



HARDING SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

5520 FAITH AND REASON, Spring 2024, Mon. 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).

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>.

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 114

Requirements and grading

1. Reading of assigned texts and class participation
2. Two seminar papers (20%)
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)

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.

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 took it 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, and Religious and Theological Abstracts. Contact the library for passwords to these databases. Also available are the research guides distributed in 5990. 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

Jan. 8 Introduction to the course; concepts in epistemology
(1) Wood, pp. 7-32, 77-119, 126-138, 154-162

Jan. 15 NO CLASS: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

I. NATURAL THEOLOGY AND ATHEOLOGY

Jan. 22 Classic natural theology

- (1) Anselm, *Proslogion*, in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, eds. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 82-104.
- (2) 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.
- (3) Alvin Plantinga, "A Contemporary Modal Version of the Ontological Argument," in *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 4th ed., ed. Michael Peterson, et. al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 174-82.

Jan. 29 Enlightenment theology and atheology

- (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.

Feb. 5 Contemporary evidentialist discussion

- (1) Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong, pp. 3-78
- (2) "Richard Swinburne, on 'The Probability of the Resurrection'" (handout)

Feb. 12 Atheism and the problem of evil

- (1) Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong, pp. 81-150

II. RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Feb. 19 The nature of religious language

- (1) A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1952), 33-45, 102-120.
- (2) 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.
- (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.
- (5) D.Z. Phillips, "Religious Beliefs and Language Games," in *The Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Basil Mitchell (New York: Oxford, 1971), 121-142.

Feb. 26 NO CLASS: Intensive course week

Mar. 4 NO CLASS: Spring Break

Mar. 11 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) 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, 1992), 304-319.
- (3) Wayne Proudfoot, "Explaining Religious Experience," in *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology*, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 336-352.

Mar. 18 Mid-term exam

III. ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS

Mar. 25 Reformed epistemology

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

Apr. 1 Theological coherentism; soft rationalism

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

Apr. 8 Virtue and epistemology

- (1) Wood, pp. 33-76, 138-153, 175-196
- (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)

IV. EPISTEMOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

Apr. 15 Epistemology and theology

- (1) Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation*.

Apr. 22 Epistemology and theology: special issues

- (1) John Greco, "Knowledge of God" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, eds. William J. Abraham and Frederick D. Aquino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 9-29.
- (2) Paul K. Moser, "Paul the Apostle" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, 327-339.

- (3) Colin M. McGuigan and Brad J. Kallenberg, “Ecclesial Practices” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, 141-156.
- (4) Devin Singh, “Liberation Theology” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, 551-563.

Apr. 29 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 11:59 p.m. (CST) on the Saturday 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 Monday, April 29. 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

Canvas Online Learning System

In addition to the live video platform Zoom.us (see below), this course uses Harding's *Canvas Online Learning System*, which is accessed at <http://elearning.harding.edu>. If you have problems gaining access to Canvas, contact HU technical support (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, you may use the email system contained in the Canvas learning management system or email your professor directly at mpowell@harding.edu.

Harding University gives each student an email address that also utilizes your user name. 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.

HST Live Interactive Video Education (HST LIVE) via ZOOM

In addition to Canvas (see above), this HST-LIVE course is supported with the video platform Zoom.us. 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.

The HST LIVE/Zoom Meeting ID for this course can be found on Canvas.

Students new to HST LIVE should watch the HST LIVE orientation video before the first day of class. The HST LIVE orientation video can be found at <https://hst.edu/students/canvas-online-learning/>.

Equipment Requirements for LIVE Sections:

- Internet access using a latest version of a web browser such as Firefox (preferred).
- Latest version of Zoom software. This changes periodically without notification. If you already have Zoom, use that account. Basic Zoom.us is available free.
- Laptop or tablet with camera or desktop computer with camera.
- Ear buds with microphone – Apple EarPods with the appropriate connector/plug work well.
- Additional monitor – Live video conferencing is best facilitated with two monitors.

LIVE Etiquette:

- HST LIVE is a convenience for distance broadcast and attendance. In terms of responsibilities, it is no different than on-campus participation. Attendance at all class sessions is required just as if in residence on the Memphis campus.
- “Making up” a missed session by watching the recording will be granted only in extreme cases such as illness or family emergency (the same policy for those on the Memphis campus). Please make arrangements in your ministry context or employment to be in attendance for all scheduled sessions (e.g., a staff meeting is not an excused absence). The same applies to arriving late or leaving early.
- Be seated in an environment that approximates a classroom setting (for example, a chair at a desk in your office). Create a distraction free environment. It is not acceptable to sit or lie down on your bed or in a recliner, lounge on your deck or on the beach, or sit in a coffee shop, etc.
- Remain stationary at your computer during the class session except during breaks. If you must go to the restroom, mute your audio/video. Then return to your screen, un-mute, and resume the class.
- Arrange for your HST LIVE environment to be distraction free (for example, no family noise, TV, etc.).
- Failure to observe these and related etiquette matters will result in grade reductions at the professor’s sole discretion.