

PHIL 347 (2025-26 Term 1). Philosophy of Religion. Credits: 3
Prerequisites: None
Tues & Thurs. 11am-12:30pm. MCML-Floor 1-Room 166
Professor Evan Thompson. 604-827-2071. evan.thompson@ubc.ca
Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:45-1:45pm
TA:

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

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. It is divided into five parts. (1) What is religion and why people are religious? (2) The case for theism (belief in the existence of God). (3) The problem of pain and suffering. (4) The case for atheism and against theism. (5) Mysticism. The course format will be a mixture of lecture and in-class discussion. No prior knowledge of philosophy or religion 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. Additional readings (as indicated on the schedule below) will be available online and/or at Canvas.

André Comte-Sponville, *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*
David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss*
T. M. Luhrmann, *How God Becomes Real: Kindling the Presence of Invisible Others*

Requirements

- **3 in-class multiple choice + essay-answer tests, each worth 25%.** These tests will ask you to explain, evaluate, or reflect on basic ideas, concepts, and arguments from the readings and lectures. **NO MAKE UP TESTS WILL BE GIVEN, SO IF YOU MISS A TEST YOUR MARK WILL BE REWEIGHTED. YOU CANNOT MISS MORE THAN ONE TEST: ADDITIONAL MISSED TESTS WILL BE GIVEN A ZERO GRADE.** Test dates: Sept. 25, Oct. 23, and Nov. 20.
- **Final paper: 25%.** Instructions for writing the paper will be posted separately at Canvas. **Due Monday December 8 no later than midnight 12am.**

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 Test).

SCHEDULE

Part 1: Why Religion?

Week 1: Sept. 4. Introduction and Overview

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

Week 2: Sept. 9 & 11

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

Part 2: Theism

Week 3: Sept 16 & 18

David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God*, Introduction & Chapter One

Week 4: Sept. 23 & 25

Test 1 on Sept. 25

David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God*, Chapters Two and Three

Week 5: Sept. 30 & Oct. 2

No Class Sept 30 (National Truth and Reconciliation Day).

David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God*, Chapter Four

Week 6: Oct. 7 & 9

David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God*, Chapters Five & Six

Part 3: The Problem of Pain and Suffering

Week 7: Oct. 14 & 16

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*. Available at Canvas or here:

https://www.samizdat.qc.ca/cosmos/philo/PDFs/ProblemofPain_CSL.pdf

Part 4: Atheism

Week 8: Oct 21 & 23

Test 2 on October 23.

André Comte-Sponville, *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, Introduction & Chapter I

Week 9: Oct 28 & 30

André Comte-Sponville, *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, Chapters II & III

Part V: Mysticism

Week 10: Nov. 4 & 6

Evelyn Underhill, *Practical Mysticism*. Available at Canvas or here: <https://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/Evelyn-Underhill-Practical-Mysticism.pdf>

Week 11: Nov. 11 & 13.

MIDTERM BREAK: NO CLASS NOV. 11.

Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, Introduction. Available at Canvas or here:
<https://dn790009.ca.archive.org/0/items/perennialphilosp035505mbp/perennialphilosp035505mbp.pdf>

Jules Evans, "Perennial Philosophy," <https://aeon.co/essays/what-can-we-learn-from-the-perennial-philosophy-of-aldous-huxley>

Week 12: Nov. 18 & 20.

Test 3 on Nov. 20.

Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*. Available at Canvas or here: <https://archive.org/details/the-doors-of-perception-huxley-aldous-1894-1963-1954-new-york-harper-97800608017>

Week 13: Nov. 25 & 27.

Steven Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" Available at Canvas.

Miri Albahari, "Is Universal Consciousness Fit for Ground?" Available at Canvas or here:
<https://academic.oup.com/book/58199/chapter/481532210>

Week 14: Dec. 4.

Final discussion, no reading assignment.