

Philosophy 370: Contemporary Philosophy of Religion

Syllabus

Friday 12:00 – 3:00, Spring 2017

Tillett Hall, 103C

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-370.html>

Course description and learning goals

We will discuss some of the main questions, theories, concepts, and arguments of contemporary philosophy of 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?

Prerequisite: One course in philosophy equal to or greater than 01:730:103.

Learning Goals

- Become familiar with the main philosophical questions, concepts, arguments, and theories that arise in contemporary philosophy of religion.
- 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 concepts, arguments, theories, and problems, and (iii) write clearly and concisely.

Texts

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

<http://ccote-bouchard.weebly.com/phil-370.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 **10% of your final grade**. You will have **2 free unexcused absences**. After that, you will lose **1%** 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 **20% 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 17th and April 14th.

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 24th for the midterm and by March 31st for the final. The midterm will have to be **1500-2000 words** long and will be due via email by March 24th, 11:59pm. The final paper will have to be **3000-4000 words** long and will be due via email by May 10th, 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

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-370.html>) for readings and updates.

Week 1 (Jan 20)	Introduction (no assigned reading)
Week 2 (Jan 27)	Arguments for theism (I): Ontological arguments
Week 3 (Feb 3)	Arguments for theism (II): Cosmological arguments
Week 4 (Feb 10)	Arguments for theism (III): Design arguments
Week 5 (Feb 17)	**No Class** + <u>**First take-home exam due**</u>
Week 6 (Feb 24)	Divine attributes (I): Omnipotence
Week 7 (Mar 3)	Divine attributes (II): Omniscience
Week 8 (Mar 10)	Divine providence

SPRING BREAK

- Week 9 (Mar 24) Arguments against theism (I): The logical problem of evil
Midterm paper due
- Week 10 (Mar 31) Arguments against theism (II): The evidential problem of evil
- Week 11 (Apr 7) Arguments against theism (III): Divine hiddenness
- Week 12 (Apr 14) Faith and reason (I): Can belief in God be epistemically rational?
Second take-home exam due
- Week 13 (Apr 21) Faith and reason (II): Can belief in God be practically rational?
- Week 14 (Apr 28) Religion and ethics: Is God the source of morality?
- May 10th ***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/

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/

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.