

PHIL160
PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION ON THE CHRISTIAN CREEDS
MW 12:30-1:45 PM, MAG103

Professor: Mark Murphy
Office: 235 New North
Office Hours: M 2-3, W 11-12,
and by appointment

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Course description

In this course, we will use the tools of philosophy to try to make sense of various ideas central to the Christian creeds. We are *not* trying to use philosophy to prove that the Christian creeds are true; we are asking, rather, if the propositions of the Christian creeds are true, what light philosophical investigation can shed on them.

I should note up front that I am a Christian and will not pretend to be neutral on the question of the literal truth of the creeds. But anybody with an interest in these questions, whether or not he or she shares these commitments, is welcome to take part in these investigations.

Course objectives

Through active participation in this course, you will

- learn about a certain style of philosophy, *analytic* philosophy, that is one important way of theorizing about religious theses
- come to understand some strengths and weaknesses of various ways of understanding credal propositions
- improve your ability to think, speak, and write clearly about matters of central human concern

Course format

The course is a combination of lecture and discussion on some very difficult readings. There will be a couple of days set aside for discussion of specific topics, and one of our classes will be devoted to meeting with the author of a number of the papers that we will read.

Course requirements and grading

Students will be graded on three criteria: the quality of the course papers, the quality of the final exam, the quality and quantity of class participation, and the quality of the unannounced quizzes.

Course papers

Students must write two course papers, each 2100-2800 words in length.

Final exam

There will be a comprehensive final exam, essay-type, administered during the regular examination period (Thursday, May 8, 12:30-2:30 PM).

Active and prepared attendance throughout the semester

Classes — at least, classes of this size — are cooperative enterprises, and whoever isn't present, prepared, and ready for action isn't doing his or her share for the common good. I expect you to attend every class unless you have a very strong reason not to be present. **You are strictly required to be present and prepared on the days devoted entirely to discussion and the day that our visiting author is here (Friday, 4/4, 9:00 AM-10:15 AM).**

Unannounced quizzes

When the readings are hard, there is a tendency for folks to slack off the reading so that everything can be made clear in class. To help combat this tendency, I'm going to give several unannounced quizzes over the course of the semester. These quizzes will be very short, will be done at the very beginning of class, and will be on that day's reading. They require only a basic level of understanding of the readings — I would not assume anything more than that for a reading quiz. Because I will drop the two lowest quiz grades in calculating your overall quiz grade, no makeup quizzes will be given, except in the case of an unusually large number of verifiable excused absences.

The final grade

Of your two papers and final exam, the lowest grade counts for 25%, the middle for 30%, and the highest for 35%. Your quiz grades will count for 10%. I assign no fixed percentage to active and prepared attendance, though particularly helpful class participation can affect one's grade, especially in borderline cases. No one passes the course without completing both papers and taking the final exam. Protracted absences, excused or not, are a basis for course failure.

Texts

The texts will all be available as electronic documents available through Lauinger reserves. Please have these somehow available in class. The readings are not terribly long, but they are rich, and difficult, and should be read *slowly* and *more than once*. If you aren't averaging at least five hours a week working on the readings, you're not putting enough time into the course.

Consulting

If you would like to see me, try to come during office hours. If you can't make office hours, set an appointment with me for Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. I check e-mail pretty regularly; the more straightforward and easy-to-answer the question, the more rapidly you will get a response. If academic calamity has befallen you, you may call me at home, but please don't call any later than 10 P.M. — I've got five children and both they and I are pretty tired by that time. If there's some other sort of calamity — say, you're in jail, or something like that, and there's no one else to bail you out — I guess you can call later than that.

READING SCHEDULE

Please consult the Blackboard course blog for suggestions regarding the readings and to raise comments or questions to be addressed in class.

