

# PHIL 3600: Philosophy of Religion

University of North Texas  
Spring 2026



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**Office:** ENV 225E

**Class Location:** ENV 120  
**Class Time:** Tue / Thu 12:30-1:50pm  
**Office Hours:** Tue / Thu 2:00-3:00pm  
and by appointment

**Teaching Assistant:** Timothy (Tianrong) Lin (he/him)  
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## Course Description

This course explores central concepts, ideas, and arguments in the philosophy of religion. It examines various questions that arise when thinking philosophically about religion, belief systems, and religious practices. Topics include the relation between faith and reason, religious experience, arguments for God's existence, the problem of evil, religious language, life after death, miracles, religion and science, and the conflicting claims of different religions.

## Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be:

1. familiar with the historical and argumentative aspects of thinking philosophically about religion in different cultures, traditions, and places.
2. able to distinguish religious faith, ideas, and practices from the philosophical analysis of religion.
3. proficient in developing and presenting well-informed, knowledgeable, and cogent philosophical arguments.

## Course Materials and Readings

Course materials include various philosophical texts on religion, from different philosophical and religious perspectives. All readings must be completed before the class in which they are scheduled to be discussed. Readings for most class meetings are about 10-20 pages in total (whether we have one reading or several shorter texts).

No book purchase is required for this class. All readings will be made available on the course Canvas page.

## **Course Requirements and Grade Components**

### **1. Attendance and Participation**

Attendance of class meetings and active participation in the discussions are essential for succeeding in this course. If unavoidable, absences should be communicated to the instructor via email prior to the class. Two unexcused absences will not affect your grade in the course. Any additional unexcused absence will deduct 3 points from your final course grade. Missing more than five classes overall will result in failing the course. Active participation in the course will positively contribute to your final grade in the course. – 20% of final grade.

### **2. Reading Responses**

Reading responses are short (about one page; 250-350 words) written responses to the assigned readings. They shall be based solely on the readings (not using any other materials). They are responses; not summaries: They shall not summarize the reading, but rather respond to 2-3 of the following points:

- What was your reading experience? Was the reading difficult, accessible, challenging, meaningful, relatable, etc.? Explain and discuss why.
- What do you find to be the reading's main argument? Explain what the author argues for and what your view on it is – do you agree or disagree with it? Or are you ambivalent or indifferent? Explain why.
- Choose a sentence or a paragraph that seems central or meaningful to you. Explain why you chose it and how you understand it.
- If you had the chance to meet the author and discuss their argument with them, what would you like to ask? What would you like to know? What would you like to tell them? What would you like to hear from them?

Reading responses shall be submitted on Canvas by the end of day before the class meeting in which the reading is scheduled to be discussed (that is, by end of day on Monday/Wednesday).

Overall, 10 reading responses shall be completed throughout the semester. Each reading response is worth 3 points x 10 reading responses. = 30% of final grade.

### **3. Three In-Class Quizzes**

In-Class Quizzes include questions – true/false, multiple choice, and short answer open questions – on class materials. Each quiz includes 10 questions to be completed within 30 minutes. The questions cover only materials from the readings, lectures, and class discussions. – Each quiz is worth 10% of the final grade x3 = 30% of final grade.

### **4. Two Discussion Papers**

Discussion papers analyze topics from class readings, lectures, and materials. Each discussion paper includes two questions (to be chosen out of three prompts) which will give you the opportunity to develop and present your own thinking about the readings and arguments

discussed in class. Paper length is about two pages: one page for each question/topic. Each paper is worth 10% of the final grade x2 = 20% of final grade.

**Course Grade Component Summary:**

1. Attendance and participation = 20% of final grade
2. Reading Responses = 30% of final grade
3. Three In-Class Quizzes = 30% of final grade
5. Two Discussion Papers = 20% of final grade

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Total: 100 %

**Grading Policies and Procedures**

Grading rubrics will be used to evaluate class participation, assignments, and papers.

The grading system for the course is as follows:

A: 90-100%, B: 80-90%, C: 70-79%, D: 60-69%, F: 0-59

**Late Submission Policy**

All work is expected to be submitted electronically on Canvas by the designated due date. Reading responses must be completed on Canvas before the class that corresponds to the reading.

