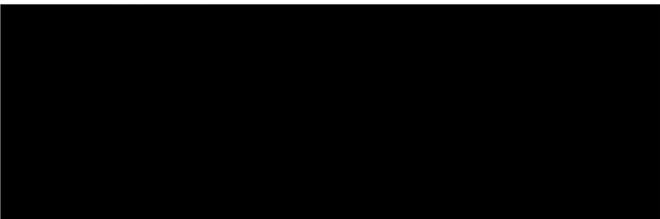


PHL110: Philosophy of Religion

Winter 2022, Section 011

Instructor Information

- **Instructor Name:** Amanda Bryant
- **Course Website:** my.ryerson.ca
- **Email Address:** amandakbryant@ryerson.ca

- **Office Hours:** Mondays, 2-3pm
- **Zoom Office Hours Link:** 

- **Zoom Office Hours Meeting ID:**
- **Zoom Office Hours Password:**

Email Policy

The primary mode of communication with the instructor will be email. Please review the syllabus, assignment instructions, D2L announcements, and/or FAQ in D2L for any relevant information prior to emailing me.

Lecture Times and Locations

Until Jan. 30th

Pre-recorded lectures will be posted on D2L, to be viewed before each week's live Zoom meeting. Live Zoom meetings will be held on Fridays from 11am-12pm.

- **Zoom Lecture Link:** 
- **Zoom Lecture Meeting ID:**
- **Zoom Lecture Password:**

After Jan. 30th (subject to change)

Lectures will be held in person.
Thursdays 11am-12pm, EPH204
Fridays, 10am-12pm, VIC103

Calendar Description

This course examines religion from a philosophical perspective. What is the nature of the "divine"? Can we give a rational account of religious experience? Can we prove the existence of God? Can the idea of God be reconciled with the presence of evil in the world? Is atheism a viable alternative to faith? These are just some of the questions this course explores. We will consider both western and eastern religions. [PHL 110](#) is not available for credit to students who choose PHL 610.

Weekly Contact: Lecture 3 hrs.

GPA Weight: 1.00

Billing Units: 1

Count: 1.00

Liberal Studies: LL

Antirequisites: PHL 610

Course Description

What is the nature of religion, why does it emerge, and what is its role in human society? What sorts of reasons are *good* reasons to accept or reject religious paradigms? Should we believe or disbelieve because of our upbringing, because of psychological needs and desires, because of evidence and argument, because we seek compelling explanations, because of the potential consequences of belief or disbelief, or for other reasons? What should we think of *faith* as a reason for religious belief — what is its relationship to rationality, and what is its status and value as a basis for belief? Are there rationally compelling arguments for the existence of supernatural entities such as the Abrahamic God? Are there rationally compelling arguments against? Does the existence of objective moral truths, human knowledge of them, or human compliance with them require the existence of God? These questions will be the focus of the course.

Course Details

Teaching Methods

In this course, we will be using D2L for online course management. Here are some [resources for using D2L Brightspace](#).

The present plan is for the course to be delivered online until January 30th, with a return to in-person classes after that date. This may change in light of the unfolding Covid-19 situation. I will keep you up-to-date on any changes by making announcements in D2L, so please watch for those.

Throughout the course, lecture slides will be posted in D2L.

For the online component of the course, pre-recorded lectures will be available on D2L and live discussion sessions will be held via Zoom at the link above, on Fridays from 11am-12pm.

Note: The University has issued a [minimum technology requirement for remote learning](#). Students will require a stable internet connection and – if they choose to participate in live discussion – a microphone and/or webcam.

For the in-person component:

- I will not be keeping track of attendance, and it won't be part of your grade. I won't judge you or take it personally if you choose to be absent.
- To state the obvious, please don't come to class if you're feeling the slightest bit ill or if you have had a possible Covid exposure (you do not need to provide me with a medical note).
- Please make smart choices both inside and outside of the classroom! Mask up, social distance, get boosted, stay vigilant.
- In the event that you need/choose to be frequently absent, please let me know by email so that I know you're alright and on track.
- You may be wondering: why come to class at all? Plenty of reasons – to better understand and grapple with the material, to ask questions, to listen, to discuss, to benefit from immediate access to your professor and interaction with your peers. All of this – when it can be safely done – enhances learning!

