



A M B R O S E

PH 203 Philosophy of Religion Winter 2010

Time: Tuesday & Thursday 8:15 – 9:45
Location: Airhart Theatre

Instructor Information:
Kenneth M. Nickel (MAR, MSc, PhD ABD)
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a philosophical examination of religious topics and issues including but not limited to knowledge of God's existence, the problem of evil, the occurrence of miracles, the nature of revelation, the legitimacy of religious experience, and the place of religion in morality.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students should hone their skills in philosophical analysis and writing, improving their ability to think and write clearly, critically, and precisely.
2. Students should learn and understand the classical and enduring problems that have arisen as philosophers have grappled with the ideas of God's existence and God's relationships to the world and to human experience.
3. Students should become conversant with many of the religious and theological debates, arguments, and criticisms that persist at the intersection of faith and reason.
4. Students should develop a more refined appreciation of the significance of religious knowledge and experience.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Reynolds, Terrence, ed. 2005. *The Phenomenon of Religious Faith*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson - Prentice Hall.

Stump, Eleonore, and Michael J. Murray, eds. 1999. *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation** 20%
 - Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Students are expected to attend each class session **with assigned text material and an engaged frame of mind**. Students should be prepared to contribute meaningful conversation to the topics under discussion. **Each absence from class merits an immediate .5% deduction (1 mark)** and class participation is assessed on the balance. For example, if a student misses two classes and generally participates excellently in class he or she generally cannot achieve more than 18/20 for this portion of his or her grade. **Students in class without text material and otherwise engaged in non-class activities are simply in the same room and may be assessed as absent.** Students who miss no more than two lectures with demonstrably good reasons (e.g., athletic participation) will have their participation assessed on the basis of 20/20.
 - Students who arrive late to class or leave early may be marked as absent. As a general rule **two late arrivals or early departures** will amount to one absence.
 - Student participation will also be assessed on the basis of 'posts' within discussion forums on Moodle. Discussion forums are intended to facilitate thoughtful interaction related to lecture material. Students are **required to make 16 'quality' posts** over the course of the term and no more than two posts will be counted in any one week. Posts can consist of thoughtful questions related to the lecture material or responses to other questions or opinions. Although the discussion forum provides a qualitative rendering of each student's participation, **failures to post will equate to absences from class**; e.g., 14/16 quality posts will take 1 mark off and participation will be assessed on the balance.
 - **Laptops are completely unnecessary and are strongly discouraged.** They are deleterious to student participation. Students who elect to refrain from laptop use for the duration of the course will be immune from the online discussion. Other things being equal, participation will be graded as no worse than 'good' – B range.

2. **Midterm Examination** 15%
- February 11th
2. **Research Paper** 25%
- Due: Thursday, April 8th @ 8:15 AM
 - Topics: TBA
 - A separate handout regarding format guidelines and late policy will be provided.
- 3 **Final Exam** 40%
- Date: Wednesday, April 14th @ 9:00 AM in 2145
 - Students must pass the final exam to ensure a passing grade in the course. A student who performs well during the term but fails the final exam may fail the course.
 - Students should not schedule flights or travel of any sort that will conflict with the final examination schedule. Final examinations will not be rescheduled to accommodate travel arrangements.

GRADING: The available letters for course grades are as follows:

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>GPA</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
A+	4.0		90-100 %
A	4.0	Exceptional	85-89 %
A-	3.7		80-84 %
B+	3.3		77-79 %
B	3.0	Exceeds Expectations	73-76 %
B-	2.7		70-72 %
C+	2.3		67-69 %
C	2.0	Meets Expectations	63-66 %
C-	1.7		60-62 %
D+	1.3		55-59 %
D	1.0	Minimal Pass	50-54 %
F	0.0	Failure	49 < %

IMPORTANT DATES

- Last day to enter a course without permission and to withdraw from course and receive tuition refund is January 15th.
- Last day to withdraw from courses or change to audit without academic penalty is March 12th.
- Last day to request revised time for a final examination is March 29th.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- *Cell phones, recording devices, head phones, and all other technology that is not essential for class by the instructor's criteria are prohibited.*

- *Lap top computers, when not used exclusively for taking class notes, are often a distraction to classmates and even the individual user. Their use is discouraged.*
- *Lap tops used for purposes unrelated to taking lecture notes are prohibited. Violators will be asked to leave the class. Repeat offenders will be directed to the Academic Vice President's Office.*
- *Students are expected to respect the learning environment of the classroom. Make every attempt to be on time. Be prudent and careful in your consumption of food and drink. Keep unnecessary conversations and comments to a minimum as they are distracting to both the instructor and fellow classmates. As well, they are often deleterious to a student's performance in the class.*
- *Ambrose is committed to fostering personal integrity and will not overlook breaches of integrity such as plagiarism and cheating. Plagiarism and cheating can result in a failing grade for an assignment, for the course, or immediate dismissal from the university college. Students are expected to be familiar with the policies in the current Academic Calendar and the Student Handbook that deal with plagiarism, cheating, and the penalties and procedures for dealing with these matters. All cases of academic dishonesty are reported to the Academic Dean.*
- *Students are responsible to check their Ambrose e-mail account regularly. E-mail may be used to notify students of cancelled classes or other important details relating to the course.*
- *Personal information, that is information about an individual that may be used to identify that individual, may be collected as a requirement as part of taking this class. Any information collected will only be used and disclosed for the purpose for which the collection was intended. For further information contact the Privacy Compliance Officer at privacy@ambrose.edu.*
- *Although extensions to coursework in the semester are at the discretion of the instructor, students may not turn in coursework for evaluation after the last day of the scheduled final examination period unless they have received permission for a "Course Extension." Alternative times for final examinations cannot be scheduled without prior approval. Requests for course extensions or alternative examination time must be submitted to the Registrar's Office by the appropriate deadline. Course extensions are only granted for serious issues that arise "due to circumstances beyond the student's control."*
- *Students are advised to retain this syllabus for their records.*