

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

PHIL 255 - SPRING 2008

Dr. Christian Coseru

4B Glebe Street, # 205

Phone: 953-1935; **Email:** coseruc@cofc.edu

Office hours: Tue/Thurs 2:00-4:00 p.m. and by appointment

Days & Time: MWF 12:00-12:50

Location: ECTR 111

This course offers an introduction to past and current philosophical debates about religion from a global and feminist perspective. The main topics of discussion include: (1) the problem of defining "religion" as a cultural phenomenon; (2) conceptions of ultimate reality; (3) ultimate reality and gender issues; (4) arguments for and against the existence of a maximal being; (5) varieties of religious attitudes (e.g., pluralism, inclusivism, exclusivism, etc.); (6) the problem of reconciling scientific and religious worldviews; (6) the rationality and/or emotionality of religious belief; and (8) the question of what form religious doctrines might, or ought to, take in our postmodern world with its concerns for globalization, ecology, and religious tolerance. This is a philosophy course, which means that emphasis will be placed not on individual religions and their doctrines so much as on critical reflection about a variety of philosophy of religion questions. Our readings are taken from an array of pre-modern and modern philosophers of religion, including recent feminist philosophers of religion.

Required Texts

(Available at the College of Charleston Bookstore).

Gary E. Kessler

Philosophy of Religion: Toward a Global Perspective (Wadsworth) **PR**

Pamela Anderson & Beverly Clack

Feminist Philosophy of Religion: Critical Readings (Routledge) **FPR**

Tentative Reading Assignments

January 9-11	Introduction: What is Religion? <u>Readings:</u> Smart, <i>The Nature of Religion</i> (PR: 1-11); Geertz, <i>Religion as a Cultural System</i> (PR: 11-24).
January 14-18 (1 st rp)	The Meaning of Religion. <u>Readings:</u> Edwards, <i>The Search for Family Resemblances of Religion</i> (PR: 20-24); Smith, <i>The Meaning and End of Religion</i> (PR: 24-34); Nishitani, <i>What is Religion?</i> (PR: 34-44).
January 21	Martin Luther King Holiday – No Classes
January 23-25 (2 nd rp)	Views of Ultimate Reality. <u>Readings:</u> Lao-tzu, <i>The Tao</i> (PR: 44-50); Cobb, <i>Emptiness and God</i> (PR: 69-81); Wainwright, <i>Is the Concept of Ultimate Reality Coherent?</i> (PR: 87-96).
January 28 - February 1 (3 rd rp)	Proofs of Ultimate Reality. <u>Readings:</u> Aquinas, <i>The Five Ways</i> (PR: 102-105); Udayana, <i>The Seven Ways</i> (PR: 97-102); Rowe, <i>Cosmological Argument</i> (PR: 105-114); Dharmasiri, <i>A Buddhist Critique</i> (PR: 114-122).
February 4-8 (4 th rp)	Arguments for the Existence of God. <u>Readings:</u> Anselm, <i>The Ontological Argument</i> (PR: 137-140); Hume, <i>The Teleological Argument</i> (PR: 122-130); Hudson, <i>Problems and Possibilities</i> (PR: 140-148).
February 11-15 (5 th rp)	Religious Experience. <u>Readings:</u> Smart, <i>The Experiential Dimension</i> (150-162); Black Elk, <i>Black Elk's Vision</i> (PR: 162-170); Buber, <i>I and Thou</i> (PR: 170-176); Jantzen, <i>Feminist, Philosophers, and Mystics</i> (PR: 192-210).
February 18-22 (6 th rp)	Religion and Language. <u>Readings:</u> Tillich, <i>The Nature of Religious Language</i> (PR: 373-383); Flew et. al, <i>Does God-Talk Make Sense?</i> (PR: 383-390); Kasulis, <i>The Origins of the Question</i> (PR: 390-399).
February 25-27	Religion and Metaphor. <u>Readings:</u> McFague, <i>Metaphorical Theology</i> (PR: 405-426); O'Grady, <i>Sacred Metaphor</i> (FPR: 153- 167).
February 29	MIDTERM EXAM (12:00-12:50 p.m.).

