

Faith and Reason
Philosophy 23011
Spring 2008
Tuesday, Thursday, 9:00-10:20

Instructor: Michael Kremer

My office is 224 Stuart Hall. I will hold office hours Wednesdays, 2:00-4:00. If these times are not convenient we can make an appointment for another time. My office phone is 834-9884; my home phone is 643-1223. I can be reached by e-mail at kremer@uchicago.edu.

The course assistants for this course are Dawn Chow and Micah Lott. Their e-mail addresses are desch@uchicago.edu and mlott@uchicago.edu. They will hold discussion sections (times: TBA) and help with grading your papers. They will also hold office hours on a regular basis.

Course objectives and format:

The topic of the relationship of faith and reason, including but not restricted to the relation of religion and science, has become a “hot” topic in contemporary popular culture, with the publication of numerous books, articles, videos, and even youtube segments and widely read blogs promoting this or that view, often in strident or soundbite-level fashion. Much of the popular discussion and debate is highly polarized and often the parties seem to be talking past one another. The purpose of this course is to introduce you to some of the history of philosophical reflection on this topic, as well as to some main areas of contemporary philosophical thought, in the hope that this will provide you with some basis for approaching the discussion in the popular arena in a more informed and intelligent way.

This course will address the issue of faith and reason primarily with reference to the “Abrahamic” religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with the main focus being on Christianity. The reason for this is primarily that Christianity is the religion I am most familiar with, and secondarily that it is the religion that has had the greatest impact on the Western philosophical tradition. However, I would welcome insights into other religious traditions and their stance on issues of faith and reason that might be brought to the class by students of other backgrounds.

This will be primarily a lecture course, with separate weekly discussion sections. Students are expected to attend one of the discussion sections regularly if at all possible. Student questions and comments are welcome during the lectures.

Texts:

Readings for the course will be made available electronically, usually through the chalk site for the course (some readings are freely available online; links will be provided). There are no textbooks to be purchased.

Course Website:

This course has a chalk website (go to chalk.uchicago.edu). The syllabus, readings and assignments, and possibly other announcements and links of interest, will be posted from time to time on that website. There are two discussion boards available there: one for posting general discussion of the course material, and a second which you can use to anonymously communicate with me about how the course is going.

Work of the Course: The requirements of the course are as follows:

(1) Reading responses: you will submit a “reading response” short paper – roughly two pages, double-spaced – four times during the course of the quarter. This response is to be turned in at the beginning of the class before we discuss the reading to which you are responding. The first reading response must be turned in by April 10; the second reading response must be turned in by April 29; the third reading response must be turned in by May 13; and the final and fourth reading response must be turned in by June 3. (60%)

(2) Book review: over the course of the quarter, you will read one of the many recent popular books on the issues we are discussing in the class, and write a book review of roughly 2000 words evaluating the book in the light of the work we have done in the class. (40%)

Candidate books for review include such works as Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, Harris, *The End of Faith*, Hitchens, *God is not Great*, Paulos, *Irreligion*, Stenger, *God: The Failed Hypothesis*, Wolpert, *Six Impossible Things before Breakfast*, Collins, *The Language of God*, Wright, *Simply Christian*, McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion*, Crean, *God is No Delusion*, Schonborn, *Chance or Purpose*, Schall, *The Order of Things*, David Marshall, *The Truth Behind the New Atheism*, Hart, *The Doors of the Sea: Where was God in the Tsunami*, Polkinghorne, *Exploring Reality: The Intertwining of Science and Religion*, Barr, *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith*, Swinburne, *Is There a God?*, Haught, *God and the New Atheism* ... The only restrictions on your choice of book are that the book you review should be (1) recent – published within the last ten years; (2) recognizably a “popular” work, not a piece of academic writing intended for specialists; (3) also recognizably dealing with topics discussed in this class and (4) not so incompetent as to be unworthy of a review. Play around on Amazon or in the Seminary Co-op – the range of books in this area is quite astounding. In writing your review you must bear in mind that your reader will not necessarily have read the book you are reviewing. You must also take a critical approach to the book, whether its conclusions are ones with which you agree or not. Reviews which simply lavish praise on the book to be reviewed will not be accepted. Your review will be due on the last day of the class, June 3.

(3) Participation in discussion, in class, in discussion section, or on the chalk discussion board, may favorably affect your grade but will not lower your grade.

Policy regarding grades:

Grading responsibilities will be divided between the course assistants and the instructor.

Grades of “A+” may be assigned on some work, and will be taken into account in determining final grades (so an A+ and an A- average to an A).

The final responsibility for all grades rests with the instructor, and any questions about grades should be addressed to him.

Policy regarding due dates:

Assigned work is to be turned in in class on the assigned date. If you cannot meet the deadline you must ask for an extension before class. Work turned in late will be subject to the following penalties:

1-2 days late: 1 “notch”(B+ is reduced to B), maximum grade is A (not A+).

3 days late: two “notches” (B+ is reduced to B-), maximum A-.

4 days late: four notches, maximum B.

5 days late: seven notches, maximum C.

6 days late: ten notches, maximum D.

