



NOTRE DAME SEMINARY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Course Syllabus for PH 202 Philosophy of God

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Semester: Fall 2014
Time: T,Th 9:30-10:55
Place: Classroom 7

I. Course Description

This course aims to show how the human mind can discover God's existence and His basic divine attributes by reason, even independently of His self-revelation in Scripture, as stated in Vatican I. It will consider general themes pertinent to man's rational (i.e. non-revealed) knowledge of God as the ultimate metaphysical principle. The course will first explore the foundational historical approaches to philosophical theology, with special attention to the inadequacies of skeptical, deistic, and pantheistic positions. The second half of the course will examine Thomas Aquinas's doctrine on God's existence, essence, attributes, operations, and will.

II. Course Rationale

Man is gifted with a natural desire to understand the causes of this world. Ancient Greek philosophy pursued profound investigations about the highest cause and came close to grasping some truths about God. In modern times, however, man has operated with a greatly diminished view of the capacity of reason, and so has rejected man's ability to know God. The first, critical step to evangelizing those who do not believe is to know how reason without the aid of faith can establish certain truths about God, truths which find their completion and perfection in Christian revelation. This in turn requires a proper sense of the extent and goal of human reason in discerning the ultimate meaning of human existence.

“The Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the beginning and end of all things, may be certainly known by the natural light of human reason by means of created thing— *for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made* (Rom 1:20).” (First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, ch. 2, paragraph 1).

III. Course Goals/Intended Outcomes

- An adequate grasp of the importance of natural theology for the pastoral life;
- An appreciation of the need for proper metaphysical methodology;
- An improvement in the analytical and argumentative abilities in defense of faith;
- The development in the student of critical assimilative and evaluative skills required to actively utilize a philosophical approach to theology;
- And a grasp of the importance of the *praeambula fidei* in counteracting an overly skeptical or dismissive approach to Scriptural claims about God's existence and nature.

IV. Instructional Methods

- 1) Lecture
- 2) Discussion
- 3) Socratic Question and Answer

V. Texts (Required and/or Recommended)

- Saint Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind to God*, tr. by Philotheus Boehner, OFM (Hackett, 1993).
- Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, 2nd edition (Yale University Press, 2002).
- Thomas Aquinas, *A Summa of the Summa*, ed. by Peter Kreeft (Ignatius Press, 1990).
- There are also a number of shorter readings in a Reader to supplement the Gilson text. Please be sure to have all the appropriate readings for each class.

VI. Bibliography

- Buckley, Michael J., SJ. *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
- Davies, Brian, OP. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).
- , ed. *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide to the Subject* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2007)
- , *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)
- Gilson, Etienne. *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956).
- Hart, David Bentley. *The Experience of God: Being Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
- McInerny, Ralph. *Characters in Search of Their Author* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).
- , *Praeambula Fidei: Thomism and the God of the Philosophers* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2006).
- Murray, John Courtney, SJ. *The Problem of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).
- Taliaferro, Charles. *Evidence and Faith: Philosophy and Religion since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Te Velde, Rudi. *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

White, Thomas Joseph, OP. *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity: A Study in Thomistic Natural Theology* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2009).

