

**PHIL 347 (2023-24 Term 1). Philosophy of Religion. Credits: 3**  
**Prerequisites: None**  
**Tues & Thurs. 3:30-5:00pm. LIFE-2202**  
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Office hours: TBA  
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](#).

**All materials of this course (course readings, lecture slides, handouts, etc.) are the intellectual property of the course instructor or licensed to be used in this course by the copyright owner. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline. No video or audio recording of the classes is allowed unless you ask for and receive my permission.**

This course is an introduction to philosophical issues arising from religion. The focus will be on theism (belief in the existence of God) versus atheism (rejection of belief in the existence of God). In the first part of the course we will ask what religion is and why people are religious. We will then proceed to examine arguments that have been given for the existence of God in classical Hindu, Christian, and Islamic philosophy, as well as Buddhist arguments against Hindu theism. We will then examine mysticism, followed by reading a contemporary defence of atheism (by French philosopher André Comte-Sponville) 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.

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

André Comte-Sponville, *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*  
Zena Hitz, *A Philosopher Looks at the Religious Life*  
T. M. Luhrmann, *How God Becomes Real: Kindling the Presence of Invisible Others*  
Elaine Pagels, *Why Religion?*  
Laure L. Patton, trans., *The Bhagavad Gita*

### **Requirements**

**10 multiple choice quizzes** (via Canvas) on the readings and the lectures. Instructions at Canvas. These quizzes are meant to get you to do the readings and review the lectures. You should have no trouble with the quizzes if you do the readings, attend the lectures, and review the lecture slides posted at Canvas. Each quiz worth 4% (all 10 quizzes = 40%).

**3 short papers**, each worth 20%. Instructions for writing these papers, and the due dates, will be posted separately 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 their 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. **Using ChatGPT or other AI content generators to generate any portion of your written work counts as plagiarism in this course.** 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 review the UBC Calendar Academic regulations for the university policy on cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty (See the UBC Calendar, under "Academic Regulations," and "Student Conduct and Discipline": <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,0,0.>)

**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**

#### **Module 1: Why Religion?**

##### Week 1: Sept 7:

(start reading T. M. Luhrmann, *How God Becomes Real*)

##### Week 2: Sept. 12 & 14

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

##### Week 3: Sept 19 & 21

Elaine Pagels, *Why Religion?*

##### Week 4: Sept. 26 & 28

Zena Hitz, *A Philosopher Looks at the Religious Life*

#### **Module 2: Arguments for and Against God in Classical India**

##### Week 5: Oct. 3 & 5

*Bhagavad Gita*

Week 6: Oct 10 (No Class Thursday Oct 12)

*The Nyāya-sūtra*, Introduction & Chapter 6 (at Canvas)

**No Class Thursday Oct 12 because it is “Make Up Monday”**

Week 7: Oct. 17 & 19

Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction*, Introduction & Chapters 1-3 (at Canvas)

Week 8: Oct. 24 & 26

Ernst Steinkellner, “Hindu Doctrines of Creation and Their Buddhist Critiques” (at Canvas)

Richard Hayes, “Principled Atheism in the Buddhist Scholastic Tradition” (at Canvas)

Matthew T. Kapstein, “The Buddhist Refusal of Theism” (at Canvas)

Recommended: Roger Jackson, “Dharmakīrti’s Refutation of Theism” (at Canvas)

### **Module 3: Christian and Islamic Arguments for the Existence of God**

Week 9: Oct. 31 & Nov. 3

Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God* (at Canvas)

Week 10: Nov 7 & 9

Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God* (at Canvas)

Week 11: Nov. 19 (No Class Nov. 14)

William Lane Craig, “The *Kalam* Cosmological Argument,” at

<https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/popular-writings/existence-nature-of-god/the-kalam-cosmological-argument>

### **Module 4: Mysticism**

Week 12: Nov. 21 & 23

Evelyn Underhill, *Practical Mysticism*.

Available at: <http://www.anglicanlibrary.org/underhill/UnderhillPracticalMysticism.pdf> or at <https://holybooks.com/practical-mysticism-ebook-evelyn-underhill/>

### **Module 5. Atheism: A Contemporary Defence**

Week 13: Nov. 28 & 30

André Comte-Sponville, *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2

Week 14: Dec 5 & 7

André Comte-Sponville, *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, Chapter 3 & Conclusion