



NOTRE DAME SEMINARY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Professor: Dr. David Liberto
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Time: Th 1:30-4:20 pm
Room: TBA

**PH 699 - Special Topics in Philosophy:
Problems in 20th Century Philosophical and Religious Thought**

I. Course Description

This course utilizes primary sources to investigate various thinkers of the 20th century on questions concerning God, His attributes and existence, the problem of evil, the question of the meaningfulness of God-talk, and the relationship between faith and reason. The works of important 20th century thinkers such as Einstein, Whitehead, Hartshorne, Barth, Bultmann, Gadamer, Wolterstorff, Norris Clarke, Plantinga, and Swinburne will be examined.

II. Course Rationale

The 20th century was one of great philosophical and religious ferment. This course will provide the student with important insights into the various currents of philosophical and religious thought on questions related to God and His relationship with the natural order. This will provide the student a way of locating and comparing a Catholic view on the questions being examined.

III. Envisioned Outcomes

- Students will be familiar with various 20th century religious thinkers.
- Students will become familiar with some of the dynamics of religious thought in the 20th century.
- Students will be able to critic a given philosophical position using both a reasoned analysis and the theological Tradition of the Catholic Church.

IV. **Instructional Method**

- The course will employ a seminar-style as the assigned readings are discussed in a small group setting.
- Brief lectures as needed

V. **Requirements and Important Dates**

- A. Read all assignments and be prepared to discuss them in the seminars
- B. Three short essays (about five pages each) on one of the topics covered in class.

VI. **Bibliography**

- Adams, Marilyn McCord. *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*. Ithaca and London, 1999.
- Ahern, M.B. *The Problem of Evil*. London, 1971.
- Alston, William P. *Divine Nature and Human Language*. Ithaca and London, 1989.
- Barr, Stephen M. *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith*. Paperback edition. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.
- Boland, Vivian, O.P. *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis*. Leiden: Brill, 1996.
- Bonsor, Jack. *Athens and Jerusalem: The Role of Philosophy in Theology*. New York, 1993.
- Braine, David. *The Reality of God and the Existence of God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Clarke, W. Norris. *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being-God-Person*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994.
- Farrer, Austin. *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited*. London, 1961.
- Ford, Lewis: *Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics, 1925-1929*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1985.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.
- Geach, Peter. "Causality and Creation." In *God and the Soul*. London, 1969.
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- Gunton, Colin. *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
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- _____. *A Natural Theology for Our Time*. LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1968.
- Hick, John. *Evil and the God of Love*. 2nd Edition. London, 1975.
- Macquarrie, John. *God-talk: An Examination of the Language and Logic of Theology*. New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1967.
- _____. *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*. North American New Edition. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002.
- Mann, William. "Divine Simplicity." In *Religious Studies* 18 (1982): 451-71.
- McCabe, Herbert, O.P. *Faith Within Reason*. Edited and introduced by Brian Davies, O.P. Foreword by Denys Turner. London: Continuum, 2007.

- Meynell, Hugo. *The Intelligible Universe: A Cosmological Argument*. London, 1982.
- Miller, Barry. *A Most Unlikely God*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 1996.
- Oppy, Graham. *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Surin, Kenneth. *Theology and the Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Swinburne, Richard. *Faith and Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- _____. *The Christian God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Tracy, David. *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2000.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *Process and Reality*. New York: MacMillan, 1929.

