

PHILOSOPHY 23: Philosophy of Religion (Section 2861)

Dr. Dean Pickard
Santa Monica College

Fall 2010, T/Th 12:45-2:05, HSS 252
E-mail: pickard_dean@smc.edu, website: www.deanpickard.com

Course Description: This is an introduction to traditional and contemporary ways of understanding and thinking carefully about issues related to religious experience and belief. We will begin with a wider phenomenology of human experience and meaning from which religious meaning arises. During the course we will examine some of the major religious traditions of the world and examine such issues as the existence and nature of God, the problem of evil, problems in non theistic belief and mysticism, the rationality of religious belief, the relationship between reason and revelation, the difference between religious, scientific, and philosophical understanding, and the viability of any scientific and/or philosophical understanding of religion. This is a course in philosophy of religion, not a course in religion. However, some familiarity with religions is necessary. Thus, we will read Smith's *The World's Religions* and Novak's *The World's Wisdom* as background reading through the course.

What is Religion? How one should define *religion* is a matter of great controversy. The term itself (from Latin *re*: back or again, *ligare*: to connect) can indicate the attempt to reconnect to something that we might refer to as the *sacred*. Understanding the terms "religion" and "sacred" will be among the central goals of the course.

What is Philosophy? Philosophy is the activity of very carefully and rigorously questioning our most basic assumptions, habits, and beliefs in order to either better understand things for its own sake or in order to live a better life. Philosophy can be seen either as the pursuit of truth for its own sake or the pursuit of importance and meaning that makes a difference in human life. For most philosophers it was both. Philosophy (from Greek) literally means love (philos) of wisdom (sophia). It is reflection on the value and importance of our engagements in life. It is the activity of thinking very carefully and critically about such fundamental issues as self, society, reality, truth, meaning, value, reason, and philosophy itself. It is a passion for wisdom that engenders humility by revealing our ignorance. As Socrates tells us, the beginning of wisdom is the recognition of one's own ignorance. Wisdom is not knowledge, but as the word wisdom indicates, "seeing," in the metaphorical sense of seeing into things. Philosophy is typically divided into these areas: 1) Metaphysics (theories of reality), 2) Epistemology (theories of knowledge and truth), 3) Axiology (theories of value, including moral philosophy or ethics, and aesthetics) 4) Logic (study of the properties of consistent inference). Philosophy can also be divided according to topics, such as, philosophy of... art, religion, science, language, politics, etc. All labeling is for convenience and no label is finally sufficiently precise or fully adequate. Any philosophical question in some way presupposes or implies many others.

Grading: The course will not presuppose any background other than college level ability to read and write. Reading assigned material will be presupposed for each class. Attendance will be required for a grade. An incomplete (I) will only be given with good attendance and emergency circumstances. Possible quizzes. Writing: Four take home essay exams. A total of 7-10 essays. Of these, 3-5 will be graded, including your best work. Papers turned in ON TIME will be returned with a grade and comments normally within 2 weeks. Late papers may be turned in any time prior to the end of the semester and will be graded without penalty, but may not be returned. Papers may be rewritten but will not be returned with comments the second time.

Note: A) If you drop the class, do so officially or you could receive an F. **Drop Deadlines:** 9/20 w/o W, 10/24 w/W, 11/21 w/approval
B) You are subject to exclusion if you miss more than 4 hours of class. Following an absence, find out what you missed. Check the website regularly.
C) Late arrival or early departure: sit near the door. After arriving, do not leave and re-enter class except for emergencies.
D) **Beepers/cell phones** should be turned off **before** entering class.
E) Please see me first for help or complaints.

Course Texts/Reading:

1. Smith, Huston, *The World's Religions* (WR) (50th Anniversary Edition) HarperOne
2. Novak, Philip, *The World's Wisdom* (WW) HarperOne
3. Pickard, D., *The Eros Of Wisdom*: (Eros) On Website www.deanpickard.com
4. Russon, John, *Human Experience*. (HE) SUNY Press, 2003.
5. Miller, Jerome, *The Way of Suffering* (WS) (online at www.deanpickard.com)
6. Pickard, D., *Issues of Truth* (IOT) On Website www.deanpickard.com
7. Guerriere, D. *Truth Proper to Religion* (TPTR) On Website www.deanpickard.com
8. Taliaferro, C., *Philosophy of Religion*, (POR) Oneworld/Oxford, 2009. (\$10.17)
9. Siderits, M., *Buddhism as Philosophy*, (BAP) Hackett, 2007. (\$15.25)

Recommended:

10. Eliade, M., *The Sacred and the Profane*. (S&P) (Bookstore) (\$14.00)
11. Miller, Jerome, *In the Throes of Wonder* (ITOW) (Bookstore/online) (\$23.95)

Resources: Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://www.iep.utm.edu/> (see www.dean.pickard.com for extensive list)
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/> MIT <http://classics.mit.edu/>

Date	Topic	Reading
8/31, 9/2	Introduction, Philosophy, Religion, Interpretation	Eros, HE Ch 1, POR Ch 1, WR Int-Ch1, WS Int-1
9/7-9, 14-16	Phenomenology of Human Experience and Meaning: Embodiment, Memory	HE Ch 2-3
9/21-23	Phen of Human Exp: Others/intersubjectivity, Self/Neurosis	HE Ch 4-5, IOT
9/28-30	Personal Identity & Neurosis, Therapy, Education, Philosophy as Care	HE 5-6
FIRST ESSAY EXAM DUE 10/5		
10/5-7	Phenomenology of Religion: On the Way of Suffering, Wonder	WS,WR, WW, Internet Research
10/12-14, 19-21	Issues of Truth, Truth Proper to Religion	IOT, TPTR, WR, WW, Internet Research
10/26-28	Issues of Truth, Truth Proper to Religion	IOT, TPTR, WR, WW, Internet Research
ESSAY DUE 10/26 (Phen of Religion, Truth)		
11/2-4	Analytic Phil of Religion: <i>Concept of God, Theistic Arguments</i>	POR Ch 2-4, WR, WW, Internet Research
11/9-11	Analytic Phil: <i>Problem of Evil, Divine Action, Miracles, Afterlife, Redemption</i>	POR Ch 4-5, WR, WW, Internet Research
11/16	Religious Experience and Truth: Analytic vs Hermeneutical Accounts	
11/18	Contemporary God Debate: Science vs Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity	POR 7, http://www.iep.utm.edu/n-atheis/
ESSAY DUE 11/30 (Anal Phil of Rel, Contemp God Debate, Anal vs Phen of Rel)		
11/23	Buddhism as Philosophy	POR Ch 6, BAP Ch 1-2
11/25	Thanksgiving	
12/2, 12/7	Buddhism as Philosophy	POR Ch 6, BAP Ch 3-4
12/9	Buddhism as Philosophy	BAP Ch 5-10
12/14	FINAL EXAM MEETING 12-3PM Mandatory	
FINAL PAPERS DUE 12/20 (Buddhism as Phil, Anal Phil Rel vs Phen of Rel, all unfinished papers)		

This outline is subject to revision. Carefully follow announcements in class and/or on website.