

PHIL 347 (2022-23 Term 1). Philosophy of Religion. Credits: 3

Prerequisites: None

Tues & Thurs. 9:30-11:00pm. LIFE-2202

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Office hours by appointment via Zoom

TA: TBA

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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 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 on [the UBC Senate website](#).

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This course is an introduction to how to think philosophically about religion. You will be introduced to the scholarly study of religion, and to a range of philosophical issues about the content of religious beliefs and practices. We will consider such questions as: What is religion? Why are people religious? What is religious experience? Is there a distinct kind of religious knowledge? What arguments can be given for or against the existence of God? What is faith? What is mysticism? What is the relationship between religion and spirituality? Can secular faith replace religion?

We will approach these questions by reading and talking about some classic modern books about religion, including some very recent ones. All the books have been chosen not just for their intellectual content but also for their style: they are existentially engaging and potentially transformative for how you live and think. The last three weeks of the course will be devoted to Martin Hägglund's recent and widely celebrated book, *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom*, which presents a critique of religion and capitalism, while making a case for reconceiving faith in secular terms and for a new vision of democratic socialism. The readings earlier in the course will give you intellectual tools to think critically about Hägglund's case from a variety of religious and philosophical perspectives.

The course format will be a mixture of lecture and in-class discussion. No prior knowledge of philosophy or any particular religious tradition is assumed. Upon successful completion of the course, you will be well informed about how scholars today analyze religion and how philosophers contribute to our understanding of religion.

Required Books (available at the UBC bookstore, or from your preferred book seller. If you have trouble acquiring any of these books, contact me.)

Stephen Batchelor, *The Faith to Doubt: Glimpses of Buddhist Uncertainty*

Martin Hägglund, *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom*

David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss*

T. M. Luhrmann, *How God Becomes Real: Kindling the Presence of Invisible Others*

Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*

Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*

Krista Tippett, *Speaking of Faith: Why Religion Matters and How to Talk About It*

Additional Readings

All other readings will be available at Canvas.

Requirements

12 weekly multiple choice quizzes (via Canvas) on the readings. These quizzes are meant to get you to do the readings. *You will not be able to pass the quizzes without doing the readings, but you should have no trouble with the quizzes if you do the readings.* Each quiz worth 5% (all 12 quizzes = 60%).

2 papers, each worth 20%, Length 1500 words maximum. Instructions for writing these papers will be posted separately at Canvas.

Paper Due Dates

Paper 1: TBA at Canvas

Paper 2: TBA at Canvas

Statement on Plagiarism: Plagiarism is intellectual theft and occurs when an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship rests on examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. 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. For further information, please see the following link about academic misconduct: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AND WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC FAILURE OF THE ASSIGNMENT, as well as possible further disciplinary action by the University.

Email Policy

The following guidelines apply to email communication during this course:

- I will make every effort to reply to legitimate email inquiries with 24 hours during weekdays but will likely take longer to respond to email during the weekend.
- Each email message should include in the Subject line the course identifier and a clear statement of purpose (e.g., PHIL 347: Question about Paper).

Schedule

Week 1: Sept 8 Introduction and Overview

Week 2: Sept. 13 & 15. Why Religion?

T. M. Luhrmann, *How God Becomes Real*

Week 3: Sept 20 & 22: Why Religion?

Krista Tippett, *Speaking of Faith*

Week 4: Sept 27 & 29: Evil

C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

Week 5: Oct. 4 & 6: Rationality

Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*

Week 6: Oct. 11 & 13: Mysticism

Evelyn Underhill, *Practical Mysticism*

Grace Jantzen, "Feminists, Philosophers, and Mystics"

Week 7: Oct. 18 & 20: A Contemporary Case for Theism

David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God*, Chapters One-Three

Week 8: Oct. 25 & 27: A Contemporary Case for Theism

David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God*, Chapters Four-Six

Week 9: Nov. 1 & 3: Faith

Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*

Week 10: Nov. 8 Uncertainty (No class Nov. 10 due to Midterm Break)

Stephen Batchelor, *The Faith to Doubt*

Week 11 Nov. 15 & 17: Secular Faith

Martin Hägglund, *This Life*, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2

Week 12: Nov. 22 & 24: Secular Faith
Martin Hägglund, *This Life*, Chapters 3 & 4

Week 13: Nov. 29 & Dec. 1: Secular Faith
Martin Hägglund, *This Life*, Chapters 5 & 6, Conclusion

Week 14: Dec 6: Taking Stock