

Spring 2008

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# PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

(PHIL 260)

Room: Comenius 111

Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:20-3:30 PM

Category: II.C.2 (Humanities; Religion and Philosophy; Contemporary Issues)

Instructor: Shalahudin Kafrawi

## **Contents:**

The course discusses the nature of religion and beliefs concerned with the existence, nature, and knowledge of God, with alternative positions to theism.

## **Course Objectives:**

At the end of the course, students are expected to achieve the following objectives:

1. to explain the significance of the Transcendent in philosophy, religion, and mysticism;
2. to describe the arguments for God's existence and to analyze their strengths and weaknesses;
3. to understand the function of reason and revelation in the search for the Unknown;
4. to analyze the problem of evil.

## **Grading Format:**

1. Participation (20 points). Active participation includes asking questions, making comments and giving answers to problems or questions posed to students. Complete attendance will not guarantee a good participation grade. Students who have complete attendance without active participation will result in no more than 6 points.
2. Reflective papers (3-6 pages each; 10 points each totaling 20 points);
3. Research paper (50 points). It will be broken down into:
  - a. Proposal (3-4 pages: 5 points)
  - b. Arguments (3-5 pages: 10 points)
  - c. Counter-arguments (2-4 pages: 10 points)
  - d. Analysis (3-5 pages: 10 points)
  - e. Concluding remarks and bibliography (2-4 pages; 5 points)
  - f. Final research paper (12-22 pages: 10 points)
4. Final exam (10 points).

## **Extra Credits:**

A 5-point extra credit will awarded to those who have complete attendance.

Students are highly encouraged to engage in any form of discussions and lectures on subjects related to the philosophy of religion. Students may consult the instructor on the possible forums.

Extra credits of up to five points may be awarded to those who participate in such programs. The students need to report their participation to the instructor, and whenever applicable a report is to be submitted via Blackboard.

**Attendance Policy:**

Students are encouraged to attend all scheduled meetings for this course. Those with complete attendance will receive 5 extra points. Students have the liberty to miss four classes without any penalty. Those who miss more than the allowed four absences will be downgraded by a point for each additional missed class. Those who miss a class with written justifiable reason(s) may be waived from absence if they write a significant report of about 3-4 pages on the reading(s) of the missed class(es).

**Final Grade**

Students will accumulate the points—there will be no conversion of points into Letter Grades—until the end of the semester. Below is the table of point conversion for the final grade:

Points	Final Grade	4-point conversion
94-100	A	4
90-93	A-	3.7
87-89	B+	3.3
84-86	B	3
80-83	B-	2.7
77-79	C+	2.3
74-76	C	2
70-73	C-	1.7
67-69	D+	1.3
64-66	D	1
60-63	D-	0.7
0-59	F	0

**Paper Submissions:**

All writing assignments will be posted on the Blackboard. The papers—including (1) reflective papers, (2) all pieces of research paper, and (4) other reports/assignments where applicable—should be electronically submitted through the Blackboard by the indicated dates. If for some reason there is a problem with electronic submission, the printed copy of the paper should be submitted to the instructor’s office on the same day. Late submissions will be downgraded for that specific assignment by one point per day.

Students are encouraged to rewrite all papers except final research paper. The final research papers cannot be rewritten. The rewritten papers are due within a week after the papers are electronically posted. Since the grades of the rewritten papers can be better or worse than the originally submitted papers, the best grades will be counted toward the final.

**Academic Honesty:**

Students are required to honor academic integrity. The course imposes the application of Moravian College's Academic Honesty Policy. The policy is to be found at Moravian College's *Student Handbook: 2004-2005*, pp. 52-8.

**Contact Information:**

Office: Zinzendorf 201  
 Phone: (610) 861-1628  
 E-mail: skafrawi@moravian.edu  
 Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30 AM-11:30 AM;  
 Wednesday, 1:30-3:30 PM;  
 or by appointment

**Required Textbooks Available at Moravian Bookstore:**

Burrell, David B. *Knowing the Unknown God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, Press. 1986.  
 Knitter, Paul F., ed. *The Myth of Religious Superiority*. New York: Orbis Books, 2005.  
 Franke, William. Ed. *On What Cannot Be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature and the Arts*. Vols. 1-2. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.  
 Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Translation and notes by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Touchtone Book, 1970.