Required Text

Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings. Edited by Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger. Oxford University Press.

The most recent edition is the 5th, but students may use older editions based on price and availability. Please contact me if your edition is missing any of the assigned readings, or if you are unable to acquire the textbook.

Course Learning Outcomes

I have developed the course to address several learning outcomes. By the end of the course a successful student will be able to:

- understand and be able to explain and evaluate historical and contemporary arguments that defend or challenge components of religious belief;
- assess the reliability, relevance, and sufficiency of evidence or reasons presented in support of a claim;

- demonstrate an appreciation of the influence of perspectives, interests, and biases in relation to arguers and audiences;
- reflect critically on their own beliefs and values;
- construct original and compelling arguments in support of their own views; and
- have improved skills in reading, writing, and arguing about complex and abstract ideas.

Plagiarism Detection

Turnitin.com is a plagiarism prevention and detection service to which Ryerson subscribes. It is a tool to assist instructors in determining the similarity between students' work and the work of other students who have submitted papers to the site (at any university), internet sources, and a wide range of books, journals and other publications. While it does not contain all possible sources, it gives instructors some assurance that students' work is their own. No decisions are made by the service; it generates an "originality report," which instructors must evaluate to judge if something is plagiarized.

Students agree by taking this course that their written work will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com. Instructors can opt to have student's papers included in the Turnitin.com database or not. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms-of-use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com website. Students who do not want their work submitted to this plagiarism detection service must, by the end of the second week of class, consult with their instructor to make alternate arrangements.

Even when an instructor has not indicated that a plagiarism detection service will be used, or when a student has opted out of the plagiarism detection service, if the instructor has reason to suspect that an individual piece of work has been plagiarized, the instructor is permitted to submit that work in a non-identifying way to any plagiarism detection service.

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Readings	Notes
Week 1 (Online)	Jan. 14	<u>Introduction:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course Syllabus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zoom lecture Thurs. Jan. 14th, 11am-12pm. ● Complete 'Start of Term' survey in D2L.
Week 2 (Online)	Jan. 20 Jan. 21	<u>The Nature of Religion:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "An Evolutionary Account of Religion", Daniel Dennett ● "Buddhist Nonrealism", Buddha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zoom lecture Fri. Jan. 21st, 11am-12pm.

Week 3 (Online)	Jan. 27 Jan. 28	<u>The Nature of Religion:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A Defense of Religious Realism”, Robert Trigg • “The Meaning of Religious Beliefs is their Use”, D. Phillips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom lecture Fri. Jan. 28th, 11am-12pm. • Jan 28 is the last day to drop (full refund). • Writing Assignment topics + “Essay-Builder” Questionnaire to be distributed.
Week 4 (In-person)	Feb. 3 Feb. 4	<u>Faith and Reason:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Ethics of Belief”, William Clifford • “The Will to Believe”, William James 	
Week 5 (In-person)	Feb. 10 Feb. 11	<u>Faith and Reason:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Faith and Reason”, Elizabeth Jackson (on D2L) • “The Wager”, Blaise Pascal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb. 11th is the last day to drop (50% refund). • “Essay-Builder” Questionnaire due.
Week 6 (In-person)	Feb. 17 Feb. 18	<u>Classical Arguments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Classical Ontological Argument”, St. Anselm • “Critique of Anselm’s Argument” Gaunilo 	
WINTER BREAK	Feb. 21-25		
Week 7 (In-person)	Mar. 3 Mar. 4	<u>Classical Arguments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Classical Cosmological Argument” Aquinas • “Critique of the Cosmological Argument” J.L. Mackie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Assignment due Mar. 4th.
Week 8 (In-person)	Mar. 10 Mar. 11	<u>Design:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Analogical Teleological Argument”, William Paley • “Critique of the Analogical Teleological Argument”, David Hume 	
Week 9 (In-person)	Mar. 17 Mar. 18	<u>Design:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Blind Watchmaker, Richard Dawkins (on D2L) • “Arguments from Design: A Self-defeating Strategy?”, Victoria Harrison (on D2L) 	

