



Course Syllabus

Course	PHIL 1305 <i>Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion</i>
Professor	Dr. Andy Amato
Term	Spring 2025
Meetings	Monday & Wednesday 1 - 1:50pm JO 3.516

Professor Contact Information & Email Protocol

The best way to contact me is by email: 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 Tuesdays from 3-4pm in JO 5.704 and by appointment.

TA Contact Information

Discussion Section	Teachings Assistant	Email
Sections 201 and 202	Coco Gagnet	Coco.Gagnet@utdallas.edu
Sections 203 and 204	Jeongmi Hwang	jeongmi.hwang@utdallas.edu

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

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.

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.

We will provide students with several **HANDOUTS** throughout the semester. Students will be provided with only one copy of each handout. Students must:

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

COURSE CALENDAR

PART I: The Ancient World *Piety, Providence, & Peace*

	<u>Topics, Activities, & Assignments</u>	<u>Your Weekly Readings</u>
WEEK 1 1/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome & Syllabus Review• What is Philosophy of Religion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i>
WEEK 2 1/27	Socratic Piety & Stoic Providence <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plato & Socratic Piety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i>
1/29	— <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stoic conception of Divinity & Providence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seneca, <i>On Providence</i>
WEEK 3 2/3	Stoic Providence & The Christian Gospel <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stoic conception of Divinity & Providence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seneca, <i>On Providence</i> continued
2/5	— <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early Christian Social Gospel• Radical Subordination (a Great Refusal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sermon on the Plain and The Kingdom of God
	— <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Short Essay on Friday 2/7	

PART II: Medieval & Early Modern *Can We Prove God's Existence?*

WEEK 4 2/10	Medieval Philosophical Arguments for God's Existence <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anselm's Ontological Argument (and Gaunilo's Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medieval Arguments
2/12	— <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aquinas' Cosmological Argument• Duns Scotus' Cosmological Argument	
WEEK 5 2/17	Modern Philosophical Arguments & Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descartes' Ontological Argument• Kant's Moral Argument	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modern Arguments
2/19	— <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pascal's Pragmatic Argument• Hume on Evil and Miracles	
	— <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second Short Essay on Friday 2/21	

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

WEEK 6 2/24 & 2/26	American Religion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Against Traditional Religion	• Emerson, <i>An Address</i>
WEEK 7 3/3 & 3/5	American Spirituality <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emerson's Religion	• Emerson, <i>The Over-Soul</i>
WEEK 8 3/10	Proto-Existentialism & Religion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kierkegaard's Knight of Faith	• Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i>
3/12	• Dostoyevsky's critique of Institutional Religion	• Dostoyevsky, <i>The Grand Inquisitor</i> (video)

WEEK 9
3/17 & 3/19

S P R I N G B R E A K

WEEK 10 3/24	The Death of God <ul style="list-style-type: none">• God's Place in Contemporary Society	• Nietzsche, <i>The Gay Science</i>
3/26	• Overcoming Christian Nihilism	• Nietzsche, <i>The Anti-Christ</i>
WEEK 11 3/31	Religion & Power (& Peace) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• God's Place in Contemporary Society	• Nietzsche, <i>The Anti-Christ</i> continued
4/2	• Patriotism and Violence	• Tolstoy, <i>On Patriotism</i>
	• Third Short Essay on Friday 4/4	

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

WEEK 12 4/7	Psychoanalytic & Critical Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Origins of Religious Sentiment• The Role of Religion in Civilization	• Freud, <i>Civilization and Its Discontents</i>
4/9	• Religion and the Truth Value of its Illusions	• Marcuse, <i>Eros and Civilization</i>
WEEK 13 4/14 & 4/16	Sociological Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Religion and World Construction	• Berger, <i>The Sacred Canopy</i>
WEEK 14 4/21 & 4/23	Existential Theological Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redefining Faith in Existential Terms	• Tillich, <i>Dynamics of Faith</i>
	• Fourth Short Essay on Friday 4/25	

