

PHIL 417.01: God, Religion, and the Meaning of Life

TR 9:40 -11:00 am, Hamilton Smith 108

CRN 13351; Writing Intensive Course, Humanities (Disc)

Instructor: Professor Jen Armstrong

Hamilton Smith 249C

Office Hours: MTWR @ 11:05-12 & by appointment

Course Description:

This course is designed as an introductory philosophical exploration of the relationship between reason and religious belief in the western tradition. In part one of the course, we will investigate the core philosophical concepts of Classical Theism, and their roots in the coming together of the classical and Abrahamic religious traditions. In part two, we will be examining some of the traditional issues arising from Classical Theism, including arguments about the existence and nature of God and Evil, the relationship between religion and ethics, and questions about the meaning of religious language. In part three, we will examine some of the challenges to Classical Theism that arise from within that tradition, in particular in the work of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud.

Required Texts: All course readings will be linked on our Canvas course site on the Modules pages. Please track course assignments by going to Modules, rather than the Canvas 'to-do' list; not everything that it's important for you to see will appear on the latter.

Grading:

Discussion Board (20%): Ahead of each class students will discuss topics relevant to that day's class reading/viewing assignments with their classmates on the discussion board. Discussion board posts will consist of one, two-to-five paragraph reflection on the day's materials – posted by class time – and two brief responses to other classmates' posts – due by end of that day (11:59 pm). Students who approach the assignment thoughtfully and responsibly and on time will receive an 'A'. Cursory or otherwise insufficient posts and responses will receive a lower grade:

- A <- Thoughtful, on time initial post and timely relevant responses to at least two classmates' posts.
- B <- Thoughtful initial post submitted between 11:10 am & 11:49 pm and timely relevant responses to at least two classmates' posts.
- B <- On time but cursory initial post and timely relevant responses to at least two classmates' posts.
- C <- Missing (by 11:59 pm) initial post but timely relevant responses to at least two classmates' posts.

Class Participation (20%): Students are expected to complete assigned readings/viewings and initial discussion posts before class each day and come to class ready to discuss and interact with the material. Class participation will be tracked using worksheets, 'chits', surveys, quizzes, and informal writing assignments. Three absences will be dropped to allow for illness or other scheduling issues.

Rough Drafts (15%): In each of the first two units of the course, students will develop material from their discussion posts and in-class materials into a 750-1000 word rough draft, which they will bring to an in-class rough draft workshop for peer evaluation scheduled the class before the date a final draft of that paper is due. Students who bring two hard copies of a draft which meets the length and content requirements with them to the workshop will receive an A for that draft. In the third section of the course, the students will be asked to bring an outline of their final essay to class, rather than a rough draft.

Essays (30%): In each of the three units of the course, students will develop their peer evaluated rough draft into a 1000-1250 word essay. The essay will be graded according to a rubric which includes the requirement that the student has taken their peer evaluations into account in revising.

Final Class-in-Review Essay (15%): This in-class essay will allow the student to choose among a few themes relevant to the course material and to illustrate that theme using material from EACH section of the course. A list of themes I will choose among will be distributed by the last class of the semester.

Additional Information & Resources

Attendance: Your presence and participation is important for everyone's success in this course, so you are expected to attend and have completed the reading and discussion assignments for each class. You are allowed to miss four class meetings without it affecting your participation grade. However, any absence will impact your engagement with content and ideas shared in class, so please be proactive in situations where you will be absent for any reason: get to know your classmates and take good notes so that you can share them with one another when you have to miss a class; make sure you contact the dean of students' office when you anticipate a prolonged absence for any reason (the dean will provide a letter to your professors to let them know that you'll be out of class, without disclosing the reasons); and come to my office hours to ask questions about material you miss.

Classroom Electronics: According to Faculty Senate rules, cell phone, tablet, and laptop use, including text messaging, videotaping, and recording, is not permitted in class unless by instructor permission. Other uses during class (surfing, checking email, engaging in social media, etc.) are not permitted because of the negative effect classroom electronic use has on both your own grade and your classmates' grades. For this class, electronics are permitted for taking notes; using electronics for other purposes is grounds for a student to lose all participation credit for the class in which it is misused.

Technical Support: Technical support is available through the 'Help' link in the bottom left corner of MyCourses. From this menu, students are provided with the following four options:

Search the Canvas Guides: This links you to the guides provided by Canvas which include step by step instructions and videos on how to use the system. These guides are very thorough and easy to search and it is always recommended you look here before contacting support. Report a Problem: This is a link to a web form where you can submit a question or issue to the service desk. These submissions are monitored 24 hours a day 7 days a week and you will typically have a response within 2 hours.

Additional Information & Resources

Attendance: Your presence and **Academic Honesty:** University policy states that “academic honesty is a core value at the University of New Hampshire. The members of its academic community both require and expect one another to conduct themselves with integrity. This means that each member will adhere to the principles and rules of the University and pursue academic work in a straightforward and truthful manner, free from deception or fraud.” The full citation of the policy on academic honesty can be found in the annual publication, Student Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities: <http://www.unh.edu/vpsas/handbook/academic-honesty>. Your honesty ensures your learning and also contributes to a fair environment for all students. For these reasons, dishonesty or cheating will affect your grade, ranging from immediate failure of an individual assignment to the potential failure of the course as a whole.

Addressing Disabilities: According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (as amended, 2008), each student with a disability has the right to request services from UNH to accommodate his/her disability. If you are a student with a documented disability or believe you may have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 201 Smith Hall. Accommodation letters are created by SAS with the student. Please follow-up with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure timely implementation of the identified accommodations in the letter. Faculty have an obligation to respond once they receive official notice of accommodations from SAS, but are under no obligation to provide retroactive accommodations. We advise you not to provide accommodations to students who are not registered with SAS. For more information refer to Student Accessibility Services or contact SAS at (603) 862-2607, 711 (Relay NH) or SAS.office@unh.edu.

Addressing Emotional or Mental Health Distress: Your academic success and overall mental health are very important. If, during the semester, you find you are experiencing emotional or mental health issues, please contact UNH Psychological & Counseling Services (PACS), 3rd floor, Smith Hall, (603) 862-2090/711 TTY, which provides counseling appointments and other mental health services. If urgent, students may call PACS Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., and schedule an Urgent Same-Day Appointment.

Addressing the Needs of Students of all Faiths: In the event that a student needs accommodation for a religious or cultural holiday/observance, that student is encouraged to make that request as early in the semester as possible.

Title IX Confidentiality and Mandatory Reporting: The University of New Hampshire and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students and for the university as a whole. To this end, the university requires faculty members to report to the university’s Title IX Coordinator (Donna Marie Sorrentino, (603) 862-2930/1527 TTY) any incidents of sexual violence and harassment shared by students. If you wish to speak to a confidential support service provider who does not have this reporting responsibility because their discussions with clients are subject to legal privilege, you can find a list of resources here. For more information about what happens when you report, how the university considers your requests for confidentiality once a report is made to the Title IX Coordinator, your rights and report options at UNH, including anonymous report options, please visit the student reporting options page.

Center for Academic Success (CFAS): Provides services and resources to support undergraduate students in their pursuit of academic success. (<https://www.unh.edu/cfar>.)