

Dr Anders Kraal

Philosophy of Religion

1. Course description

The course is concerned with some main philosophical questions pertaining to belief in God, including

- (i) the distinction and relation between natural theology (generic belief in God) and revealed theology (belief in God rooted in specific religions),
- (ii) some main philosophical arguments for generic belief in God (including the cosmological, teleological and ontological arguments),
- (iii) some main arguments against generic belief in God (including the argument from evil, the argument from divine hiddenness, and the argument from Ockham's Razor), and
- (iv) if time permits, some main arguments for and against the claims of specific religions with regard to God.

Participating in this course involves a preparedness to attend to and evaluate arguments against various forms of theistic belief put forth by critics of religion.

2. Lectures

Tues and Thurs 10:00 - 13:00, we have online lectures via Collaborate Ultra, accessed via Canvas. Lectures will be recorded and accessible also after the live lectures.

3. Instructor

Dr. Anders Kraal (anders.kraal@ubc.ca)

4. Instructor office hours

The last hour of each lecture occasion, from 12-13, will be devoted to Q&A. This will be our online substitute for regular on-campus office hours.

5. Instructor email policy

The instructor will aim to read and reply to emails Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 13:00-14:00.

6. Teaching assistants

Nathan Cockerham and Spencer Knafelc.

The TAs will be marking exams, and will answer questions about marked work via email.

7. Required texts

All readings will be made available in the form of PDF files or links posted on Canvas or sent to you via email. You may also occasionally be asked to view online lectures or talks.

8. Course requirements

There will be two exams worth 30% of the final grade each, and one final exam worth 40% of the final grade. (For dates, see the Schedule at the end of this document.)

In the first two exams, you will be asked to provide answers to 5 questions dealing with matters brought up in class prior to the date of the exam. The questions will be made available to you on Canvas at 10:00 am of the exam day, and you will have to 11:30 am to upload your answers. If you live in an alternate time zone, you will be offered to write a similar exam, on the same difficulty level, 12 hours after the regular one. If you miss these exams you will automatically be assigned 0 points unless you provide the TA with an UBC Academic Calendar approved rationale for doing a make-up exam (this is to be provided within 1 week of the day of the exam).

In the final exam you will be asked to provide answers to 10 questions dealing with matters brought up in class prior to the date of the exam. The questions will be made available to you on Canvas, and you will have 2.5 hours to upload your answers. The date and time of the final exam isn't yet set. If you live in an alternate time zone, you will be offered to write a similar exam, on the same difficulty level, 12 hours after the regular one. A missed final will automatically receive 0 points, unless you provide the TA with a UBC Academic Calendar approved rationale for an extended deadline (this is to be provided within 1 week of the day of the fixed deadline).

9. Learning outcomes

At the end of the course the student will be expected to

- (1) be familiar with the main content of generic theistic belief;
- (2) be familiar with some main arguments that have been put forth in support of generic theistic belief;
- (3) be familiar with some main arguments that have been put forth against generic theistic belief; and
- (4) (if there is time to cover this in the course) be familiar with some main arguments that have been put forth in support of specific religious claims about God, and objections to these claims.

10. Missed-lecture policy

If you miss a lecture, just watch the recording of it on Canvas.

11. Marking parameters

Your mark in this course will be a function of three main factors: 1) your performance on the examinable momenta *relative to your peers*, 2) your comprehension of the course material, 3) demonstration of skill in assessing and evaluating philosophical ideas.

12. Marking scale	90-100%: A+	76-79%: B+	64-67%: C+	50-54%: D
	85-89%: A	72-75%: B	60-63%: C	0-49%: F
	80-84%: A-	68-71%: B-	55-59%: C-	

The degree of difficulty on the examinable momenta will be set so as to *aim* at a class average outcome that by and large conforms to the department average for this course down the years, which is in the range 70%-75%. Upward scaling may be used to this effect.

13. Policy on review of marked work

Marks on exams will be posted on canvas. Feedback on expected outcomes of exams and papers will be provided (typically by the Instructor) in so-called Feedback Sessions. Any concerns about the marking of an exam should be submitted to the marker (typically the TA) via email, and will be responded to (typically by the TA) via email.

14. Plagiarism (from the UBC Academic Calendar)

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. See also <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

15. UBC values and policies (from the UBC Academic Calendar)

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here (<https://senate.ubc.ca/policiesresources-support-student-success>)

16. Schedule

The following schedule is tentative, and may change depending on the needs and flow of the course.

May PART 1: ARGUMENTS FOR BELIEF IN GOD
Topics: *Generic theism. The distinction between natural and revealed theology. The cosmological, ontological and design arguments, and objections to these arguments.*

** Exam 1, May 28*

June PART 2: ARGUMENTS AGAINST BELIEF IN GOD
Topics: *The Problem of Evil. The Argument from Divine Hiddenness. The Argument from Ockham's Razor.*

** Exam 2, June 11*

PART 3: THE CLAIMS OF SPECIFIC RELIGIONS ABOUT GOD (IF TIME PERMITS)

Possible topics: claims about God found in Christianity, Confucianism, Islam, and/or Hinduism. Arguments for and against these claims.

** Final exam during the UBC final exam period for Summer 1 courses.*

18. The nature of this syllabus

This syllabus sets out the policies according to which this course will proceed. Enrollment in the course involves an acceptance of these policies.