VII. Professional Vocabulary

1. **Mythos-Logos**: Represents birth of philosophy; before Thales, people explained world through myths, afterward they employed reason.
2. **Metaphysics**: study of “being *qua* being,” of reality behind appearance, or the ultimate principle behind things.
3. **Faith and Reason**: Two ways by which man can know truths; faith builds on and perfects what we can know by nature.
4. **Natural Theology**: What can be known about God purely by natural reason.
5. **Demiurge**: Plato’s idea of God, who is subordinate to the Forms and merely the mechanism bringing change about and not a creator.
6. **Forms**: principle determining what something is, and the object that is known, since it is behind or apart from the material world of change.
7. **Four Causes**:
 1. material cause: stuff from which something is made
 2. formal cause: “shape” of what it is
 3. efficient cause: outside force which brings substance into being
 4. final/end cause: purpose for which something existsOf these, the extrinsic causes of efficient and final cause can be used to argue for God.
8. **Prime Mover**: Aristotle’s idea of God as the first cause of movement in the material world, by being the final cause of a perfect self-thinking thought.
9. **Stoicism**: Hellenistic philosophy which states that virtue in life is living in accord with Nature, wherein Nature is defined as the Divine order or fate of the universe. Humans should concern themselves only with those things over which they have control and resign themselves to fate.
10. **Logos**: the Divine Reason that orders the universe in Stoicism; human reason is a spark of this, and so can understand and resign ourselves to this order.
11. **The One**: for Plotinus, the ineffable source of all Being which is outside of Being, from which all Being flows by emanation. In the One are all things, but no one thing in itself.
12. **Emanation**: for Plotinus, the necessary (not free) act by which all Being comes from the One; the excess from the One overflows into Being.
13. **Divine Illumination**: Augustine’s epistemology, in which knowledge of any truth in our contingent minds requires illumination by God, thus pointing to the necessity of His existence.
14. **Foreknowledge and Free Will**: The problem of sustaining the reality of free will in light of the fact that God knows all by means of creating it to be.
15. **Ontological Argument**: An argument for God’s existence based on the kind of being God is, a necessary being.
16. **Cosmological Argument**: an argument for the existence of God based on the fact that the existence of the universe is not self-explanatory. Examples are Aquinas’s proofs of motion, efficient cause, and contingency.

17. **Teleological Argument:** An Argument for the existence of God based on the observed order and regularity of the world. Not to be confused with the **Argument from Design**, which says all the parts fit together into a harmonious whole.
18. **Act of Existence:** that by which an essence is given existence; the most universal principle of commonality for all being in Aquinas's metaphysics.
19. **Nominalism:** the belief that universals exist in name alone, thus denying the existence of Forms or natures.
20. **Ockham's Razor:** the notion that entities should not be multiplied without necessity, or that the simplest explanation is the best.
21. **Fideism:** The idea that knowledge of God can be had by faith alone, and not by knowledge.
22. **Pantheism:** the belief that only one substance exists, that is God. All of creation is merely an attribute of the infinite substance God. Everything is God. God is everything (Spinoza)
23. **Hume's Fork:** Hume's process for determining whether or not a claim has meaning. The first question asked in this process is: "Is the claim a relation of ideas?" If the answer is "yes," the claim is merely tautological and has no relevance to the experienced world. If the answer is "no," one can proceed to the second question: "Is the claim based on direct sense experience?" If the answer to this question is "yes," one can gain meaningful knowledge from the claim. If "no," the claim is meaningless.
24. **A Priori:** something known independently or prior to sense experience.
25. **A Posteriori:** something known after or through sense experience.
26. **Noumena:** for Kant, what things are in themselves apart from our perception. These cannot be known.
27. **Phenomena:** things as they are experienced by us. The only way we can experience the world.
28. **Materialism (Marx):** that consciousness is determined by our social relations; social relations are not determined by consciousness.
29. **Subjectivity:** for Kierkegaard) at the core of our being is our existence whose determination is completely up to us by deciding beliefs, values, morals, etc., and not on objective criteria like math or science. It requires a leap of faith, a risk, and shapes who the person is.
30. **Scientism:** The idea that all truth must come about by applying the scientific method.
31. **Death of God:** Nietzsche's idea that there are no longer absolute values, and so man must determine truth and value for himself.
32. **Simplicity:** That God's essence is existence, and that there is no composition of form and matter, essence and existence, or substance and accident (i.e, act and potency in any way).
33. **Eternity:** The simultaneous possession of the whole of being.
34. **Analogy:** the mode of predication in which the thing signified remains the same but the mode of signification varies according to subject.
35. **Divine Ideas:** the exemplar causes of all that is.
36. **Creation:** to make something out of nothing at all; to communicate the act of existence.
37. **Evil:** the privation of being.
38. **Miracle:** To accomplish an act without the normal secondary/natural cause.

VIII. Lecture, Presentation, and Reading Schedule

Tues. W1: Syllabus and Introduction.