PART V:
Festivity & Community
Spaces of Celebration and Rituals of Resistance

WEEK 15 4/28 & 4/30	Festivity • Religion as Play and Festival	• Pieper, <i>In Tune with the World</i>
WEEK 16 5/5	Womanism • Religion as Liberation • Becoming Critical & Charitable	• Cannon, <i>Katie's Canon</i>
5/7	— • Conclusions — • Fifth Short Essay on Friday 5/9 — • FINAL EXAM on Wednesday 5/14 from 1-2:45pm in JO 3.516	

Course Requirements & Evaluations Criteria:

Two factors will be used to determine the student's final grade: 1) Five short **Essays** (in-class) and 2) One **Exam** (in-class). You can earn a maximum of **1,000 points** in the course:

Short Essays (5)	50%	500 points (100 points possible for <i>each</i> short essay)
Exam	50%	500 points

Grade Scale/Key:

Letter	Percentage	Points Earned
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"

More Information about Assignments:

1) Short Essays | You will write five short in-class essays throughout the semester. You will be given a prompt at the start of your discussion section that will require you to recall and correctly use multiple key concepts from the readings and lectures as well as to formulate a basic thesis upon which you elaborate and provide convincing arguments and interpretations. You must write at least 500-750 or about 2-3 pages with average handwriting size. We will provide you with paper, but you must bring a pen or pencil. It will be closed book and closed notes. You will have a forty-minute time limit. Please note that if you are late to class, you will not be given extra time. Each short essay is worth up to one hundred points.

2) Final Exam | You will have one final exam. The Day, Time, and Location are TBD. You will be given passages for which you must correctly identify the author and title of the work it came from. There will be philosophers listed for which you must give the correct century in which they were active and the movement/s with which they are associated. There will be key concepts listed for which you must give a brief explanation. And there will be a prompt for a short essay (which will have the same requirements as the regular short essay assignments). It will be closed book and closed notes. You will have a 1 hour and 45 minute time to complete

the exam. Please note that if you are late to the final, you will not be given extra time. The exam is worth up to five hundred points.

GRADING: Any assignment that meets the formal requirements for that assignment (word count, completed on time, is on topic, etc.) will not receive less than half credit.

Make Up Work/Extra Credit: There is no “make-up work” or “extra credit” for this course. Students may, however, request one **replacement essay** for one of their short essays. It will be worth up to one hundred points. No reason needs to be provided to request the replacement essay. The replacement essay cannot be used for the exam. The request must be received by your TA no later than May 2nd though you can make the request earlier. Your TA will customize a prompt specifically for you corresponding to the material covered for the short essay you wish to replace — but it will not be the same prompt as the original short essay. The replacement essay must be written in person during your TA’s office hour. The replacement essay has the same criteria as a short essay. You must write 500-750 words or about 2-3 pages with average handwriting size. It is a closed book and closed notes exercise. You will have forty-minutes.

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: Notwithstanding legitimately documented illness, family emergencies, and official university activities, attendance and active participation are required for this course. Students who miss 6 classes (twenty percent of the course) will have their final grade dropped one complete letter grade. Students who miss 9 or more classes (thirty percent of the course) will automatically fail the course. Students who arrive 10 minutes late and/or leave 10 minutes early will be counted absent.

NOTE: Plagiarism, including use of ChatGPT or any artificial intelligence, using any notes, handouts, or electronic devices during the essays or the exam—*any form* of cheating whatsoever on any assignment for this course—is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and will be reported. Additionally, students who violate these policies will **automatically receive 0 pints for the assignment**, *which they will not be allowed to makeup with a replacement essay*. There are no exceptions to these policies and ignorance is not an excuse.

So, In a Nutshell...

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) **Five Short Essays** (in-class), and 2) **One Exam** (in-class)—*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.

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!

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>