PHIL3030 - Reason and Religion
Course Outline

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Course Overview
Semester: Semester 2 - 2007
Unit Weighting: 10
Teaching Methods: Lecture

Brief Course Description
Examines a number of issues in philosophical theology which came to the fore in the medieval and early modern periods. Issues to be discussed may include proofs for the existence of God, the nature of deity, God's knowledge of the future and predestination, the nature of religion, the relation of religion and science, and the sources of the concept of deity. Philosophers and theologians to be considered in the discussion of one or more of these issues may include St Thomas Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Descartes, the Cambridge Platonists, Locke and Hume.

Contact Hours
Lecture for 2 Hours per Week for the Full Term

Learning Materials/Texts
A significant proportion of the suggested reading will be placed on blackboard.

Course Objectives
(1) Impart to students familiarity with, and knowledge of, the main issues addressed and approaches taken by Western philosophers and theologians in the medieval and early modern periods.

(2) Impart to students critical skills to deal with these issues in their historical forms and to prepare them to employ these approaches in their assessment of the current philosophical discussion of these matters.

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at: Week 1, Semester 2 - 2007

CTS Download Date: 26 June 2007
Develop high level written and oral skills in understanding and presenting philosophical issues in their historical contexts.

Develop an understanding and appreciation of the ways in which historical context can help generate but not exhaust the ways in which an issue can appear and reappear in the history of philosophy.

**Course Content**
The content focuses on the presentation of particular issues in philosophical theology as they came into prominence in the medieval and early modern period. The issues are those surrounding the existence, nature, and attributes of God, the source of the concept of God, the nature of religion, ways of understanding the relation between God and the created order from a scientific perspective. There will be some variation in emphases within this framework from year to year as appropriate to student needs. The lectures and discussions in class will focus on interpreting the texts, examining the philosophic issues, discussing how the historical context helps shape the issues, and indicating the contemporary relevance of the matters discussed.

**Assessment Items**

| Essays / Written Assignments | 2 x 2000 word essays, worth 50% each; the first due week 8, the second at the end of semester. |

**Assumed Knowledge**
At least 10 units of PHIL courses at 1000 level, or 40 units of any courses at any level.

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**Plagiarism**

University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. A student plagiarises if he or she presents the thoughts or works of another as one’s own. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

- copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;
- using another's ideas without due acknowledgment;
- working with others without permission and presenting the resulting work as though it was completed independently.

Plagiarism is not only related to written works, but also to material such as data, images, music, formulae, websites and computer programs.

Aiding another student to plagiarise is also a violation of the Plagiarism Policy and may invoke a penalty.

For further information on the University policy on plagiarism, please refer to the Policy on Student Academic Integrity at the following link -


The University has established a software plagiarism detection system called Turnitin. When you submit assessment items please be aware that for the purpose of assessing any assessment item the University may -

- Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or
· Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a plagiarism checking service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking).

· Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

Written Assessment Items

Students may be required to provide written assessment items in electronic form as well as hard copy.

Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations

Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date, as advised in the Course Outline, unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension of time for submission of the item. University policy is that an assessment item submitted after the due date, without an approved extension, will be penalised.

Any student:

1. who is applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or

2. whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment;

must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, to the appropriate officer following the instructions provided in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Procedure - Policy 000641.

Note: different procedures apply for minor and major assessment tasks.

Please go to the Policy at http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html for further information, particularly for information on the options available to you.

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

· Requests for Special Consideration must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.

· Requests for Extensions of Time on Assessment Items must be lodged no later than the due date of the item.

· Requests for Rescheduling Exams must be received in the Student Hub no later than ten working days prior the first date of the examination period

Your application may not be accepted if it is received after the deadline. Students who are unable to meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak to their Program Officer in the first instance.

Changing your Enrolment

The last dates to withdraw without financial or academic penalty (called the HECS Census Dates) are:

For semester 1 courses: 31 March 2007
For semester 2 courses: 31 August 2007
For Trimester 1 courses: 16 February 2007
For Trimester 2 courses: 8 June 2007

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of semester. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of semester will result in a fail grade.

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of semester/trimester, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of semester/trimester must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs.

