



HARDING SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

5520 FAITH AND REASON, Spring 2020 (January 13-17)

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, 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.

The course contributes to the following degree outcomes:

- Demonstrate the skills required for theological reflection. (M.Div.)
- Demonstrate the ability to integrate the scriptures and theological tradition with diverse contemporary cultural contexts. (M.A.C.M. and M.Div.)

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).

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.

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

Requirements and grading

1. Reading of assigned texts and class participation
2. Four essay papers (17.5% each)
3. One essay exam (30% each)

Grading scale: 100-93 (A), 92-84 (B), 83-75 (C), 74-70 (D), 69 and below (F)

Students should complete all readings before the session for which they are assigned and should be prepared to contribute to the discussion of the readings in class. Students may be penalized up to ten points (one letter grade) off the final grade for missing more than one class session or being late for more than two class sessions.

Late assignments will receive one point off per day late for the first three days, and then three points off per day late (excluding Sundays), up to 20 points total.

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.

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.

Class schedule

Class meeting times: Jan. 13-17

Session 1: 8:00-10:55 a.m.

Chapel: 11:00-11:30 a.m.

Session 2: 1:00-5:00 p.m.

Jan. 13

Lunch: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

All sessions, including daily chapel and Monday lunch, are course requirements that allow the course to meet contact hour requirements for accreditation.

I. NATURAL THEOLOGY AND ATHEOLOGY

Mon., Jan. 13

Session 1: Introduction to the course; concepts in epistemology

Session 2: Classic natural theology

(1) Wood, chaps. 1, 4; pp. 105-119, 126-138, 154-162.

(2) Anslem, *Prosologion*, in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, eds. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 82-104.

(3) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.2-4, 20-21, in *Aquinas on Nature and Grace*, ed. A.M. Fairweather (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 50-92.

(4) Alvin Plantinga, "A Contemporary Modal Version of the Ontological Argument," in *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 3rd ed., ed. Michael Peterson, *et. al.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 181-93.

Tues., Jan. 14

Session 1: Enlightenment theology and atheology

Session 2: Contemporary evidentialist discussion

(1) René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Part 4, in *Discourse on Method and Meditations*, trans. Laurence J. Lafleur (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1960), 24-30.

(2) David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 109-148.

(3) Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong, *God: A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*.

(4) "Richard Swinburne, on 'The Probability of the Resurrection'" (handout)

II. RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Wed., Jan. 15

Session 1: The nature of religious language

Session 2: Religious experience

(1) A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1952), 33-45, 102-120.

- (2) John Hick, "Theology and Verification," in *The Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Basil Mitchell (New York: Oxford, 1971), 53-71.
- (3) Antony Flew, R.M. Hare, and Basil Mitchell, "Theology and Falsification: A Symposium," in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London: SCM Press, 1955), 96-108.
- (4) D.Z. Phillips, "Religious Beliefs and Language Games," in *The Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Basil Mitchell (New York: Oxford, 1971), 121-142.
- (5) 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.
- (6) John Hick, "The Rationality of Religious Belief," in *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology*, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman (New York: Oxford University Press, 304-319).
- (7) Wayne Proudfoot, "Explaining Religious Experience," in *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology*, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman (New York: Oxford University Press, 336-352).

III. ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS

Thurs., Jan. 16 Session 1: Reformed epistemology
 Session 2: Theological coherentism; soft rationalism

- (1) Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*.
- (2) Bruce D. Marshall, "What is Truth?" *Pro Ecclesia* 4 (1995): 404-430.
- (3) Basil Mitchell, *The Justification of Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 39-95.

IV. VIRTUE AND DIVINE REVELATION

Fri., Jan. 17 Session 1: Virtue and epistemology
 Session 2: Epistemology and theology

- (1) Wood, chaps. 2, 3, pp. 138-153, chap. 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.
- (3) "Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, on 'Intellectual Virtues'" (handout)
- (3) William J. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation*.

AFTER ON-CAMPUS SESSIONS

Jan. 24 Essay paper 1 due (Natural theology and atheology)

Jan. 31	Essay paper 2 due (Religious language and religious experience)
Feb. 7	Essay paper 3 due (Alternative proposals)
Feb. 14	Essay paper 4 due (Virtue and divine revelation)
Feb. 21	Final exam due

Essay papers

Students are required to write four essays, each 900-1200 words (or approximately 3-4 pages) in length. Essay questions will be posted on Canvas during the week of class. Each essay should be posted on Canvas by 11:59 p.m. (CST) on the due date listed in the class schedule.

Final exam

The final exam essay, 2400-3000 words (or approximately 8-10 pages) in length, will be posted on Canvas during the week of class. The final exam should be posted on Canvas by 11:59 p.m. (CST) on February 21.

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).