



HARDING SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

5520 FAITH AND REASON, Fall 2017, Thurs. 8:15-10:55 a.m.
Prof. Mark E. Powell

Course description

A study of the nature of knowledge and justification (epistemology) and the rationality of religious belief. Topics to be considered include the nature of religious language, the coherence of the concept of God, the problem of evil, religious experience, intellectual virtue, and the theological significance of recent developments in epistemology.

Course objectives

1. Exhibit an understanding of foundational concepts in epistemology and contemporary proposals on the rationality of religious belief.
2. Carefully present and critically interact with influential proposals on the rationality of religious belief.
3. Develop and present a position on the rationality of religious belief.

Required textbooks

W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

William J. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

Textbooks can now be ordered through a link on the [HST website](#). The Textbooks tab can be viewed on the navigation bar on any page of the website. Check the book list provided under the Textbooks tab (<http://hst.edu/students/textbook-services/>) for correct ISBN's and editions to insure correct ordering. A link provided there will take you to Amazon where you will only need to enter the ISBN to order your books. By going through our website, HST will receive some credit from the order. Thanks for your support.

Additional readings, course notes, a place to submit assignments, and grades are available on Canvas. To access the Canvas course page, go to <http://elearning.harding.edu>.

Accessibility

HST professors are accessible to local and distance students. Please use the following to arrange appointments with me (in person or by phone):

Email: mpowell@harding.edu

Office Phone Number: (901) 432-7725

Office: Ijams Administration Building 209

Requirements and grading

1. Reading of assigned texts and class participation

2. Two seminar papers (40%)

3. Mid-term exam (20%)

4. Take-home final exam (40%)

Grading scale: 100-90 (A), 89-80 (B), 79-75 (C), 74-70 (D), 69 and below (F)

All readings and papers should be completed before the session for which they are assigned. Reading and class participation, or lack thereof, may have a positive or negative effect on the final grade of up to five points.

Credit Hour Workload

For every course credit hour, the typical student should expect to spend at least three clock hours per week of concentrated attention on course-related work, including but not limited to time attending class, as well as out-of-class time spent reading, reviewing, organizing notes, preparing for upcoming quizzes/exams, problem solving, developing and completing projects, and other activities that enhance learning. Thus, for a three-hour course, a typical student should expect to spend at least nine hours per week dedicated to the course.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of Harding University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to contact Steve McLeod, the Associate Dean, at 901-761-1353.

Library Resources

If you have not taken 5990 (Advanced Theological Research) or 5770 (Research in Counseling), or took either class more than a year ago, go to the HST Web site (www.hst.edu) for information concerning library services to students. Under the “library” tab you will find a link to and instructions for searching the HST online catalog. There are also instructions for using the following databases available through the library: OCLC FirstSearch, EBSCOhost, Infotrac, PsycINFO, and Religious and Theological Abstracts. Contact the library for passwords to these databases. Also available are the research guides distributed in 5990 and 5770. These annotated bibliographies list basic tools you will find helpful in your research.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty in all its forms is inconsistent with Christian faith and practice, and will result in penalties which could include a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, dismissal from the course, and even dismissal from the school.

Class schedule

I. INTRODUCTION

Aug. 24 Introduction to the course

Aug. 31 Concepts in epistemology

- (1) Wood, chaps. 1, 4; pp. 105-119, 126-138, 154-162.
- (2) Roderick Chisholm, *The Problem of the Criterion* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1973), 1-21.

Sept. 7 The nature of religious language

- (1) A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1952), chaps. 1, 6.
- (2) *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London: SCM Press, 1955), 96-108.
- (3) Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and the Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations"* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 77-125.
- (4) Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), 27-38.

PART II. CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO RELIGIOUS EPISTEMOLOGY

Sept. 14 Hard rationalism

- (1) Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong, chaps. 1-3.
- (2) "Richard Swinburne, on 'The Probability of the Resurrection'" (handout)

Sept. 21 Atheism and the problem of evil

- (1) Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong, chaps. 4-6.

Sept. 28 Mid-term exam

Oct. 5 Reformed epistemology

- (1) Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*.

Oct. 12 Religious experience

- (1) William Alston, "Christian Experience and Christian Belief" in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 103-134.
- (2) R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman, eds., *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), chaps. 22, 24.

