



*Course Syllabus*

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| <b>Course</b>    | PHIL 1305 <i>Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion</i> |
| <b>Professor</b> | Dr. Andy Amato  |
| <b>Term</b>      | Spring 2024   |
| <b>Meetings</b>  | Monday & Wednesday 12 - 12:50pm<br>GR 3.420                 |

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**Professor Contact Information & Email Protocol**

The best way to contact me is by email: [andy.amato@utdallas.edu](mailto:andy.amato@utdallas.edu) I will check email periodically throughout the day, Monday through Friday. I will try to respond promptly, but please allow at least twenty-four hours (excluding weekends). Before emailing, please follow this protocol: 1) *consult the syllabus* to see if it addresses your concern, then, if doesn't, 2) *contact your TA* and see if they can assist you — if neither of those steps resolves your issue, then please feel free to 3) *contact me*. When sending an email make sure you: a) *properly address it* (for example, “Dear Professor Amato” or “Hi Dr. Amato” etc.), b) *include your name, class, and section information*, and c) *be as clear and concise as possible*. You must tell us who you are and what class you are in so that we can help you. Remember: this is formal communication with your professor, not casual conversation via direct messaging—*treat it accordingly*. If you do not follow these protocols, we will simply refer you to this portion of the syllabus. My office hours will be on Wednesdays from 2-3pm in JO 5.704 and by appointment.

**Teaching Assistants Contact Information**

| <b>Discussion Section</b> | <b>Teachings Assistant</b> | <b>Email</b>   |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Sections 201              | Kehinde Tijani             | <a href="mailto:Kehinde.Tijani@UTDallas.edu">Kehinde.Tijani@UTDallas.edu</a> |
| Sections 202              | Zachary Meyer              | <a href="mailto:Zachary.Meyer@UTDallas.edu">Zachary.Meyer@UTDallas.edu</a>   |

Your TAs will provide you with their office hour information when you attend your first discussion section.

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**Course Description for PHIL 1305**

Introduction to Philosophy of Religion will be a study of some of the major issues that constitute the discipline, including the nature of religious piety, arguments for and against the existence of God, explorations into various conceptions of deity and providence, the relationship between faith and reason, the nature of religious language and symbols, psychological and sociological approaches that inform a philosophical understanding of religious experience, the role of faith and faith communities in contemporary society, and the problem of evil and injustice. We will pay particular attention to class, race, and gender in relation to faith communities and religious institutions. We will read and discuss a selection of primary texts that directly and indirectly address these topics.

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*Please note* that the overall aim of the course is *not* to survey a wide variety of world religions or diverse religious perspectives—this is not a world religions course—rather to introduce students to a philosophical approach to a) the interpretation of religious and sacred literature, b) the theoretical analysis of religious concepts and themes, and c) the charitable and critical evaluation of the role religion plays in society. While our scope of primary and scholarly materials will be limited, students will learn a range of philosophical and theoretical methods to apply to the religious traditions, texts, schools, and beliefs that are of interest to them.

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We will provide students with several **HANDOUTS** throughout the semester. Students must:

- 1) Complete each reading before the class session covering it
- 2) Bring the correct handouts to each class session

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## COURSE CALENDAR

### PART I:

#### The Ancient World

*Piety, Providence, & Peace*

| <b>WEEK 1</b> | <b>Topics, Activities, &amp; Assignments</b>   | <b>Your Weekly Readings</b>  |
|---------------|--|--|
| 1/17          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome &amp; Syllabus Review</li><li>• What is Philosophy? What is Philosophy of Religion?</li></ul>              |  |
| <b>WEEK 2</b> | <b>Socratic Piety &amp; Stoic Providence</b>   |  |
| 1/22          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plato &amp; Socratic Piety</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i></li></ul>                    |
| 1/24          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stoic conception of Divinity &amp; Providence</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seneca, <i>On Providence</i></li></ul>               |
|               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion Board 1 OPENS on Tues 1/23 at 12am</li><li>• Discussion Board 1 CLOSES on Wed 1/24 at 11:59pm</li></ul> |  |
| <b>WEEK 3</b> | <b>Stoic Providence &amp; The Christian Gospel</b>   |  |
| 1/29          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stoic conception of Divinity &amp; Providence</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seneca, <i>On Providence</i> cont.</li></ul>         |
| 1/31          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Early Christian Social Gospel</li><li>• Radical Subordination (a Great Refusal)</li></ul>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sermon on the Plain and The Kingdom of God</li></ul> |
|               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First Quiz OPENS on Sat 2/3 at 12am</li><li>• First Quiz CLOSES on Sun 2/4 at 11:59pm</li></ul>                    |  |