Thurs. W1: Faith and Reason (ST Q 1.1-8; Kreeft 35-47)

Tues. W2: Pre-Socratics (Gilson 1-23; *Phaedo*).

Thurs. W2: Plato (Gilson, 23-31; Plato in Reader).

Tues. W3: Aristotle and Hellenistic thought (Gilson, 32-37 and Reader).

Thurs. W3: Plotinus and Augustine (Gilson, 38-62 and Reader).

Tues. W4: Boethius and Anselm (in Reader).

Thurs. W4: Aquinas (Gilson 62-68 and Reader).

Tues. W5: Scotus, Ockham (Gilson, 68-73 and Reader).

Thurs. W5: Descartes and Spinoza (Gilson 74-108 and Reader).

Tues. W6: Pascal and Hume (in Reader).

Thurs. W6: Kant (in Reader).

Tues. W7: Contingency Day.(?)

Thurs. W7: Positivism and Modernity (Gilson, 109-144; Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche in Reader).

Tues. W8: Newman and Marcel.

Thurs. W8: Review for Midterm

Tues. W9: **Midterm Exam.**

Thurs. W9: Aquinas, Q 2: Existence of God (pp.53-70).

Tues. W10: Aquinas, Q 3: Simplicity (pp. 73-85).

Thurs. W10: QQ 4-11: Perfection, Goodness, Infinity (pp. 86-112).

Tues. W11: Q 12: How we know God (pp. 113-122). **First Paper Due.**

Thurs. W11: Q. 13: God's Names (pp. 123-133).

Tues. W12: QQ 14-18: God's Knowledge (pp. 134-153).

Thurs. W12: QQ 19-26: God's Will and Providence (pp. 154-185).

Tues. W13: QQ. 44-47: Creation (pp. 189-207).

Thurs. W13: QQ. 48-49: Evil (pp. 208-218) and Miracles (*Summa Contra Gentiles* III.99-102 in Reader).

Tues. W14: Bonaventure, Chapters 1-3.

Thurs. W14: Thanksgiving.

Tues. W15: Bonaventure, Chapters 4-6.
Thurs. W15: Review for Final. **Second Paper Due.**

W16: **Final Exams.**

IX. Course Requirements

- Read all assigned readings
- Participate in class and maintain good attendance record
- Study the notes from the class lectures

X. Important Dates

Midterm –TBA
First Paper—TBA
Second Paper – TBA
Final Exam– TBA.

All dates are subject to change if circumstances warrant them.

XI. Evaluation Criteria

- *Exams:* There will be a Midterm Exam (**Oct. 22**) and a Final Exam (**Dec. 10-12**). **Each exam will be worth 20% of your grade.**
- *Papers:* There will be two 4-5 page papers. The specific assignment for each paper will be handed out about a week in advance of the due date.
- The first will concern pagan or modern approaches to God's existence (due **Nov. 5**); the second is one aspect of God as presented by St. Thomas (due **Dec. 5**). **Each paper will be worth 20% of your grade.**
- *Attendance and participation:* Thoughtful class discussion is the best way to learn philosophy. Therefore, you are expected to have read the material; this will enable you to participate in class discussion. Periodic quizzes will also be counted toward the participation grade. Since this requirement also includes your presence in class, recurrent absence will affect your grade. (NB: Anyone not present at the time attendance is taken is considered absent). **These are each worth 10% of your grade.**

XII. Attendance Policy

Notre Dame Seminary observes the following policy regarding class attendance: Regular class attendance is expected and required of all students who intend to receive credit for course work in the graduate school. Inevitably, extraordinary circumstances will arise that make class attendance impossible on occasion; therefore, a formula for determining regular attendance has been established as policy for the convenience of both seminarians and instructors. A student is

permitted to be absent from class no more than twice the number of times the class meets per week. (You are considered absent if you are not present when attendance is taken). Thus, if a student is absent for seven classes from a course that meets three times a week, the student is in violation of school policy in this regard. The normal penalty for such a violation is the grade FA (failure due to absence).

The number of absences includes those due to illness, late registration, or any other cause. Absence from class immediately before or after holidays and free weekends is considered a double cut. Only the Academic Dean may waive penalties for absence. In absences due to illness, you must inform the instructor and your formation advisor prior to the class.