Week 10 (In-person)	Mar. 24 Mar. 25	<u>Evil:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Evil and Omnipotence”, J.L. Mackie • “The Free Will Defense”, Alvin Plantinga 	
Week 11 (In-person)	Mar. 31 Apr. 1	<u>Evil:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Soul-Making Theodicy”, John Hick • “Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God”, Marilyn McCord Adams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apr. 1st is the last day to drop (no refund).
Week 12 (In-person)	Apr. 7 Apr. 8	<u>Ethics and Religion:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Does Ethics Need God?”, Linda Zagzebski (on D2L) • “Atheism, Naturalism, and Morality”, Louise Antony (on D2L) 	Take-home final to be distributed (due Apr 22 nd).
Week 13 (in-person)	Apr. 14	<u>Course wrap-up:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new readings 	

Evaluation

1. **“Essay-Builder” Questionnaire:** A questionnaire designed to help you complete your writing assignment incrementally. Because there are two options for the writing assignment (see below), there will be two different questionnaires available in D2L – make sure to complete the right one! The questionnaire may (for instance) ask students to describe their topic(s), say what they find most puzzling or interesting about it (them), identify and explain some key quotations from the source text, declare a thesis, and outline some initial ideas about how they might defend their thesis.
2. **Writing Assignment:** Students will complete EITHER:
 - Two 600-750 word papers, OR
 - One 1200-1500 word paper

Topics will be distributed on D2L. Paper prompts will ask students to summarize and critically respond to course material.

(For students taking the two short papers option: both papers will be weighted equally, and both must be received on or before Mar. 4th to receive the on-time incentive. However, students are encouraged to submit their first completed paper earlier to get it out of the way.)

3. **Take-Home Final ‘Exam’:** Students will be given a number of long-answer (paragraph, multi-paragraph, and short essay) questions asking them to explain and evaluate key arguments discussed in the course. This is not a research paper and does not require extensive quoting and citing of the source texts (but as always any sources you *do* consult *must* be cited). The exam will be distributed on D2L in Week 12.

Late Policy

There will be no late penalties, *but students must:*

1. Submit work weighing at least 20% of the final grade before March 25th (so that I can grade it and return it by the drop deadline, April 1st).
2. Complete and submit all course requirements on or before April 29th. This is the *absolute last day* that you may submit any outstanding assignments.

Instead, there is an ‘on-time incentive’ of +5% added to any major assignment (including the writing assignment and take-home final) that is submitted on or before the ‘suggested due date’.

A word of warning: Be smart about this! *Don’t* take it as permission to procrastinate, and *don’t* let assignments pile up so that you’re overwhelmed at the end of term.

Assessment Weighting Breakdown

Evaluation Component	Percentage of Final Grade	Suggested Due Date
“Essay-Builder” Questionnaire	20%	Feb. 11 th (grades to be returned via D2L by Feb. 18 th).
Writing Assignment	40%	Mar. 4 th (grades to be returned via D2L by Mar. 14 th).
Take-Home Final ‘Exam’	40%	Apr. 22 nd
Total:	100%	

Instructor Policies

- **Accessibility:** Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require

accommodations, approach Ryerson's accessibility services as soon as possible
<<https://www.ryerson.ca/accommodations/>>.