- Oct. 19 Philosophical and theological coherentism
 (1) R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman, eds., *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology*, chaps. 5, 6, 8.
 (2) Bruce D. Marshall, "What is Truth?" *Pro Ecclesia* 4 (1995): 404-430.
- Oct. 26 Soft rationalism
 (1) Basil Mitchell, *The Justification of Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), part II.
 (2) William Abraham, "Soft Rationalism" in *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 2nd ed., eds. Michael Peterson, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 98-108.
- Nov. 2 Virtue and epistemology
 (1) Wood, chaps. 2, 3, 6.2, 8
 (2) Linda Zagzebski, "Religious Knowledge and the Virtues of the Mind" in *Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology*, ed. Linda Zagzebski (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 199-225.
- III. SPECIAL TOPICS
- Nov. 9 Theology and epistemology
 (1) Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation*.
- Nov. 16 Science and religion
 (1) Collins, *The Language of God*.
- Nov. 23 THANKSGIVING
- Nov. 30 Cognitive science and religious belief
 (1) Paul Bloom, "Is God an Accident?" *Atlantic Monthly* (December 2005): 105-112.
 (2) Stephen T. Davis, "Can Cognitive Science Explain Religion?" in *Rational Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016), 101-120.
- Dec. 7 Take home final exam due

Seminar papers

Students are required to lead two class discussions by presenting a paper, five-six pages in length, on the readings assigned for the session. The papers should strike a balance between careful exposition of the readings, critical evaluation, and constructive suggestion. In addition, two questions for class discussion should be included at the end of the paper.

Seminar papers are due by 12:00 p.m. noon (CST) on the Wednesday before they are presented. Papers that are not turned in by this time will be penalized 10 points. The

seminar paper should be submitted as a Word or PDF document in Canvas. All students should carefully read the seminar papers before the class meeting.

Students are expected to revise seminar papers in light of class discussion and comments from the professor. A revised version of the seminar paper, submitted in Canvas, is due before the beginning of the next class session. Late papers will receive one point off per day late (excluding Sundays) for the first three days, and then three points off per day late, up to 20 points.

Seminar paper grading rubric

Criterion	Above Expectations Grade of A	Meets Expectations Grade of B or C	Below Expectations Grade of D or F
Exposition of primary sources	Demonstrates careful reading and presentation of course readings; highlights the key issues beings addressed.	Demonstrates adequate reading and presentation of course readings; may miss a one or more key issues being addressed.	Demonstrates shallow reading and presentation of course readings; may miss multiple key issues being addressed.
Critical analysis	Strong critical interaction with the readings and key proposals.	Adequate critical interaction with the readings and key proposals.	Shallow and uncritical interaction with the readings and key proposals.

Final exam

The final exam will be a take-home, open-book exam. Completed exams should be submitted in Canvas by Thursday, Dec. 7. Late papers will receive one point off per day late (excluding Sundays) for the first three days, and then three points off per day late, up to 20 points.

Recommended resources

Robert Audi, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010).

Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Edward Craig, ed., *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

_____, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 10 vols. (New York: Routledge, 1998).

Paul Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 8 vols. (New York: Macmillan and The Free Press, 1967).

Use of technology

This course is supported with the video platform www.Zoom.us (for HST LIVE students) and Canvas (available at <http://elearning.harding.edu/>) to facilitate class participation. For new Zoom platform users, go to <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697-Getting-Started> for helpful video tutorials about using this platform.

Assignments in this course offer opportunities for students to demonstrate proficiency in the use of technology in the following ways:

- Use of library and electronic databases to do research
- Use of online technology for submissions and class participation

Equipment requirements for Zoom and HST LIVE:

1. Ear buds with microphone required. Apple Earbuds with mic have worked flawlessly and are required. (Apple MD827LL/A EarPods with Remote and Mic - Standard Packaging – White) Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Apple-MD827LL-EarPods-Remote-Mic/dp/B0097BEG1C/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1480536372&sr=8-1&keywords=Apple+MD827LL%2FA+EarPods+with+Remote+and+Mic+-+Standard+Packaging+-+White
2. Additional monitor for remote students required. Used monitor is okay.
3. Laptop or tablet with camera or desktop computer with camera. On-ground students are encouraged to bring their laptops with camera to class and connect to the Zoom meeting with their computer.
4. Internet access using a latest version of a web browser such as Firefox (preferred), Google Chrome, or Microsoft Internet Explorer.
5. Latest version of Zoom software. This does change periodically without notification.

Canvas can be accessed at <http://elearning.harding.edu/>. If you have problems gaining access to the Canvas system, contact technical support for students by calling (501) 279-4545. You will need your HST username and your password to log into Harding Pipeline. These are the same credentials you use to register for classes via Pipeline.

When you need to contact your professor via email about a class related issue, always use the email system contained in the Canvas learning management system. This provides a secure convenient means of tracking communication between you and your professor. Of course, there are many email providers, and many students and professors hold more than one email address. To promote timely and secure communication about class related issues, students and professors will only use Canvas email.

Harding University gives each student an email address that also utilizes your user name. For example, your instructor's email address is mpowell@harding.edu. Many students use other email addresses as their preferred address. You can set your Harding G-mail account to forward messages to an alternative email address if you want; however, it is your responsibility to check your Harding email account regularly because this is the official Harding email address to which all Harding-related email will be sent.