



COURSE OUTLINE - Winter 2025

PH3570(A3): Philosophy of Religion - 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

INSTRUCTOR:	Hugh Hunter	PHONE:	(780) 539-2823
OFFICE:	C421	E-MAIL:	jhunter@nwpolytech.ca
OFFICE HOURS:	Wednesday from 1:00 to 2:00 PM, or by request		

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: General topics in the Philosophy of Religion. Selections from the following will be studied: The concept of 'religion', the relationships between philosophy and religion, arguments for and against the existence of God, meaning and intelligibility in religious language, religion and morality, religion and the meaning of life, implications of the study of religion in the social sciences.

PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE: None

REQUIRED TEXT/RESOURCE MATERIALS:

- [PR] - [Introduction to Philosophy of Religion](#), Beau Branson (Ed.) (Rebus Community: 2020)
- [TO] - [The Originals: Classic Readings in Western Philosophy](#), Jeff McLaughlin (Ed.) (Thompson Rivers University/BCCampus, 2017)
- [PM] – [Introduction to Philosophy of Mind](#), Heather Salazar (Ed.) (Rebus Community, 2019)
 - Note: All these textbooks are free and open source. They can be downloaded as PDF, EPub, other formats, or accessed online. Paper copies may also be purchased from the publisher for a small fee if you want a paper copy, but you don't need one for this course.

DELIVERY MODE(S): On-Campus

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- The learning outcomes stressed in this course are Communication Skills, Critical Thinking Skills, and Diverse Reasoning.

Students will use **Communication Skills** in

- Communicating clearly and concisely while employing written and verbal skills appropriate to class assignments and discussion.
- Developing written arguments with strong logical inferences to show support for your claims.

- Demonstrating interpersonal skills by listening effectively, establishing rapport, and monitoring non-verbal signals.
- Expressing awareness of and respect for self and others.

2. Students will use **Critical Thinking Skills** in

- To develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through the analysis of philosophical topics.
- Learning how to understand and charitably interpret others' arguments and developing the ability to rearticulate arguments in a philosophical form.
- Analyzing theoretical concepts and examining the connections between them.
- Developing written arguments with strong logical inferences to show support for your claims.
- Critically assessing philosophical theories and arguments in support of these theories.
- See section on What we do in Philosophy for more.

3. Students will use **Diverse Reasoning Skills** in

- To gain an understanding of important problems in philosophy.
- Applying philosophical reasoning to varied views.
- Recognizing and examining conflicting views on philosophical issues.
- Analyzing and discussing issues from a multitude of perspectives.
- Examining individual and social assumptions, values, norms, beliefs, and understandings of phenomena in the world.
- Gaining an understanding of abstract philosophical concepts.
- Enhancing awareness and increasing understanding of the nature of the world.

TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferalberta.ca>

**** Grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability**

EVALUATIONS:

- **35% Short Essay, 4-5 pages (max 1250 words) due February 4**
- **55% Research Essay, 8-12 pages (max 3500 words) due April 10**
- **10% Participation**
 - Note: the participation grade is based on your active participation in class discussion. You don't have to attend every single class or talk in every single class to get a good participation grade, but you should be a regular contributor.

Expected Statutory Holidays and Breaks: (no class on these days)

- Family Day: February 17
- Spring Break: February 18-21

GRADING CRITERIA:

Please note that most universities will not accept your course for transfer credit **IF** your grade is **less than C-**.

Grading Chart

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	95-100	C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-94	C	2.0	63-66
A-	3.7	80-84	C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	77-79	D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	73-76	D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72	F	0.0	00-49

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments Due
January 7	What do we do in philosophy	How to Do Philosophy [TO]	
January 9	Thinking about the Philosophy of Religion 1	1. The Intertwining of Philosophy and Religion in the Western Tradition [PR]	
January 14	Thinking about the Philosophy of Religion 2		
January 16	The Design Argument 1	William Paley – On The Teleological Argument [TO]	
January 21	The Design Argument 2	2. Reasons to Believe – Theoretical Arguments [PR – “The Teleological Argument” pp 22-24)	
January 23	The Cosmological Argument(s) 1	St. Thomas Aquinas – On the Five Ways to Prove God's Existence	
January 28	The Cosmological Argument(s) 2	2. Reasons to Believe – Theoretical Arguments [PR – “The Cosmological Argument” pp 24-26)	
January 30	The Ontological Argument 1	St. Anselm – On the Ontological Proof of God's Existence	
February 4	The Ontological Argument 2	2. Reasons to Believe – Theoretical Arguments [PR – “The Ontological Argument” pp 26-28)	Short Essay Due
February 6	Reformed Epistemology	2. Reasons to Believe – Theoretical Arguments [PR – “Reformed Epistemology”, pp 29-30]	
February 11	The Wager 1	Blaise Pascal – On the Wager for God's Existence [TO]	