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### PART II:

#### Medieval & Early Modern

*Can We Prove God's Existence?*

|               |  |  |
|---------------|--|--|
| <b>WEEK 4</b> | <b>Medieval Philosophical Arguments for God's Existence</b>  |  |
| 2/5           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anselm's Ontological Argument (and Gaunilo's Response)</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medieval Arguments</li></ul> |
| 2/7           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aquinas' Cosmological Argument</li><li>• Duns Scotus' Cosmological Argument</li></ul>                            |  |
|               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion Board 2 OPENS on Tues 2/6 at 12am</li><li>• Discussion Board 2 CLOSES on Wed 2/7 at 11:59pm</li></ul> |  |
| <b>WEEK 5</b> | <b>Modern Philosophical Arguments &amp; Challenges</b>   |  |
| 2/12          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Descartes' Ontological Argument</li><li>• Kant's Moral Argument</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modern Arguments</li></ul>   |
| 2/14          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pascal's Pragmatic Argument</li><li>• Hume on Evil and Miracles</li></ul>  |  |
|               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Second Quiz OPENS on Sat 2/17 at 12am</li><li>• Second Quiz CLOSES on Sun 2/18 at 11:59pm</li></ul>              |  |

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**PART III:**  
**19th Century Romanticism, Existentialism, & Anarchism**  
*American Religion, Jesus against Christianity, The Death of God*

**WEEK 6**  
2/19 & 2/21

**American Religion**

- Emerson's Transcendental Religion
- Emerson, *An Address*
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- Discussion Board 3 OPENS on Tues 2/20 at 12am
- Discussion Board 3 CLOSES on Wed 2/21 at 11:59pm

**WEEK 7**  
2/26 & 2/28

**American Spirituality**

- Emerson's Transcendental Religion
- Emerson, *The Over-Soul*
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- Third Quiz OPENS on Sat 3/2 at 12am
- Third Quiz CLOSES on Sun 3/3 at 11:59pm

**WEEK 8**  
3/4

**Proto-Existentialism & Religion**

- Kierkegaard's Knight of Faith
- Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*
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- Dostoyevsky's critique of Institutional Religion
- Dostoyevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor* (video)
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- Discussion Board 4 OPENS on Tues 3/5 at 12am
- Discussion Board 4 CLOSES on Wed 3/6 at 11:59pm

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**WEEK 9**  
3/11 – 3/13

**S P R I N G B R E A K**

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**WEEK 10**  
3/18 & 3/20

**The Death of God**

- God's Place in Contemporary Society
- Overcoming Christian Nihilism
- Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*  
and *The Anti-Christ*
- 
- Discussion Board 5 OPENS on Tues 3/19 at 12am
- Discussion Board 5 CLOSES on Wed 3/20 at 11:59pm

**WEEK 11**  
3/25

**Religion & Power (& Peace)**

- God's Place in Contemporary Society
- Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ* cont.
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- Patriotism and Violence
- Tolstoy, *On Patriotism*
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- Fourth Quiz OPENS on Sat 3/30 at 12am
- Fourth Quiz CLOSES on Sun 3/31 at 11:59pm

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**PART IV:**  
**20th Century Approaches**  
*Religion After The Death of God*

**WEEK 12**  
4/1

**Psychoanalytic & Critical Approach**

- The Origins of Religious Sentiment
- The Role of Religion in Civilization
- Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*
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- Religion and the Truth Value of its Illusions
- Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*

**WEEK 13**  
4/8 & 4/10

**Sociological Approach**

- Religion and World Construction

• Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*

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- Discussion Board 6 OPENS on Tues 4/9 at 12am
  - Discussion Board 6 CLOSES on Wed 4/10 at 11:59pm

