

Point Loma Nazarene University

GOD AND PHILOSOPHY

PHL 250 (may count as an upper-division Philosophy Class)

SPRING 2019

Mondays and Wednesdays 10:55-12:05

Instructor: Heather K. Ross

Office: Smee #204

Office Phone: 849-2357

E-mail: hross@pointloma.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

PLNU MISSION:

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Students will engage in the disciplined practices of asking questions about God, the world, and of themselves, including questions for which there may be no easy answers. (Learning, Growing)
2. Students will differentiate among interrelated movements or figures in the history of philosophy. (Learning)
3. Students will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of human reasoning or experience to provide adequate accounts of significant issues that relate to our human condition, the world, ethics and Christian life. (Learning, Growing, Serving)

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To live in hopeful anticipation of God's revelation.
2. To develop and widen an openness towards the pursuit of wisdom.
3. To examine the philosophical impact of the body as we consider the relation of the soul to the body.
4. To study historically impacting figures in the history of philosophy in order to enrich our engagement with this tradition.
5. To consider the way the transcendence of God and transcendence itself has functioned within the tradition

7. To explore issues related to theological discourse, especially language about God and the metaphysical assumptions found in Christian thought.
8. To nurture creative and reflective thinking by reading some really good but difficult texts that address some key issues within the Western philosophical tradition, like religious experience, faith, reason, God's existence, theodicy, immortality, mortality, ethical action, idolatry, iconography and language.
9. To wrestle with these issues as they relate to our lives.

CHRISTIAN STUDIES CORE REQUIREMENT:

This class fulfills the Core philosophy requirement (PHL 250) for all Christian Studies majors.

Rationale for Its Inclusion in the SoTCM Core

The core philosophy course will not be a technical course.

It will not be a specialized course.

It will be self-consciously general.

Its main interest will be **the cultivation in each of its students a disposition of generous inquiry.**

The content of the course (God and Philosophy) will provide a **context** for this disposition.

We will inquire into issues related to textual interpretation (including scripture).

We will inquire into issues related to embodiment (e.g. incarnation of Christ, mortality, and human vulnerability).

We will inquire into issues related to power dynamics (e.g. issues that come to bear on women, post-colonial dynamics, politics, environmental concerns, and poverty).

We will inquire into issues related to ethical concerns as we consider the logic at work within the life death and resurrection of Christ.

The nature of philosophy is such that it intentionally addresses thought and action at the broadest, most primary levels. Its job is to make explicit logics that are already present within human presuppositions, endeavors and history, but, at the same time, it anticipates those that are not yet present. Philosophy is an inter-play between what has been presumed, articulated and acted upon and what has not yet been thought or said. In other words, philosophy both uncovers what is already present and vigilantly awaits what is yet to be.

The inclusion of the God and Philosophy course into the SoTCM core will be significant for you in that you will be learning how to ask after significant issues. These questions will be important for each of you throughout your lives as you are confronted with the opacity of human life and the profundity of theological problems. As ministers, you will need to be able to deal meaningfully with

the despair that often comes with poverty, sickness and death. As theologians you will need to engage the logic at work within Creation, the transcendence of God and the particularity of love. As interpreters of Holy Scripture, you will need to begin with the nature of authorship and authority in writing itself. As Christians, you will need to ask the question, “how are we to love those we meet as the church?” You will need to ask the principle question, “what, then, is love?”

God and Philosophy will only begin to engender these questions in a meaningful way. You will continue in this attitude of inquiry throughout our curriculum in the SoTCM. The synthetic relationship between the areas of study in our school will be particularized in each of you. What we hope is that you will continue to pursue Christ throughout each of your lives. This pursuit will take on different forms in unimaginable ways for each one of you who passes through our doors.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS:

Please see me in order to discuss any accommodations you may need. All students are expected to meet the minimum standards for this course as set forth by the instructor. Students with learning disabilities who may need accommodations should first discuss options and services with the Academic Support Center (ASC) during the first two weeks of the semester. Approved documentation must be provided by the student and placed on file in the ASC prior to the beginning of the semester. If you have a diagnosed disability, please contact PLNU’s Disability Resource Center (DRC) within the first two weeks of class to demonstrate need and to register for accommodation by phone at 619-849-2486 or by e-mail at DRC@pointloma.edu. See [Disability Resource Center](#) for additional information.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE:

The School of Theology and Christian Ministry is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people often use language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, the School strongly urges students to join faculty and staff in avoiding any sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions and in writing.

