

PHI 3700 – PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION  
Dr. Mountcastle

**Course Description:**

Problem of Religious language. Arguments for atheism and existence of God. Phenomenology of religious experience. Problems of evil and nature of God. Theories of immortality. (Gordon Rule Course)

**Tests:**

Hick: *Classical and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Religion*

Hudson: *The Philosophy of Religion*

Session

Topic

1. Introduction: Definitions of philosophy, religion, theology and
2. Philosophy of religion.

Problem 1: INTERPRETING RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

3. James: Religious experience is always mystical and is characterized as ineffable, noetic, transient and passive.
4. Schleiermacher: The “feeling of absolute dependence” is elicited when we realize our ultimate dependence on God.
5. Otto: The *mysterium tremendum* is a supernatural experience characterized by awe, fascination and feeling of creatureliness.
6. Buber: God is directly known in the I-Thou encounter as the Being that is
7. Directly over against us.

Problem 2: RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE: FAITH, REASON & TRUTH

8. Introduction to epistemology: Sources of Knowledge, laws of logic, tests of truth.
9. Definitions of Faith and Reason: Walhout: Faith as subjective attitude and objective focus. Bertocci: Reason as logical consistency and empirical coherence. Questions of priority and interrelationship.
10. Certainty and Truth in religion. Comparative models:
11. (Thomas, Aquinas, Kierkegaard, and DeWolf)

Problem 3: THE UNIQUENESS OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

12. The problem of meaning in religious statements: How can ordinary language refer to a trans-human Reality? The Vienna Circle, Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* and Logical Positivism.
13. Ayer: Talk about God is nonsense because it cannot be verified.  
The “new” Wittgenstein and language game theory.
14. Zuurdeeg: Religious language is convictional.  
Bultmann: Religious language must be demythologized for modern man.
15. Tillich: Religious language is symbolic. Myths broken by existential analysis.  
Flew, Hare and Mitchell: Parables of the trials of faith – “bilks” and question of falsification.
16. Ferre: Religious language is noncognitive and functions emotively, conatively and heuristically

### MID-TERM ESSAY

Students may choose any topic covered in the first part of the course.

#### Problem 4: REASONS FOR BELIEVING IN GOD

17. Anselm: The ontological argument from the unique meaning and function of the word "God".
18. Aquinas: The cosmological argument from the existence of the universe and the need for a First Cause.
19. Tennant and Bertocci: The teleological argument from the design and order
20. Of the cosmos
21. Carter and Peacock: the Anthropic Principle: Our universe was designed to produce persons

#### Problem 5: THE REALITY OF EVIL

22. Traditional religious answers: Deuteronomic philosophy of history in Judges and Fall Story in Genesis: Evil is punishment. Hebrews: Evil is discipline. Job: Evil is a mystery.
23. Indian Vedanta: Evil is an illusion. Buddhist philosophy: Evil is caused by ignorance and egotism. St. Augustine: Evil is the absence of good caused by falling away from God.
24. Spinoza and Royce: Evil is incomplete good, only vision of the Whole is good.
25. Leibnitz and Tennant: Evil is logically necessary in the "Best of all possible worlds."
26. Mill, James, Brightman, and Bertocci: Finitism; God is perfect in love but
27. Limited in power by the "given" which is part of His own nature.

#### Problem 6: THE FACT OF DEATH AND THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY

28. Traditional Views: Biological, Cultural, Reincarnation, Nirvana, Resurrection (physical and/or spiritual). What survives? Soul, Self, Mind, Memory
29. Kant: A here-after must exist where moral perfection and happiness can be experienced. Brightman: Conditional immortality is consistent with the theistic concept of a good and loving God.
30. Bertocci and Hocking: Epiphenomenalism can be refuted; mind is of a different order than matter and may survive clinical death.

### SECOND ESSAY

Students may choose any topic covered in the second part of the course. Evaluation for both essays will be based on evidence of serious research of the problem selected, clarity of expression and critical thinking.