7 days late: failing

But reasonable requests for extensions will not be denied. Please ask! Do not penalize yourself unnecessarily. Also, please do not fail to come to class because you have not completed your assignment!

If an extension is granted and work is turned in after the extension due date, the above penalties will apply.

Policy regarding plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged presentation of another’s thoughts or words as your own. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class.

ROUGH Schedule of Topics

The syllabus is at this point still a work in progress. Readings have not been determined beyond the first few weeks. Updated reading lists will be distributed as the final reading requirements are determined.

4/1 Introduction

I. Faith and Reason: what are the issues?

4/3-4/10 Conceptions of faith and of reason; conceptions of the relation of faith and reason

II. Arguments that reason supports faith, and critiques of those arguments

4/15-4/29 Ontological argument, cosmological argument, argument from design, argument from natural order, moral argument

III. Independence of faith and reason, fideism, critiques

5/1-5/13 Pascal's wager, evidentialism, voluntarism, groundlessness of belief, religious belief as basic

IV. Arguments that Reason conflicts with Faith and responses

5/15-6/3 The problem of evil, theodicy, science and religion, naturalism, cosmology, evolution, miracles

Detailed schedule of readings:

4/3 A.C. Grayling, "Faith"

Abraham Joshua Heschel, "Faith"

Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§142-165 (on faith)

Martin Luther, "Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans"

4/8 Caleb Miller, "Faith and Reason"

Ibn Rushd, "The Harmony of Philosophy and the Qur'an"

Josef Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections"

O.K. Bouwsma, "Faith, Evidence, and Proof"

4/10 Stewart Shapiro, "Faith and Reason, the Perpetual War: Ruminations of a Fool"

Stephen Jay Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria"

Richard Dawkins, "Is Science a Religion?"

4/15 Anselm, "Proslogion," selections

Gaunilo, "A Reply to the Foregoing"

Anselm, "Reply to Gaunilo," selections

Thomas Aquinas, "Whether the Existence of God is Self-Evident," *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 2, Article 1

Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, "Notes on the Ontological Argument"

Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, sections 1, 23

Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, *Monadology*, sections 43-45

Immanuel Kant, from *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, "The Possibility of an *entis realissimi*," "The A Priori Proofs," through the first paragraph on p. 60.

4/17 Thomas Aquinas, "Whether it can be Demonstrated that God Exists," "Whether God Exists," *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 2, Articles 2-3 (see first, second, and third ways)

Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, *Monadology*, sections 31-42

David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Dialogue IX

Russell-Copleston debate on the Cosmological Argument

Paul Edwards, "Critique of the Cosmological Argument"

4/22 Aquinas, "Whether God Exists," *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 2, Article 3 (see fifth way)

Paley, "Natural Theology," selections

Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, Dialogues II-IV, VII-VIII

Dallas Willard, "Reflections on Dawkins' *The Blind Watchmaker*"

Daniel Dennett, "Atheism and Evolution"

4/24 Aquinas, "Whether God Exists," *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 2, Article 3 (see fifth way)

Josef Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), "The Primacy of the Logos" from *Introduction to Christianity*

Hugo Meynell, "The Intelligibility of the Universe"

Eugene Wigner, "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics"

Gregory Chaitin, "On the Intelligibility of the Universe"

4/29 Immanuel Kant, "Moral Faith in God," "The Nature and Certainty of Moral Faith," "The Absurdum Practicum," from *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*

C. Stephen Layman, "God and the Modal Order"

Peter Byrne, "God and the Modal Order: A Reply to Layman"

C. Stephen Layman, "God and the Modal Order: Replies to Objections"

5/1 Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, selections

Ian Hacking, "The Logic of Pascal's Wager"

William Lycan and George Schlesinger, "You Bet Your Life: Pascal's Wager Defended"

5/6 William K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief"

Charles S. Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief"

Peter van Inwagen, "Is It Wrong Everywhere, Always, and for Anyone to Believe Anything on Insufficient Evidence?"

5/8 William James, "The Will to Believe"

Michael Martin, "William James and the Will to Believe"

Nicholas Everitt, "William James and the Will to Believe"

5/13 Norman Malcolm, "The Groundlessness of Belief"

Alvin Plantinga, "Religious Belief without Evidence"

Michael Martin, "A Critique of Plantinga's Religious Epistemology"

5/15 David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, Parts X-XI

Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part II, Book Five, Chapter 4, "Rebellion" (in "Selections")

J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence"

5/20 Leibniz, "Theodicy: Abridgement of the Argument reduced to Syllogistic Form"

Peter van Inwagen, "The Argument from Evil"

Marilyn McCord Adams, "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God"

5/22 David Lewis, "Divine Evil"

C.S. Lewis, "Hell"

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, further selections (in "Selections")

5/27 David Hume, "Of Miracles"

Richard Price "On the Importance of Christianity and the Nature of Historical Evidence, and Miracles"

George Campbell, "A Dissertation on Miracles," selections

5/29 Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, sections 6-7, 16

Gareth Moore, "Miracles," "The Activity and Creativity of God"

6/3 No reading