Date	Topic	Reading (to be done <i>before</i> class on the date listed)
1/8	Christian philosophy	Plantinga, “Advice to Christian Philosophers”
1/13	Creeds and heresies	Stump, “Orthodoxy and Heresy”
1/15	Belief	Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God”
1/20	<i>NO CLASS: UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY</i>	
1/22	Belief (cont’d)	O’Leary-Hawthorne, “Arguments for Atheism”; van Inwagen, “‘It is Wrong, Everywhere, Always, and for Anyone, to Believe Anything upon Insufficient Evidence’”
1/27	Belief (cont’d)	van Inwagen, “Quam Dilecta”
1/29	God	Morris, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Anselm”; Morris, “Metaphysical Dependence, Independence, and Perfection”
2/3	God (cont’d)	Diller, “A Proposal to Change the Tradition of Perfect Being Theology”
2/5	Creation	Kretzmann, “A General Problem of Creation”
2/10	Creation (cont’d)	Kretzmann, “A Particular Problem of Creation”; Kvanvig, “Creation and Conservation”
2/12	Discussion day	Quinn, “An Argument for Divine Command Ethics” Question: Does God’s creative activity extend to morality?
2/17	<i>NO CLASS: UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY</i>	
2/19	Trinity	Rea and Brower, “Understanding the Trinity”
2/24	Trinity (cont’d)	Swinburne, “The Trinity,” from <i>The Christian God</i>
2/26	Trinity (cont’d)	Merricks, “Split Brains and the Godhead”

READING SCHEDULE (continued)

3/3	Trinity (cont'd)	Rea and Brower, "Material Constitution and the Trinity"
3/5	Incarnation	Adams, " <i>Cur Deus Homo?</i> : Priorities Among the Reasons"
<i>3/10-3/12 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK (ADAMS CONFERENCE ON CAMPUS THIS WEEK)</i>		
3/17	Incarnation (cont'd)	Merricks, "The Word Made Flesh" (up to p. 94); Stump, "Aquinas's Metaphysics of the Incarnation"
3/19	Incarnation (cont'd)	Merricks, "The Word Made Flesh" (p. 94 to the end)
3/24	Atonement	Swinburne, "The Christian Scheme of Salvation"
3/26	Atonement (cont'd)	Murphy, "Not Penal Substitution but Vicarious Punishment"
3/31	Resurrection	van Inwagen, "Possibility of Resurrection"; Hasker, "Minds and Bodies"
4/2	Resurrection (cont'd)	Merricks, "The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting"
4/4	Merricks visit — this is a FRIDAY — 9:00 AM, location TBA	
4/7	Heaven and Hell	Swinburne, "A Theodicy of Heaven and Hell"
4/9	Hell	Walls and Talbott, "Is Eternal Damnation Compatible with the Christian Concept of God?" (Walls's contribution)
4/14	Hell (cont'd)	Walls and Talbott, "Is Eternal Damnation Compatible with the Christian Concept of God?" (Talbott's contribution, and replies)
4/16	<i>NO CLASS (because of extra Merricks class), but second paper is due</i>	
4/21	<i>NO CLASS: EASTER BREAK</i>	
4/23	Discussion day	Sennett, "Is There Freedom in Heaven?" Question: Why is there no sin in heaven?
4/28	Final remarks	None

ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

Date	Assignment
Friday, 2/21, 5 PM	2100-2800 word paper (by e-mail)
Wednesday, 4/16, 5 PM	2100-2800 word paper (by e-mail)
Thursday, 5/8, 12:30-2:30 PM	Final exam (room TBA)

STUFF ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Cheating of any form is wrong. It damages the cheater, those whose work is assessed alongside the cheater's, and the institution in which cheating takes place. Because a campuswide honor system is in place, any case of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Council. Anyone found in violation of the honor code for cheating in this class in a premeditated fashion will receive a failing grade for the semester.

The form of cheating to which there seems to be the greatest temptation in philosophy courses is plagiarism. For your information, the university's Honor System brochure describes plagiarism in the following way: "Plagiarism is the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another" (p. 3). It also emphasizes that "plagiarism can be said to have occurred without any affirmative showing that a student's use of another's work was intentional" (p. 3). This means that plagiarism can occur through sloppiness as well as through malice: failure to cite one's sources is plagiarism even if one just forgot to cite it. This means that the burden of care is on **you**.

General guidelines:

If it is a direct quotation, **cite it**.

If it is a paraphrase, **cite it**.

If it is an idea that you got from a particular source — whether a publication or a person — **cite it**.

If you are in doubt about whether it should be cited, **cite it**.

The only items that are not cited are those that one thought up on one's own or those that belong to general knowledge.