**WEEK 14**  
4/15 & 4/17

**Existential Theological Approach**

- Redefining Faith in Existential Terms

• Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*

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- Fifth Quiz OPENS on Sat 4/20 at 12am
  - Fifth Quiz CLOSES on Sun 4/21 at 11:59pm

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**PART V:**

**Festivity & Community**

*Spaces of Celebration and Rituals of Resistance*

**WEEK 15**  
4/22 & 4/24

**Festivity**

- Religion as Play and Festival

• Pieper, *In Tune with the World*

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- Discussion Board 7 OPENS on Tues 4/23 at 12am
  - Discussion Board 7 CLOSES on Wed 4/24 at 11:59pm

**WEEK 16**  
4/29 & 5/1

**Womanism**

- Religion as Liberation
- Becoming Critical & Charitable
- Conclusions

• Cannon, *Katie's Canon*

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- Essay written *in-class* during your last Discussion Section  
You must bring an 11 x 8.5 Blue Book

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**Course Requirements & Evaluations Criteria:**

Three factors will be used to determine the student's final grade: 1) Seven online **Discussion Boards** (eLearning), 2) Five **Quizzes** (eLearning), and 3) an **Essay** (In-Class). You can earn a maximum of **1,000 points** in the course:

|                              |     |  |
|------------------------------|-----|--|
| <b>Discussion Boards (7)</b> | 35% | 350 points (50 points possible for <i>each</i> Discussion Board) |
| <b>Quizzes (5)</b>           | 50% | 500 points (100 points possible for <i>each</i> Quiz)            |
| <b>Essay</b>                 | 15% | 150 points   |

**Grade Scale/Key:**

| <b>Letter</b> | <b>Percentage</b> | <b>Points Earned</b> |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| A+            | 100%              | 1,000 points         |
| A             | 90-99%            | 900-999 points       |
| B+            | 89%               | 890-899 points       |
| B             | 80-88%            | 800-889 points       |
| C+            | 79%               | 790-799 points       |
| C             | 70-78%            | 700-789 points       |
| D+            | 69%               | 690-699 points       |
| D             | 60-68%            | 600-689 points       |
| F             | 00-59%            | 000-599 points       |

Note: The final grade (point total) will be rounded up at .5

*Example:* A total of 795 points, or 79.5%, will be rounded up to 80%, or "B"

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**More Information about Assignments:**

- 1) **Discussion Boards:** *students will post at least FIVE times for EACH Discussion Board in eLearning* (there will be seven discussion boards in total). The first post (or “reply”) for each Discussion Board will be in response to the prompt (or question), while the second through fifth posts will be responses to other students. **Each of the five posts must be at least 100+ words to get full credit.** Each post/reply is worth 10 pts (up to a maximum of 50 pts for all five), though students are encouraged to post as many times as they would like beyond the five required. **To get full credit:** it must be clear that, whatever your position or argument, your posts are informed by the readings. If you are not referencing the readings or engaging other students, **you will not get credit for this assignment.** Each discussion board will OPEN on a Tuesday at 12:00am and CLOSE 48 hours later on Wednesday at 11:59pm (sharp). See the Course Calendar for specific due dates.

**To sum up:**

- FIVE posts in total for *each* of the FIVE Discussion Boards
  - Each post must be at least 100+ words
  - First post replies to the prompt itself, second through fifth posts respond to other students
  - Your posts must reference/use the assigned readings and engage directly with your peers
- 2) The five **Quizzes** will be online through eLearning, multiple choice, and will be based upon the lectures and assigned readings. Quizzes will be released (“**OPENS**”) at 12:00am on the scheduled date, a Saturday, and be available for 48 hours, closing (“**CLOSES**”) at 11:59pm 48 hours later on a Sunday. Quizzes will have **10 questions** and a **30-minute time limit**. See Course Calendar for specific dates.
  - 3) The **Essay** will occur during the last week of the semester. It will be *written in class* during the Discussion Section of week 16. Students will have 45 minutes to compose a 750-word essay. **Students must bring their own 11x8.5 Blue Book** (which are available at the UTD bookstore and library) **and a pen.** *The essay must be legible.* Students will select one of two prompt (which will not be given in advance), and whichever one they select they must: a) list and explain 3-5 key concepts associated with the thinker and readings listed in the prompt, b) provide a defensible argument in response to the prompt (i.e., not just baseless claims and opinions), and c) demonstrate an ability to reflect thoughtfully upon the social and ethical implications of the course material. This is a closed notes and closed book assignment. The essay (Blue Book) must be turned in at the end of the discussion section.