Discussion papers will be docked 3 points for each day late (2 days late: 6 points deduction, 3 days late: 9 points deduction, etc.).

Exceptions will be made in emergency situations and depending on circumstances. If such a situation arises, please make sure to communicate it to the instructor as soon as possible before the assignment due date.

**Academic Success, or: How to Succeed in This Course**

Every student can succeed in this course! Your success in this course is important to me as your instructor and it is my goal to help you succeed. Success in this course means passing with a good grade. Attending classes, reading the texts, participating in class discussions, and completing assignments and assessments are the best ways to succeed in this course.

Some readings and arguments may be easier and some more difficult than others. Different students engage differently with different materials. I am here to help and support you. My office hours offer you an opportunity to ask for clarification or find support with understanding class material. I encourage you to connect with me for support. If you can't make my regular office hours, please email me so we can find a different time that works for you!

## **Technology in the Classroom**

Use of all technology (laptops, tablets, phones) in the classroom is permitted, as long as it is done primarily for learning purposes and does not cause distraction. Use of technology for other purposes (such as texting, social media, watching videos) is not permitted, since it causes distraction and disturbs other students. Students who use technology for such purposes will be asked to leave for the duration of the class. This policy is subject to change according to circumstances.

## **Academic Integrity**

“UNT promotes the integrity of learning processed and embraces the core values of trust and honesty. Academic integrity is based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the university. In the investigation and resolution of allegations of student academic dishonesty, the university’s actions are intended to be corrective, educationally sound, fundamentally fair, and based on reliable evidence.”

(UNT Academic Integrity Policy description, <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>)

Please note that plagiarism is considered an academic offense. Plagiarism means representing the words or ideas of someone else as one’s own in any academic exercise, such as:

1. Submitting as one’s own a paper written by another person or by a commercial “ghost writing” service,
2. Exactly reproducing someone else’s words without identifying the words with quotation marks or by appropriate indentation, or without properly citing the quotation in a footnote or reference.
3. Paraphrasing or summarizing someone else’s work without acknowledging the source with a footnote or reference.
4. Using facts, data, graphs, charts, or other information without acknowledging the source with a footnote or reference. Borrowed facts or information obtained in one’s research or reading must be acknowledged unless they are “common knowledge”. Clear examples of “common knowledge” include the names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, and the meaning of fundamental concepts and principles in a discipline. When in doubt, footnotes or references should be used.

The likely penalty for plagiarism is failing the course.

If you have any questions regarding plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty, please do not hesitate to ask.

## **Use of Generative AI (Artificial Intelligence) Tools**

The use of Generative AI tools is neither encouraged nor prohibited in this class. It is fine and acceptable to use these tools as long as they do not substitute the reading of class materials.

Please note that in philosophical papers, Generative AI tools may lead to inaccurate answers or erroneous arguments. Only use these tools after you have read the relevant materials and only if you are confident that the information they provide aligns with the philosophical content of the assignment.

Using Generative AI content without proper credit or substituting your own work with Generative AI undermines the learning process and violates academic integrity. If you are unsure whether something is allowed, please seek clarification.

### **Title IX Statement on Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Harassment, and Survivor Advocacy**

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at [oeo@unt.edu](mailto:oeo@unt.edu) or at (940) 565 2759.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (ADA Statement)**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

## **Inclusivity, Chosen Names, and Preferred Pronouns**

Every student in this class should have the right to learn and engage within an environment of respect and courtesy from others. UNT students represent a variety of backgrounds, identities, and perspectives. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging where everyone feels seen, valued, and included. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together and we can all learn from each other!

### ***Chosen Names***

A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and you would like it to be used in class, please let us know.

### ***Preferred Pronouns***

Pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him, etc.) are a public way for people to address you, much like your name, and can be shared with a name when making an introduction. Please let us know your preferred pronoun, and please use and respect other students' preferred pronouns.

Just as we ask and don't assume someone's name, we should also ask and not assume someone's pronouns. You can add your pronouns to your Canvas account so that they follow your name when posting to discussion boards, submitting assignments, etc.

