

**Philosophy 3600-1**  
Philosophy of Religion  
**TA: Reece Newman**

**Instructor: Deen Chatterjee**  
University of Utah

## **GOD, FAITH, AND REASON**

### **Texts:**

- (1) *God, Reason, and Religion*, Steven Cahn (2006)
- (2) *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion* (7<sup>th</sup> edition), David Stewart (2010)

### **Course Description:**

The course examines the meaning and limitations of some of the central concepts and beliefs in the philosophical and public discourse on the question of God's existence. The debate, issues, and arguments are as old as human civilization. The course looks at the contemporary and early modern versions of this debate that are informed by developments in science and philosophy. The main issues cluster around whether God exists and how we claim to know about it. If one were to rationally believe that God exists, such belief needs to be supported by good arguments. The course looks into a host of arguments to examine the validity of such belief claims.

The course also examines the role of faith. It analyzes the epistemic status of theistic faith, explores what differentiates faith from dogma, and defines blind faith vs. reasonable faith. One important goal of the course is to examine how faith and reason interact when it comes to believing in God.

Beliefs about God have a significant impact on people's private and public lives. As the course examines the topic of God, faith, and reason, it seeks to investigate how one's belief about God may relate to morality and to one's search for meaning in life. These are the two most common arenas where how one stands on the issue of God's existence makes an important difference.

In addition, the course explores the role of religion in the public sphere in a liberal democracy. This is a contentious issue made especially acute in recent days.

The course focuses primarily on the Judeo-Christian religious thought, though it looks into other religious traditions as needed.

### **Schedule:**

Jan. 11, 13, 15:	Introduction
	<b>Proving God's existence</b>
Jan. 20, 22, 25, 27, 29; Feb. 1:	Text 1, ch. 1; Text 2, ch. 5
	<b>Proving God's non-existence</b>
Feb. 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 17, 19:	Text 1, chs. 2, 3, 4, 5; Text 2, ch. 5
Feb. 22:	First midterm
	<b>Faith and reason</b>
Feb. 24, 26; March 1, 3, 5,	
March 8, 10, 12, 15:	Text 1, chs. 6, 7, 8, 9; Text 2, ch. 6
March 17:	Second midterm
	<b>God and morality</b>
March 19, 29, 31; April 2, 5, 7:	Text 1, chs. 10, 11, 12, 13; Text 2, ch. 2
	Term paper assignment given out in class on April 7
	<b>God and human destiny</b>

April 9, 12, 14 : Text 1, chs. 14, 15, 16; Text 2, ch. 3  
**God and politics**  
 April 16, 19, 21, 23, 26: Text 2, ch. 7  
 April 28: Third midterm; term paper due in class today

**Classroom Format:**

The class format consists of a mixture of lecture and discussion. The instructor will present all sides of an argument to facilitate meaningful dialogue. Students are encouraged to ask questions and raise issues related to the class topics. The course seeks to motivate students to engage in thoughtful dialogue, not simply jump to a quick conclusion. Though the course may help the student to find out where she or he may stand on the question of God and religion, that is a personal matter left entirely to the student.

Cell phone use and texting are prohibited in class. Laptops are allowed only for course-related work.

**Grading Procedure and Work Required:**

There will be three (3) midterm exams on pre-assigned dates (see schedule) and a term paper. Midterm #1 will count 15% toward the course grade, midterm #2 20%, and midterm #3 25%. The term paper will count 25% and is due in class on April 28. Each midterm will be held in class, will require answering one question out of two, and will be in essay format. Midterm questions and paper topics will be drawn from class lectures, discussions, and required readings.

Grades for the midterms and the paper will be determined by the clarity, coherence, and accuracy of your ideas and by the depth of your analysis.

Students are required to take the midterms and turn in the paper as scheduled. A missed midterm must be made up within a week and at a time that coincides with the instructor's office hour. Students can make up a missed exam no more than once. Any missed exam that is not made up will automatically fetch a fail grade. The term paper is due on the assigned date: no exception!

Fifteen percent (15%) of the course grade is set aside for class participation. Regular class attendance is required along with participation in class discussions. If one misses more than six (6) unexcused class sessions, one loses all credit for this segment of the course grade.

**Please Note:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact the Center for Disability Services (162 Union Building) if you will need any such accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

For attendance details, please visit <http://www.acsutah.edu/sched/handbook/attend.htm>

For academic honesty policies, please visit <http://www.sa.utah.edu/code/>

Drop/Withdrawal and Other Important Dates:

<http://www.saff.utah.edu/regist/calendar/datesDeadlines/fall2004.htm>