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**USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES:** Unless a student has been granted an accommodation by the AccessAbility Resource Center (ARC), **the use of electronic devices during class is prohibited**—no phones, laptops, headphones, earbuds, e-readers, etc. After one warning, students will be considered in violation of Section C 18 and 19 of the Student Code of Conduct.

**ATTENDANCE:** Attendance and participation are required. Students who *miss 7 classes—including discussion sections—will have their final grade reduced by one letter* and students who *miss 12 classes will automatically fail the course.* If the student provides legitimate documentation for absences due to illness, family emergencies, or official university activities, those absences will not count toward this total.

**NOTE: Plagiarism,** including use of **ChatGPT** or any **artificial intelligence**—or *any form* of cheating on any assignment for this course—is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and will be reported. Students who violate these rules will **automatically fail the course.** What you turn in must be your own work. There are no exceptions and ignorance is not an excuse.

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**Make Up Work & Extra Credit:** *There is no “make-up work” or “extra credit” opportunities.* However, students may request to submit ONE *replacement essay* for any assignment they underperformed on. This essay would replace either one Quiz grade (worth up to 100 points) OR one Discussion Board (worth up to 50 points) of their choice. No reason needs to be provided. The replacement essay cannot be used for the Essay. The request must be received by your TA before 11:59pm on Friday 4/26 (although this request can be made earlier). The professor

or TA will customize and provide a prompt specifically for the student corresponding to the material covered for the quiz grade OR discussion board that they wish to replace. This essay must be a minimum of 750 words (though students should ideally aim for closer to 1,000 words) and cite from the assigned course materials using MLA or Chicago rules of style. This essay is due at the start of your last discussion section on 5/3. *Late and/or emailed replacement essays will not be accepted.* Full credit is not guaranteed; rather, the essay will be awarded a number of points commensurate with its merits. The class policies on plagiarism and cheating apply for the replacement essay.

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*So, In a Nutsbell...*

### **HOW THIS COURSE WORKS**

- You are expected to obtain all of the **required texts** for this course and read them in accord with the dates outlined in the Course Calendar above where the readings for each week are specified, along with assignments
- Attend the main lecture and your discussion section
- There are 1) **Seven Discussion Boards** (one every other week), 2) **Five Quizzes**, and 3) one **Essay**—*you are responsible for completing these assignments*
- To get full credit for assignments you must *follow the instructions* for each assignment (see above) and *turn it in on time*
- If you have any questions, check the syllabus first to see if it has what you're looking for. If it doesn't, email your TA for help. If you still need help then feel free to email me: follow the email policy outlined above under Professor Contact Information
- Keep an eye out for announcements from the Professor or your TA

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Like many other philosophy courses with new (and often demanding) readings every week and multiple assignments throughout the semester, you'll need a healthy degree of self-discipline: the ability to set and keep a reasonable schedule, making time to read and review throughout the week, taking notes while you read and during lectures and discussions, class attendance and participation, staying aware of deadlines, paying attention to details, etc. While certain weeks have more reading than others, the workload for this class is generally very manageable by design. There is, however, very little time to slack off—you can easily fall behind—so you must organize your time well and commit to being meaningfully involved in the class. If you do the things that I've mentioned here you will learn a lot about philosophy, the world, and yourself—and more than likely have a good time in the process!

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### **Additional Resources**

#### **Student Code of Conduct**

<https://policy.utdallas.edu/utdsp5003>

#### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

<https://studentaccess.utdallas.edu>

#### **Students in Recovery**

<https://recovery.utdallas.edu>