VII. Glossary of Philosophical and Theological Terms

- analogy – a type of predication that acknowledges both the similarity and the difference between a thing and its referent.
- Apophaticism – a philosophical or theological position that holds that any knowledge of God must be attained by negation, or that no positive knowledge of God is possible due to the transcendent nature of the divinity.
- Compatibilism – a position that posits that free will can be harmonized with Divine determinism.
- Cosmological Argument – any argument for the existence of God that begins with the cosmos or creation (things which are caused) and reasons to the Uncaused (or First) Cause. Also known as *a posteriori* proofs.
- cosmology – in general, the study of the universe, especially with regard to its origin and development.
- Determinism – any philosophical or theological position that sees all events, including human free will, as determined by some external or anterior cause.
- equivocity – a type of predication that acknowledges no similarity between the thing described and its referent.
- Existentialism – a philosophical position that, in reacting against Scientific Positivism and Rationalism, stresses the freedom and self-determinism found in human experience and choices.
- Fideism – a philosophical or theological position that tends to negate or minimize the need for reason in discoursing on matters about God. Faith takes the prominent position so that reason is obfuscated or obliterated.
- immanence – refers to the fact that God is everywhere and in everything.
- hypostasis* (Gr. ὑπόστασις) – although etymologically related more to the Latin term *substantia*, in the developments of the Fourth Century Trinitarian debates, the term comes to be understood more as an individual subsistence, akin to the term person (Lt. *persona*).
- Materialism – philosophical position, with ancient and modern versions, that holds that all of reality can be explained by matter.

Nominalism – a philosophical position that considers universals to be solely mind-dependent, *i.e.*, universals have no reality outside of a name that is used to express an abstract concept.

Ontological Argument – the name used to refer to St. Anselm’s famous argument for the existence of God in his *Proslogion*; generally, any argument which would proceed *a priori*, *i.e.*, posit a divine attribute as a premise in the proof that one is attempting to prove.

Process Thought – a philosophical position developed in the 20th century that makes becoming or process the foundation to all reality. Alfred North Whitehead is usually considered the father of Process Thought.

Realism – any philosophical position that posits the reality of the object as mind-independent as in contrast to Idealism. Concerning the question of universals, any philosophical position that defends that universal concepts are real and not merely vocal sounds or names as in contrast to Nominalism.

relation – One of Aristotle’s nine accidents whose formal definition is the order of one thing to another (Gr. πρὸς τι, Lt. *ad aliquid*). An accident involves a subject (*subiectum*, *suppositum*) a term (*terminus*), and a reason (*ratio*) by which the subject is related to the term. Differing from the other accidents, a relation is more than a perfection in the subject but is a reference to the term. The governing idea of a relation is more with regard to the reference to (*esse ad*) than in the inherence in (*esse in*), although to be an accident it must also contain the latter.

simplicity, divine – a divine attribute that excludes any type of composition in God, whether that be physical, metaphysical, or substantial.

substance (Lt. *substantia*) – Arguably one of the most important philosophical terms used in theology. The term is correlative to the Greek terms *ousia* (οὐσία) and *hypostasis* (ὑπόστασις). One of the ten categories of Aristotle, substance is that which stands on its own as opposed to the nine accidents whose being is described as adhering in something (namely, in a substance).

theodicy – that branch of philosophy that is concerned with defending the existence of God, especially with regard to the question of evil.

ubiquity, divine – a divine attribute that, as corollary to the divine infinity, excludes the possibility of God not being in a given place. More positively, it is synonymous with the divine omnipresence.

universals – abstract concepts that are applied to a given group of individuals (particulars); an essence or nature that, in the abstract, can be applied to a group of individuals.

univocity – a type of predication that acknowledges one meaning for a thing and its referent.

VIII. Lecture and Reading Schedule

Reading selections will be sent to the students for each topic via email (pdf format) at least one week prior to the discussion of the topic.

| Class # | Topic |
|---------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | God-talk |
| 2 | Faith and Reason |
| 3 | Cosmological Argument |
| 4 | Cosmological Argument (part II) |
| 5 | Faith and Science |
| 6 | Faith and Science (part II) |
| 7 | God and the World |
| 8 | Divine Simplicity |
| 9 | Divine Simplicity (part II) |
| 10 | Divine Immutability |
| 11 | Divine Immutability (part II) |
| 12 | The Problem of Evil |
| 13 | The Problem of Evil (part II) |
| 14 | Q and A |

VIII. Evaluation

The student's average will be the average of the three essays (30% each), and class participation (10%). Each essay will be approximately 1000-1200 words and be accompanied by a research bibliography on the topic.

X. 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.

XI. 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.

XII. 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.

XIII. 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.

XIV. 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.

XV. 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. Seminarian status is then subject to review by the Dean.

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 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.