

Philosophy 265: Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion  
Syllabus  
Mon 1:10-2:30, Wed 1:10-2:30, Spring 2017  
Frelinghuysen Hall, B6

**Contact information**

Instructor: Charles Côté-Bouchard, Ph.D.

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Office hours: Wednesdays 3:00-5:00 in room 547 of the philosophy department, and by appointment.

Homepage: <http://ccote-bouchard.weebly.com>

Course webpage: <http://ccote-bouchard.weebly.com/phil-265.html>

**Course description**

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of religion in the Western monotheistic tradition. Drawing on both historical and contemporary sources, we will examine some of the main philosophical problems that arise from Western monotheistic religion. How should we understand God's attributes such as omnipotence, necessary existence, perfect goodness, and omniscience? Are these attributes mutually compatible? Is God's omniscience and omnipotence compatible with human free will? Can there be proofs or persuasive arguments for the existence of God? Are there persuasive arguments against the existence of God? Can belief in God be rational? If so, in what sense? What is the relationship between God and morality? Authors discussed will include, among others, Anselm, Aquinas, Clifford, Hick, Hume, James, Kant, Mackie, Molina, Paley, Pascal, Plantinga, and Rowe.

**Learning goals**

- Understand the main philosophical questions, problems, concepts, arguments, and theories that arise from the Western monotheistic religious tradition.
- Develop fundamental philosophical and critical thinking skills. These include the ability to (i) construct, reconstruct, and evaluate arguments in one's own words, (ii) understand complex philosophical problems, concepts, arguments, theories, (iii) closely and critically read historical and contemporary philosophical texts, and (iv) write clearly and concisely.

**Texts**

There are no texts for purchase. The readings will be made available at:

<http://ccote-bouchard.weebly.com/phil-265.html>

**Assessments and grading policy**

Your final grade will be based on your **attendance**, two **take-home exams**, one short **midterm paper**, and one longer **final paper**.

Your **attendance** to the class will be worth **12% of your final grade**. You will have **2 free unexcused absences**. After that, you will lose **0.5%** of your final mark per

absence. If you have to miss a class, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence.

The **two take-home exams** will be worth **18% and 25%** of the final grade. They will be short essay questions about the content of the readings and the lectures. I will give you the questions one week before the due date. The exams will be due via email by 11:59pm on February 20<sup>th</sup> and April 12<sup>th</sup>.

Your **papers**, will be worth **15% (midterm)** and **30% (final)** of your final grade. In your papers, you will explore in detail a topic of each half of the course that particularly interested you. A list of possible questions for each paper will be made available on the course webpage. You can choose a question/topic that is not on the list, but I must approve it by February 22<sup>nd</sup> for the midterm and by April 5<sup>th</sup> for the final. The midterm will have to be **1500-2000 words** long and will be due via email by March 24<sup>th</sup>, 11:59pm. The final paper will have to be **3000-4000 words** long and will be due via email by May 10<sup>th</sup>, 11:59pm.

**Late assignments** will receive lower marks. You will lose **5%** of your assignment mark for each day late.

### **Academic integrity policy**

Don't plagiarize! The current academic integrity policy can be found at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/> For a useful guide on how to avoid plagiarism, go to: [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid\\_plagiarism](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism) Check it out. Avoiding plagiarism might be trickier than you think.

### **Student disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services>

### **Tentative schedule**

See course webpage (<http://ccote-bouchard.weebly.com/phil-265.html>) for readings and updates.

Week 1 – Introduction

Jan 18 Introduction (No assigned reading)

Week 2 – Arguments for theism (I): Ontological Arguments

Jan 23 Classical version

Jan 25 Modal version

Week 3 – Arguments for theism (II): Cosmological Arguments

Jan 30 Classical version

Feb 1 Kalam version

Week 4 – Arguments for theism (III): Design Arguments

Feb 6 Analogical

Feb 8 Fine-tuning

Week 5 – Arguments for theism (IV): Arguments from experience  
Feb 13 Alston  
Feb 15 **\*\*NO CLASS\*\***

Week 6 – Divine attributes (I): Omnipotence  
Feb 20 Aquinas + **\*\*First take-home exam due\*\***  
Feb 22 Geach

Week 7 – Divine attributes (II): Omniscience  
Feb 27 Boethius & Pike  
Mar 1<sup>st</sup> Marylin Adams

Week 8 – Divine providence  
Mar 6 Middle Knowledge  
Mar 8 Open theism

#### SPRING BREAK

Week 9 – Arguments against theism (I): The logical problem of evil  
Mar 20 Mackie  
Mar 22 Plantinga + **\*\*Midterm paper due\*\***

Week 10 – Arguments against theism (II): The evidential problem of evil  
Mar 27 Hick's soul-making theodicy  
Mar 29 Rowe

Week 11 – Miracles  
Apr 3 Hume  
Apr 5 TBA

Week 12 – Religion and reason (I): Can religious belief epistemically rational?  
Apr 10 Reformed epistemology  
Apr 12 TBA + **\*\*Second take-home exam due\*\***

Week 13 – Religion and reason (II): The ethics of belief  
Apr 17 Pascal's wager  
Apr 19 Clifford and James

Week 14 – Religion and ethics (I): Is God the Source of Morality?  
Apr 24 Divine command theory  
Apr 26 Natural law theory

Week 15 – Religion and ethics (II)  
May 1<sup>st</sup> (Last class) TBA

May 10<sup>th</sup> – **\*\*Final paper due\*\***

## **Student-wellness services**

Just In Case Web App <http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS) (848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA) (848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://vpva.rutgers.edu/)

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services (848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources.

Scarlet Listeners (732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.