- **Academic Dishonesty:** Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from Ryerson University is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of academic dishonesty and plagiarism very seriously. Ryerson University's Academic Integrity Office
<<https://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity/students/penalties-and-consequences/>> outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from the Academic Integrity Office. Assignments with plagiarized words or ideas will receive a grade of 0. If I discover that a third party has completed an assignment for you, you will receive an automatic 0 in the course.
- **Pronouns:** Students who would like to communicate their preferred pronouns through email, Zoom options, or other means are warmly encouraged to do so.
- **Recording:** Live Zoom discussions and in-person classes may be recorded and posted on D2L, if a class survey (to be taken at the beginning of term) indicates an overwhelming preference for this.
- **Respectful Discussion:** We will be discussing matters about which many people have strong, personally meaningful beliefs that are integrated with their sense of identity. We will approach those matters in the spirit of critical thinking and rational inquiry, but this should not be confused with an attitude of irreverence or disrespect. Indeed, I expect all discussion to be conducted in a respectful manner.
- **When Things Get Tough:** If you are struggling with course content, assignments, deadlines, engagement, keeping up, balancing life and school, mental and physical health, covid fatigue, or other matters, please feel free to reach out to me. My goal is to be as helpful, flexible, and accommodating as possible. However, I can't help if I don't know what's going on, so help me to help you by staying in touch!
- **Student Suggestions:** If something about this course is really working for you, or really *not* working, I welcome your feedback. Moreover, if any of your other professors have implemented policies, procedures, or approaches to organizing and delivering courses effectively during the pandemic that you especially liked or benefited from, I'd love to hear about it! The 'Course Feedback' survey is available on D2L to complete anonymously at any time, and you can do it more than once.

University Policies

Students are reminded that they are required to adhere to all relevant university policies found in their online course shell in D2L and/or on [the Senate website](#).

Important Resources Available at Ryerson

- [The Library](#) provides research workshops and individual assistance. If the University is open, there is a Research Help desk on the second floor of the library, or go to [Library Online Workshops](#).
- [Student Life and Learning Support](#) offers group-based and individual help with writing, math, study skills, and transition support, as well as [resources and checklists to support students as online learners](#).
- You can submit an [Academic Consideration Request](#) when an extenuating circumstance has occurred that has significantly impacted your ability to fulfill an academic requirement. You may always visit the [Senate website](#) and select the blue radial button on the top right hand side entitled: Academic Consideration Request (ACR) to submit this request).

Please note that the Provost/ Vice President Academic and Dean's approved a COVID-19 statement for Fall 2020/Winter 2021/Fall 2021/Winter 2022 related to academic consideration. This statement has been built into the Online Academic Consideration System and is also on the [Senate website \(www.ryerson.ca/senate\)](#):

Policy 167: Academic Consideration for Fall 2020/Winter 2021/Fall 2021/Winter 2022 due to COVID-19: Students who miss an assessment due to cold or flu-like symptoms, or due to self-isolation, are currently not required to provide a health certificate. Other absences must follow Senate [Policy 167: Academic Consideration](#).

Also NOTE: Outside of COVID-19 symptoms, the new Policy 167: Academic Consideration does allow for a once per term academic consideration request without supporting documentation if the absence is less than 3 days in duration and is not for a final exam/final assessment. In the absence is more than 3 days in duration and/or is for a final exam/final assessment, documentation is required. For more information please see Senate [Policy 167: Academic Consideration](#).

- [Ryerson COVID-19 Information and Updates for Students](#) summarizes the variety of resources available to students during the pandemic.
- [Ryerson COVID-19 Vaccination Policy](#)
- If taking a remote course, familiarize yourself with the tools you will need to use for remote learning. The [Continuity of Learning Guide](#) for students includes guides to completing quizzes or exams in D2L Brightspace, with or without [Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor](#), [using D2L Brightspace](#), joining online meetings or lectures, and collaborating with the Google Suite.
- Information on Copyright for [Faculty](#) and [students](#).
- *At Ryerson, we recognize that things can come up throughout the term that may interfere with a student's ability to succeed in their coursework. These circumstances are outside of one's control and can have a serious impact on physical and mental well-*

being. Seeking help can be a challenge, especially in those times of crisis. Below are resources we encourage all Ryerson community members to access to ensure support is reachable.

- [Ryerson Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)

If support is needed immediately, you can access these outside resources at anytime:

- **Distress Line** — 24/7 line for if you are in crisis, feeling suicidal or in need of emotional support (phone: 416-408-4357)
- **Good2Talk**- 24/7 hour line for postsecondary students (phone: 1-866-925-5454)