**Required Readings Available at Library Reserves:**

Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. In Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Jonathan Barnes. Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. Pp. 1694-8.  
 Plato. *Symposium*. In *The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters*. Ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. Pp. 553-74.  
 Stewart, David. *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion*. Fifth edition. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2001. Pp. 117-62 and 165-212.

**Schedule:**

No.	Date	Topic and Reading	Due date
1.	15/01/2008	Introduction [Syllabus]	
2.	17/01/2008	Apophatic Discourse [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 1, 1-33]	
3.	22/01/2008	The Ineffable One (1): Plato [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 1, 37-48 and Plato, <i>Symposium</i> , 553-74]	
4.	24/01/2008	The Ineffable One (2): Aristotle and Neo-Platonists [Readings: Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> , Book 12, 1694-8 and Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 1, 49-107]	Proposal
5.	29/01/2008	The Nameless God (1) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 1, 111-57]	
6.	31/01/2008	The Nameless God (2) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 1, 158-222]	
7.	05/02/2008	The Nameless God (3) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 1, 223-74]	Reflective 1

8.	07/02/2008	The Infinite (1) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 1, 277-317]	
9.	12/02/2008	The Infinite (2) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 1, 318-55]	Arguments
10.	14/02/2008	The Infinite (3) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 1, 356-97]	
11.	19/02/2008	The Finitude (1) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 2, 53-89]	
12.	21/02/2008	The Finitude (2) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 2, 90-136]	
13.	26/02/2008	Depicting, Composing and Representing Nothing (1) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 2, 211-70]	Counter-arguments
14.	28/02/2008	Depicting, Composing and Representing Nothing (2) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 2, 271-343]	
	04/03/2008	Spring recess	
	06/03/2008	Spring recess	
15.	11/03/2008	The Unutterably Other (1) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 2, 361-405]	Reflective 2
16.	13/03/2008	The Unutterably Other (2) [Reading: Franke, <i>On What Cannot Be Said</i> , vol. 2, 406-76]	
17.	18/03/2008	Knowing God in Abrahamic Tradition (1) [Reading: Burrel, <i>Knowing the Unknowable God</i> , 1-34]	
18.	20/03/2008	Knowing God in Abrahamic Tradition (2) [Reading: Burrel, <i>Knowing the Unknowable God</i> , 35-70]	Analysis
19.	25/03/2008	Knowing God in Abrahamic Tradition (3) [Reading: Burrel, <i>Knowing the Unknowable God</i> , 71-113]	
20.	27/03/2008	Proofs for God's Existence [Reading: Stewart, <i>Exploring the Philosophy of Religion</i> , 117-62]	
21.	01/04/2008	The Problem of Evil [Reading: Stewart, <i>Exploring the Philosophy of Religion</i> , 165-212]	
22.	03/04/2008	The God-World Intimate Relation (1) [Reading: Buber, <i>I and Thou</i> , 53-122]	Concluding remarks
23.	08/04/2008	The God-World Intimate Relation (2) [Reading: Buber, <i>I and Thou</i> , 123-68]	
24.	10/04/2008	On Religious Superiority (1) [Knitter, <i>The Myth of Religious Superiority</i> , 1-42]	
25.	15/04/2008	On Religious Superiority (2) [Knitter, <i>The Myth of Religious Superiority</i> , 45-101]	
26.	17/04/2008	On Religious Superiority (3) [Knitter, <i>The Myth of Religious Superiority</i> , 105-150]	Final research paper
27.	22/04/2008	On Religious Superiority (4) [Knitter, <i>The Myth of Religious Superiority</i> , 211-236]	
28.	24/04/2008	Concluding Remarks	