflection and no connection to readings used in course
- dominating the discussion & being insensitive to the desires of other students to participate in the discussion

Standards for evaluating answers to dialogue-days questions

**strengths**
- cite specific comments within the reading
- raise good questions based on the reading
- relate your comments to previous class discussions

**weaknesses**
- excessively brief answers which do not go beyond the web site outlines
- indications that you did not read the essay (e.g., excessively brief answers which could be gleaned from the headings)
Evaluation of papers

 strengths

- clear statement of the project of the paper (thesis statement)
- good personal reflections
- well-organized; good movement from introduction, through body, and to conclusion
- few grammatical and spelling mistakes
- few awkward phrases
- good transitions
- correct use of the MLA style with sources at the end of the paper

 weaknesses

- no clear statement of the project of the paper (thesis statement)
- repeating classroom discussion and assigned reading with nothing more
- grammatical and/or spelling errors
- many awkward or tangled phrases
- use of colloquialisms
- excessively ambiguous or incoherent sentences
- no clear flow from introduction, through body, to conclusion
- ambiguity about who is speaking (you? the author you are discussing?)
- jumps without transitions or connections with what precedes
- incorrect use of the MLA parenthetical style
- few personal reflections or analyses
- only marginally on the topic assigned
- using sources without any references (plagiarism)