## **Course Schedule, Topics, and Readings**

### **Week 1: Introduction to the Course**

**Tue., Jan. 13:** Introduction to the Course – What will this course be about? What is the Philosophy of Religion? What does it mean to speak and write philosophically about religion?

**Thu., Jan. 15:** How to succeed in this course? Overview of topics, readings, and requirements.

### **Week 2: What is the Philosophy of Religion?**

**Tue., Jan. 20:** What can philosophy ask and tell us about religion?

Reading: Tim Bayne, *Philosophy of Religion: A Very Short Introduction*, Ch. 1: "What is the Philosophy of Religion"? Pp. 1-5.

**Thu., Jan. 22:** What is the relationship between philosophy and religion?

***Quiz #1: Syllabus quiz***

**Week 3: The Nature of Religion (I)**

**Tue., Jan. 27:** The Idea of the Holy

Reading: Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*

**Thu., Jan. 29:** Nature and Religion

Reading: Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*

**Week 4: The Nature of Religion (II)**

**Tue., Feb. 3:** Religion as a Social Phenomenon

Reading: Emile Durkheim, “Religion as a Social Phenomenon”

**Thu., Feb. 5:** Religion from a Scientific Perspective

Reading: Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell*

**Week 5: Religious Experience**

**Tue., Feb. 10:** Two Types of Religious Experience

Reading: Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Autobiography*

**Thu., Feb. 12:** Varieties of Religious Experience

Reading: William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

***Quiz #2***

**Week 6: Arguments Concerning the Existence of God (I)**

**Tue., Feb. 17:** The Ontological Argument

Reading: René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations 1,3,5

**Thu., Feb. 19:** The Cosmological Argument

Reading: Al Ghazali, *The Jerusalem Tract*

**Week 7: Arguments Concerning the Existence of God (II)**

**Tue., Feb. 24:** The Teleological Argument

Reading: William Paley, *Natural Theology*

**Thu., Feb. 26:** The Moral Argument

Reading: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*

**Week 8: The Problem of Evil**

**Tue., Mar. 3:** Good, Evil, and God's Existence

Reading: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Theodicy*

**Thu., Mar. 5:** Suffering and Critique

Reading: Voltaire, *Candide, or: On Optimism*

*Quiz #3*

**Spring Break: March 9-15 – No Classes!**

**Week 9: Knowledge of God**

**Tue., Mar. 17:** Negative and Positive Attributes

Readings: Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*

**Thu., Mar. 19:** Miracles and Mysticism

Readings: Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*

Sufism, The Mystics of Islam (Selected Texts)

*Discussion Paper #1 assigned.*

**Week 10: Faith and Belief**

**Tue., Mar. 24:** Faith and Reason

Reading: Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*

**Thu., Mar. 26:** Faith, Belief, and Language

Reading: Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching*

**Week 11: Critique and Skepticism (I)**

**Tue., Mar. 31:** Religion as ‘Opium for the People’

Reading: Karl Marx, *Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*

**Thu., Apr. 2:** Religion, Morality, and Power

Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

***Discussion Paper #1 due by Friday, Apr. 3***

**Week 12: Critique and Skepticism (II)**

**Tue., Apr. 7:** Religion as an Illusion

Reading: Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*

**Thu., Apr. 9:** Religion, Ethics, and Economy

Reading: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

**Week 13: Religion, Oppression, and Liberation**

**Tue., Apr. 14:** Slavery, Oppression, and Religious Faith

Reading: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*

**Thu., Apr. 16:** Theology of Liberation

Reading: Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*

***Discussion Paper #2 assigned.***

**Week 14: Religion and Gender**

**Tue., Apr. 21:** Religion and Feminism

Reading: Rosemary Radford Ruether, “The Female Nature of God”; “Sexism and God-Talk”

**Thu., Apr. 23:** Religion and Queerness

Reading: Patrick Cheng, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology*

**Week 15: Religious Diversity and Pluralism**

**Tue., Apr. 28:** Religious Diversity and Pluralism

Readings: Dalai Lama, “Buddhism, Christianity, and the Prospects for World Religion”, *The Bodhgaya Interviews*

John Hick, “Religious Pluralism and Salvation”

**Thu., Apr. 30:** Review, Summary, and Conclusions

***Discussion Paper #2 due by Mon., May 4***