February 13	The Wager 2	3. Non-Standard Arguments for God's Existence [PR "Pascal's Wager", pp 34-37]	
February 18	WINTER BREAK		
February 20	WINTER BREAK		
February 25	The Will to Believe	William James – On the Will to Believe [TO]	
February 27	Religious Experience	3. Non-Standard Arguments for God's Existence [PR "God's Existence and Religious Experience" pp 37-39]	
March 4	Faith and Belief 1	Søren Kierkegaard – On Encountering Faith [TO]	
March 6	Faith and Belief 2	3. Non-Standard Arguments for God's Existence "C.S. Lewis's Argument from Desire & Other Non-Standard Arguments for God's Existence" [PR pp 40-46]	
March 11	Problems for Belief: Divine Attributes	4. Reasons Not to Believe [PR "Introduction & The Incoherence of Divine Attributes" pp 53-56]	
March 13	Problems for Belief: The Problem of Evil	4. Reasons Not to Believe [PR "Problems of Evil" pp 56-59]	
March 18	Problems for Belief: Divine Hiddenness	4. Reasons Not to Believe [PR "Divine Hiddenness" pp 59-61]	
March 20	Are there reasons not even to form a belief in God	5. Debunking Arguments against Theistic Belief [PR "Introduction - Varieties of Error-Proneness" 65 – 71]	
March 25	Are there reasons not even to form a belief in God	5. Debunking Arguments against Theistic Belief [PR "Replies" 71 – 74]	
March 27	Religion and Miracles 1	David Hume– On the Irrationality of Believing in Miracles [TO]	
April 1	Religion and Miracles 2		
April 3	Religion and Human Freedom 1	8. Freedom of the Will [PM]	
April 8	Religion and Human Freedom 2		
April 10		Review/Makeup Class	Research Essay Due

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Responsibilities of all students:

1. Please do not be late for class.
2. You are expected to complete assigned readings before class. Do not fall behind in the assigned readings because it is difficult to catch up.

3. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain the information you missed.
4. Policies regarding final exams are governed by institutional policy. You should consult the Examinations policy in the NWP Calendar. You should consult the NWP Calendar for any questions regarding deferred exams but note that students are required to be available to write exams during the entire final exam period.
5. Exam and assignment deferrals may only be granted in extenuating circumstances such as extreme illness or other serious circumstances beyond the student's control. Work commitments, holidays, or forgetfulness are not considered legitimate reasons for missing assigned deadlines.
6. In cases where submitted work exhibits concerning patterns or raises questions for the instructor about its creation and the student's intellectual effort involved, students may be required to submit to an oral examination regarding the work at the discretion of the instructor. Failure to participate in the oral examination will result in an assigned grade of 0 for the assessment. If, following the oral examination, the instructor still has concerns about the work, the academic misconduct provisions of the [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) policy may be applied.
7. You are adults. Please treat class as you would any professional setting. That means governing your actions so as not to disrupt the class.
 - a. Feel free to use your technology discretely so long as it does not distract others.
 - b. If you need to take a call, leave to use the bathroom or leave early, do it quietly so as not to disrupt the class on the way out.
 - c. Don't start conversations on the side that will disrupt the class (join in class discussion instead!)
8. Please note that questions – philosophical or otherwise – are rarely well answered over email. If you have questions about how to write, course expectations or anything else, please ask during class (it will certainly benefit your fellow students) or come see me after class or in office hours. If you email with these sorts of questions, I will direct you to my office hours. I am happy to discuss your drafts in my office hours, but I will not review them by email.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy available at <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/administration/policies/index.html>

**Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

What we do in Philosophy

I like to think of philosophers as product testers for ideas. A product tester doesn't test a product under regular use conditions, but rather puts the product into extreme conditions. For example, if a product is designed to run at -25° Celsius, a product tester might try to see if it works at -35°, because if it works in -35° it's safe to say it will work in -25°. In philosophy, we subject ideas to stress tests by considering the extreme cases. As you read through the readings, you'll find some unlikely and strange scenarios. We want to see if our ideas work in those scenarios, because if our ideas work in weird, extreme scenarios we can be sure they will work in ordinary cases as well.

Just like product testers, the fact that we are testing an idea doesn't mean that we believe it. Sometimes we don't even like the idea! But a product tester is neutral. We run the tests and see how the idea performs. We must always remember that we are testing ideas, not the people who happen to believe in them. As the

philosopher Socrates often said, someone who shows you a problem with an idea that you believe in is doing you a favour by showing you that there are better, truer ideas out there to be discovered.