XIII. Academic Integrity

Seminarians of Notre Dame Seminary are required to commit themselves to responsible scholarship in every aspect of priestly formation, including academics. It is expected that every seminarian works and studies to the best of his ability for every course.

Seminarians also accept responsibilities and obligations as students, which include commitments to honesty, disciplined study, and integrity in their academic work. They will be expected to respect academic scholarship by giving proper credit to other people's work, while at the same time preparing well for assigned materials and examinations in such a way that their academic integrity will never be questioned.

Those needing assistance with writing papers, or who would like tutoring, should contact the Academic Resource Center (ARC) for assistance. All students are encouraged to seek the direct assistance of their instructor whenever any questions arise regarding assignments, grading, course expectations, etc.

XIV. Disability Accommodation Policy

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Notre Dame Seminary provides disability accommodations for students with identified and/or diagnosed disabilities. Students with disabilities need not inform their instructors about the nature of their disabilities, but they are responsible for contacting and providing appropriate documentation to the Academic Resources Center. Requests for accommodations must be made each semester for which the student wishes to receive service; the Academic Resources Center will then distribute a letter of accommodation to the faculty. It is the student's responsibility to meet with each faculty member to discuss how his/her accommodation(s) may be met within each course. Notre Dame Seminary will attempt to meet reasonable accommodations requested. A reasonable accommodation is a modification to a non-essential aspect of a course, program, or facility which does not pose an undue burden and which enables a qualified student with a disability to have adequate opportunity to participate and to demonstrate his or her ability. Such accommodations are determined on an individual basis depending upon the nature and extent of the disability. For more information, contact the Academic Dean's Office.

XV. Extension Policy

Instructors are never obligated to grant a student's request for a due-date extension on a paper/project if they judge the request to be without sufficient merit or not in keeping with the fair requirements articulated in the course syllabus.

XVI. Audit Policy

For academic course audits at Notre Dame Seminary, the amount of work required of seminarians will be decided on a case by case basis by the instructor, the Academic Dean and the seminarian's Formation Advisor.

XVII. Probation and Grading Policy

Passing grades for seminarians are A, B and C. A seminarian is put on academic probation for the following:

A seminarian who obtains a D+ or lower in any course is automatically placed on probationary status and must repeat the course in order to get credit for the course. Seminarians will be allowed to repeat a course only once and the course must be repeated at NDS. . If the seminarian fails the course a second time, the Rector, after consultation with the faculty, will then review the status of the seminarian with the vocation director.

A seminarian whose semester grade point average (GPA) in coursework is below a 2.30 at any time is placed on academic probation. Two or more consecutive semesters on probation may subject the seminarian to be dismissed from academic formation at Notre Dame Seminary. To be removed from probationary status, the seminarian must complete a semester with a GPA of 2.30 or higher.

After each semester, the seminarian's Bishop will receive a copy of his transcript and a review of the seminarians' status.

If a seminarian fails to meet the passing grade point average requirement then he forfeits his eligibility for financial aid under Title IV Federal Regulations.

Letter Grade Number	Quality Points	Grade Scale
A	4.00	100 – 94
A-	3.70	93 – 90
B+	3.30	89 – 88
B	3.00	87 – 84
B-	2.70	83 – 80

C+	2.30	79 – 78
C	2.00	77 – 74
C-	1.70	73 – 70
D+	1.30	69 – 68
D	1.00	67 – 64
D-	.70	63 – 60
F	0.00	59 – 0

See Academic Catalog for Grading Guidelines Policy Narrative.

XVIII. Syllabus Contract

This syllabus *obliges* the student to adhere to all policy requirements and to fulfill all academic expectations herein stated; it also *entitles* the student to a reasonable opportunity to learn the material specified in the course description in order to accomplish for himself the educational goals of the course. In order to optimize the learning process the course instructor reserves the right to make reasonable adjustments to the syllabus requirements during the semester, in response to unforeseen developments or circumstances. All adjustments made must be communicated clearly to students.