March 3-7	SPRING BREAK
March 10-14 (7 th rp)	Feminist Approaches to PR. <u>Readings:</u> Frankenberry, <i>Philosophy of Religion in Different Voices</i> (FPR: 3-24); Armour, <i>A Deconstructive Approach</i> (FPR: 42-52); Anderson, <i>An Epistemological-Ethical Approach</i> (FPR: 87-99).
March 17-21 (8 th rp)	Feminist Topics: God as a Female. <u>Readings:</u> Reuthner, <i>The Female Nature of God</i> (PR: 81-87); Beattie, <i>Redeeming Mary</i> (FPR: 107-120); Walton, <i>Women Writing the Divine</i> (FPR: 123-133);
March 24-28 (9 th rp)	Feminist Topics: Love, Sex, Death, and the Body. <u>Readings:</u> Jasper, <i>Recollecting Religion in the Realm of the Body</i> (FPR: 170-180); Clack, <i>Feminism and Human Mortality</i> (FPR: 183-194); Soskice, <i>Love and Attention</i> (FPR: 199-208); Dalmiya, <i>Loving Paradoxes: The Goddess Kali</i> (FPR: 241-260).
March 31 – April 4 (10 th rp)	Reason and Faith: Harmony or Conflict? <u>Readings:</u> Averroes, <i>On the Harmony Between Faith and Reason</i> (PR: 428-441); Pascal, <i>A wager</i> (PR: 441-444); Clifford, <i>The Ethics of Belief</i> (PR: 444-448); James, <i>The Will to Believe</i> (PR: 449-456).
April 4	ESSAY DUE IN CLASS.
April 7-11 (11 th rp)	Religion, Science, and Miracles. <u>Readings:</u> Feuerbach, <i>God is a Projection</i> (PR: 483-492); Marx, <i>Religion is an Opiate</i> (PR: 492-496); Hume, <i>Of Miracles</i> (PR: 509-516); Masao Abe, <i>Religion and Science in the Global Age</i> (PR: 504-509).
April 14-18 (12 th rp)	Religion, Human Nature, and Morality. <u>Readings:</u> Mencius, <i>Human Nature is Good</i> (PR: 217-221); Hsün-tzu, <i>Human Nature is Evil</i> (PR: 221-225); Mackie, <i>Evil and Omnipotence</i> (PR: 225-233); Reichenbach, <i>Karma and the Problem of Evil</i> (PR: 246-255).
April 21-23	Conclusion: Are All Religions True? <u>Readings:</u> Hick, <i>Conflicting Truth Claims</i> (PR: 535-546); D'Costa, <i>Whose Objectivity? Which Neutrality?</i> (PR: 561-573).
April 30	FINAL EXAM (12:00-3:00 p.m.).

You must bring the assigned text to class

Requirements and Grading Scale:

- Twelve short response papers (1-2 pages, 2% each) due at the beginning of each class on Fridays.
- One essay (8-10 pages, 30%) due in class on Friday, April 4.
- Midterm exam (16%) in class on February 29 (12:00-12:50 p.m.).
- Final exam (25%) in class on April 30 (12:00-3:00 p.m.).
- Participation (5%).

Attendance: It is essential that you attend classes! You may be allowed four unexcused absences without any penalty. Additional absences will adversely affect your grade, unless you provide a legitimate (i.e. documented excuse). Missing 8 or more classes will result in a WA grade (which is equivalent to an F). **Also make sure you come to class on time.**

Late policy for response papers: Please let me know in advance if you cannot turn a response paper on time. A paper turned in late without an extension will be marked down (a letter grade) for every day it is late, including weekends. Failure to turn in a response paper will result in a grade of zero for that assignment.

Essay and Exams policy: You must complete all assignments in order to obtain a final grade for this course. Failure to take one or both exams or to turn in the final essay will result in a grade of I (incomplete) for the entire course, which will be changed to an F if the missed assignments are not completed within 30 days. Late (or early) exams will only be given if you can show that a real emergency prevents you from taking the exam on the due date.