

Rutgers University  
Fall 2011

## Introduction to Philosophy of Religion

The syllabi listed here are from the last term during which the course was taught and are posted only as a guide to some of the typical topics the course may cover. Please note that the readings and materials may change from term to term. An updated syllabus for the course for the coming semester will be posted closer to the start of the semester.

FALL 2011

Prof. Mark Colby  
Philosophy 265

### Course Description

This course introduces the Western philosophical tradition of reasoned, systematic, and critical reflection on various matters about monotheistic religious belief. We will examine the relationship between faith and reason; the question of religious miracles; the relationships among science, religion, and evolution; and the nature and validity of religious experience. The course aims to provide both general philosophical methods for analyzing religious belief and to develop the student's capacity for logical, analytical, and critical thinking about such matters in particular.

### Course Prerequisites

One introductory course in philosophy is required.

### Text

Louis Pojman and Michael Rea, eds., *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*, 6th edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2012).

### Course Requirements

(1) Closed-book midterm and final exams are each worth 45% of the course grade, (2) class participation is expected and counts for 10% of the final grade. **Students are expected to attend all classes; if you miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website at <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An e-mail is automatically sent to me. If you miss more than three classes without documentation, your course grade will be reduced.** Do not talk to one another during class, repeatedly come late to class, or leave early. Turn all beepers and cell phones off. Always bring the text to class. No solid food is allowed.

### Office Hours

On Tuesdays and Fridays before 9:15 a.m. or after 1:55 p.m. or by appointment (location to be announced). You are encouraged to speak with me about any aspect of this course in particular or philosophy in general. My e-mail address is [mcolby@rutgers.edu](mailto:mcolby@rutgers.edu). The philosophy department's undergraduate secretary is Ann Lipovsky ([alipovsky@philosophy.rutgers.edu](mailto:alipovsky@philosophy.rutgers.edu)), 732-932-9861.

### Date, Topic, and Reading Assignment

*Note that you are also required to read the editors' introductions for the historical and intellectual background information necessary to understand the texts.*

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| 9/2  | Introduction: overview of the course                       |
| 9/6  | <i>Faith and reason</i> : Pascal, "The Wager," pp. 492-98  |
| 9/9  | Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," pp. 498-502              |
| 9/13 | James, "The Will to Believe," pp. 502-511                  |
| 9/16 | Hick, "Rational Theistic Belief Without Proof," pp. 513-22 |
| 9/20 | Flew, "The Presumption of Atheism," pp. 522-34             |

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**Date, Topic, and Reading Assignment**

- 9/23 Bergmann, "Rational Religious Belief Without Arguments," pp. 534-49
- 9/27 Pojman, "Faith, Hope, and Doubt," pp. 549-61
- 9/30 *Faith and reason*, continued
- 10/4 *Faith and reason*, final thoughts
- 10/7 *Miracles*: Hume, "Against Miracles," pp. 402-15
- 10/11 Van Inwagen, "Of 'Of Miracles,'" pp. 415-25
- 10/14 Mackie, "Miracles and Testimony," pp. 425-33
- 10/18 Swinburne, "Evidence for the Resurrection," pp. 433-45
- 10/21 *Miracles*, continued
- 10/25 *Miracles*, final thoughts
- 10/28 *Midterm exam on faith and reason and miracles*
- 11/1 *Science, Religion, and Evolution*: Dawkins, "Is Science a Religion?" pp. 561-68
- 11/4 Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria," pp. 568-76
- 11/8 Pope John Paul II, "Faith and Science," pp. 577-83
- 11/11 *Science, Religion, and Evolution*, continued
- 11/15 *Science, Religion, and Evolution*, final thoughts
- 11/18 *Religious experience*: James, "Mysticism," pp. 220-41
- 11/22 No class: Thursday schedule
- 11/29 Alston, "Perceiving God," pp. 241-47
- 12/2 d'Aquili and Newberg, "The Neurophysiological Basis of Religion," pp. 247-58
- 12/6 Jordan, "Religious Experience and Naturalistic Explanations," pp. 258-66
- 12/9 *Religious experience*, continued
- 12/13 *Religious experience*, final thoughts
- 12/? *Final exam on science, religion, and evolution and religious experience*