To change your enrolment online, please refer to
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/enrolment/changingenrolment.html

**Faculty Information**

The Student Hubs are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students on campus.

The four Student Hubs are located at:

**Callaghan campus**
- Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Union Building
- Hunter Hub: Student Services Centre, Hunter side of campus

**City Precinct**
- City Hub & Information Common: University House, ground floor in combination with an Information Common for the City Precinct

**Ourimbah campus**
- Ourimbah Hub: Administration Building

**Faculty websites**

- Faculty of Business and Law
- Faculty of Education and Arts
  http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/
- Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment
  http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/engineering/
- Faculty of Health
  http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/health/
- Faculty of Science and Information Technology
  http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/science-it/

**Contact details**

Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie
Various services are offered by the University Student Support Unit:  

Alteration of this Course Outline

No change to this course outline will be permitted after the end of the second week of the term except in exceptional circumstances and with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of any approved changes to this outline.

Web Address for Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards  

Web Address for Rules Governing Postgraduate Academic Awards  

Web Address for Rules Governing Professional Doctorate Awards  

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

The University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic illness.

If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies, please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator.

Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register please contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, or via email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au

As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester.

For more information related to confidentiality and documentation please visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website at: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability

Studentmail and Blackboard: Refer - www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/
This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

**Further Information**

Details about a range of topics are available on your course Blackboard site (where relevant). Refer - [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)

(Additional information)

**SCHEDULE OF LECTURES**

**WEEK ONE:**
Introductory issues
- The place of religion in today’s world.
  - The influence of Religion
  - Attacks on religion
  - Reason and Religion
Is religious belief rationally justifiable?

Arguments for the existence of God - I:
- The first cause argument
- The argument from contingency
- Aquinas and the “five ways”.

**WEEK TWO:**
Arguments for the existence of God - II:
- The arguments from design, Hume’s criticisms
  - Darwin, evolution and the argument from design
- Intelligent design. The controversy over intelligent design.
  - Is it science? Ought it be taught as science?
- Modern versions of the argument from design from theoretical physics.

**WEEK THREE:**
Arguments for the existence of God - III:
- The ontological argument. Anselm’s initial statement of the argument.
  - The criticisms of Kant and Gaunilo. Modern versions of the argument.
  - Norman Malcolm and necessary existence.

**WEEK FOUR:**
Arguments for the existence of God - IV:
- The Moral Argument
- The argument from our knowledge of other minds.
- The argument from miracles. Are miracles a conceptual possibility?
WEEK FIVE:
Attempts to justify belief in God by appeal to practical rationality.
*Pascal’s wager
*William James and the will to believe.

WEEK SIX:
Attempts to disprove the existence of God - I
The problem of evil.
* Attempts to solve the problem of evil
*Should the concept of God be modified in response to the problem of evil?

WEEK SEVEN:
Attempts to disprove the existence of God - II
*Is the notion of God logically coherent?
*Mackie on omnipotence
*Omniscience. God and foreknowledge. Freewill.

WEEK EIGHT:
Arguments against the existence of God
*Attempts to explain religion psychologically or sociologically:
  Durkheim and Freud.
*Dawkins and the “meme” of religion

WEEK NINE:
Arguments against the existence of God.
*The irrationality of religious belief. Clifford and the ethics of belief.

WEEK TEN:
Appeals to religious experience and emotion rather than reason - I
*Taylor and the argument from religious experience.
  Otto on the nature of religious experience.
*Martin Buber “On Meeting God”, I-It and I-Thou.

WEEK ELEVEN:
Appeals to religious experience and emotion rather than reason - II
*Plantinga and the claim that, for the believer, belief in God is properly basic. The claim that “there is no need for an argument”. The “Great Pumpkin” Objection.
*Tillich on the nature of our knowledge of God.

WEEK TWELVE:
The idea that rationality is irrelevant to religious belief - I
*Kierkegaard on the absurdity of religious belief.
  The idea that one proves one’s faith by believing that which one knows to be absurd.
Reason as irrelevant to religious belief. Subjectivity and objectivity in Kierkegaard.

WEEK THIRTEEN:
The idea that rationality is irrelevant to religious belief - II

“Wittgenstein. Religious belief as a form of life.
Wittgensteinian “fideism”