

## “PHILOSOPHY OF GOD”

### *Syllabus*

Course: PHIL-V-178-001 (Spring II 2006)

Schedule: TR 2:00 – 3:50 (Bobet 212)

Instructor: Dr. Dittmar Dittrich

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Office hours: TR before and after class, and by appointment

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Textbook: David Shatz (ed.); Philosophy and Faith: A Philosophy of Religion Reader; Boston (McGraw-Hill) 2002<sup>1</sup>.

### **Course Description:**

In compliance with the description in the Undergraduate Bulletin this course will concentrate on the in-depth study of fundamental philosophical theories exploring the *nature and existence of God*.

A variety of historically decisive conceptions of God and their intrinsic problematics will be critically examined ranging from theistic to atheistic and agnostic standpoints. The primary focus of this inquiry will be the unfolding of the meaning and the implications of central *divine attributes* that are derived from an understanding of God as a perfect and necessary being (e.g. omniscience, omnipotence, omnibenevolence, impassibility, immutability, eternity and simplicity).

On the basis of this clarification, the traditional *arguments for and against the existence of God* will be analyzed and evaluated with special emphasis on their metaphysical and conceptual dimension. The major arguments for the existence of God to be considered will include ontological and cosmological proofs as well as the arguments for design; consequently, the course will then proceed to assess attempts to demonstrate the non-existence of God that focus on the existence of evil, the hiddenness of God and reductionistic psychological interpretations of belief in God.

In accordance with these more specific explanations, the course will, ultimately, contrast theistic worldviews with scientific worldviews and alternative non-theistic sources of experience. The underlying fundamental *relation of rationality to belief in God* will be characterized further by a discussion of consequential theories such as natural theology, negative theology and process theology, and of the controversy in how far morality can depend upon belief.

Eventually, the course aims to enable the student to reflect independently –in the light of these distinct conceptions of God- with clarity and rigor on contemporary debates over the idea of God.

On May 23, 2006 a *guided tour of Loyola's Monroe Library* will be offered by Ashley Pillow, the liaison librarian for the Department of Philosophy. Ms. Pillow will present the library's research resources relevant for the field of Philosophy of God and explain the corresponding stack areas, the print reference collection, and philosophy periodicals. She will also give an overview of the library website and its on-line tools, again concentrating on philosophy.

### **Goals and Objectives of the Course:**

Please, consult the **Department of Philosophy: Goals and Learning Objectives** (<http://cas.loyno.edu/philosophy/programs.html>) -Upper Level Philosophy Common Curriculum- and also the **College of Arts and Sciences: Goals and Objectives of the Common Curriculum** (<http://cas.loyno.edu/common/purpose.html>). This Course has been designed to satisfy Objective 1, Sub-Objective b of the *Department of Philosophy: Objectives for Upper Level Philosophy Common Curriculum Courses*. It has also been designed to satisfy the *College of Arts and Sciences' Common Curriculum Objectives* by helping students to develop effective skills in research, writing, speaking, reading and listening. Furthermore, the course is designed to fulfill substantially the *Arts & Sciences' Goal for Advanced Common Curriculum courses* to achieve substantially the following: contribute to a values-based critical understanding of our lives, of society and its institutions of our methods and beliefs.

### **General Policies:**

The *attendance* of all classes is essential, particularly since the participation in the class and in the discussion of the assigned readings constitutes a substantial part of the course work. Also, the contribution to the class will be reflected in the final grade.

The *current assignments* consist of the preparation of the weekly reading from the textbook and one short presentation of the author of one of the texts.

The *general assignment* will be a **concise research paper of approx. 5,000 words on a freely chosen topic** covered by the scope of the course. The paper should explore a relevant question in the realm of the philosophy of God by means of circumspect and insightful reasoning and it should reach a clear and substantial conclusion. As the length of the paper is rather limited its form is expected to be flawless. The specific formal requirements for the paper will be explained during the course.

The *final grade* for the course will primarily be based upon the grade of the paper; the overall participation in class, however, will also be taken into account. A short classroom presentation of the topic and the structure of the paper (May 30 & June 1) along with a corresponding 2-page outline will be the basis for the mid-term grade. This **outline is due on June 1; the deadline for the paper will be July 11.**

## Class Topics:

- May:
- The Divine Impassibility* (Thomas Aquinas)
  - How God is Both Merciful and Impassible* (Anselm of Canterbury)
  - Omnipotence* (Geach)
  - Predestination, Divine Foreknowledge, and Human Freedom* (Rowe)
  - Middle Knowledge, Foreknowledge, and the Openness of God* (Hasker)
  - God Everlasting* (Wolterstorff)
  - Process Theology: God as Creative-Responsive Love* (Cobb & Griffin)
  - Negative Theology* (Maimonides)
  - A Critique of Negative Theology* (Gersonides)
  - The Meaning of the Divine Attributes* (Mill)
  - The Doctrine of Analogy* (Thomas Aquinas)
  - The Task of Demythologizing* (Bultmann)
  - Feminist Christian Philosophy?* (P.A. Johnson)
  - Defining Piety* (Plato)
- June:
- Divine Command Morality* (Idziak)
  - Suspending the Ethical* (Kierkegaard)
  - Worship and Moral Agency* (Rachels)
  - An Ontological Argument* (Anselm of Canterbury)
  - A Modal Ontological Argument* (D. Johnson)
  - The Five Ways* (Thomas Aquinas)
  - The Cosmological Argument* (Edwards)
  - Philosophical and Scientific Pointers to Creatio ex Nihilo* (Rowe)
  - On An Argument for Design* (Hume)
  - Fine-Tuning: The New Design Arguments* (Davis)
  - An Argument for Design* (Hambourger)
  - The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism* (Rowe)
  - The Inductive Argument from Evil* (Alston)
  - Coercion and the Hiddenness of God* (Murray)
  - How Human Ignorance Leads to Religion* (Spinoza)
  - Religion as Projection* (Feuerbach)
- July:
- Religion as Wish Fulfillment* (Freud)
  - Causation vs. Justification: A Critique of Freud* (Rowe)
  - Is Religion Opposed to Science?* (Haught)
  - Genesis and Evolution* (van Inwagen)
  - Theism and the Mind-Body Problem* (Audi)
  - God's Action in the World* (Alston)
  - Of Miracles* (Hume)
  - Rationality and Religious Belief* (Plantinga)
  - Do Religious Beliefs Need Grounds?* (Penelhum)
  - An Evaluation of James's Argument* (Martin)
  - Kierkegaard's Arguments Against Objective Reasoning in Religion* (Adams)
  - Suppose God Exists* (Cahn)