TEXTBOOKS: required

- *Proslogion* by St. Anselm ISBN #9780872205659
- *For Self Examination and Judge for Yourself* by Soren Kierkegaard ISBN# 691020663
- *I and Thou* by Martin Buber ISBN #0684717255
- *Ethics and Infinity* by Emmanuel Levinas ISBN # 9780820701783
- *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* James Cone ISBN # 9781626980051

PROCEDURE/REQUIREMENTS:

1. We will be reading from some of the most significant **texts** in the history of Western thought. It is vitally important that you become acquainted with the material in order that you get a feel for not simply what the writer says, but how he or she makes you think. I want you to be thoughtful and critical of what each of the thinkers writes, as well as of what I say in class. A significant portion of your grade will be based upon the amount of reading you do. I will ask you to report on your **reading** each class. For example, an 8.5 means that you read carefully and thought about carefully 85% of the assigned reading by that particular class day.
2. Regular and punctual **attendance** is required for the full benefit of this class. Dialogue tends to spawn new ideas and creativity, so discussion will also be extremely important. Therefore, *each* student will be expected to enter into class discussion. The extent, along with the quality, to which this occurs as well as attendance will be considered in your final grade. You may not pass the class if you have over six absences.
3. There will be one **paper**. The paper will be 6-7 pages in length and will be on James **Cone's** book *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. You should rely on that text primarily, but you may use other texts from the class as well. You will need to do a close and careful analysis of his main argument regarding the significant relationship between the cross of Jesus and the lynching tree in the American south. It will be due 4/24. You may use whichever manual of style you prefer. All papers must fully reference all texts utilized for the paper in accordance with the preferred manual of style. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in either zero credit for the assignment and a full grade reduction for the class or failure of the course all together (this is up to my discretion). Both will result in a letter to the Provost to be placed in your academic record.
4. Throughout the term each of you will do one in-class **presentation**. Please provide at least a 150 word general introduction to the work to be covered for that day. This should be IN YOUR OWN WORDS. If it is the first day discussing a figure, there should be general philosophical introduction to the figure covered during that session. It may include cultural analyses elucidating the time period surrounding the figure/work. The presentation should mainly be an outline of the text for the day. You should reference 7-8 significant portions of the text to be covered in class. You must provide a detailed list of quotations and bibliographic citation/reference for each member of the class. Pictures are always a welcome addition.
5. You will be expected to write a **reading reflection** (RR) for Levinas, Rivera, Derrida, King, Johnson, Marion. One page per day in advance of the class session. This may be informal, but it must be typed and double spaced. It will be due in class on 4/17.

6. There will be three **exams**. The first exam will be a take-home exam and will cover the material from the Ecumenical Creeds, St. Augustine, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas. I will give you a prompt via e-mail. It will be due on the 4th of February. The second will be in class on March 11. It will cover Luther, Kierkegaard and Buber. You may bring 5 3x5 notecards. I will provide the paper. This exam is not timed and may be proctored. The last exam (3rd and final) will also be in class on April 29th at 10:30-1:00. I will ask you to refer to Levinas, Rivera, Derrida, King, Johnson, Marion, as well as to the class as a whole. You may bring 5 3x5 notecards. I will provide the paper.

7. You will be required to attend 1 **Wiley** lecture and type a one page reflection due February 18th. Please do try to attend as many lectures as is possible.

8. The **grades** are based on all of these mentioned assignments. All outside work is due at the beginning of class.

		100-94% A	79-77% C+	63-60% D-
		93-90% A-	76-74% C	59-0% F
READING	10	89-87% B+	73-70% C-	
EXAM I (TAKE HOME)	15	86-84% B	69-67% D+	
EXAM II (IN CLASS)	15	83-80% B-	66-64% D	
EXAM III (FINAL)	15			
PRESENTATION	12			
WILEY REFLECTION	3			
READING REFLECTION	15			
<u>CONE PAPER</u>	<u>15</u>			
	100%			

SCHEDULE GUIDELINE:

- 1/8 Introduction to the course
- 1/9 watch [Willie Jennings Video](#) in class
- 1/14 Read the [Four Ecumenical Creeds](#)
- 1/16 St. Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* PDF*
- 1/21 **No Class**, MLKjr Day
- 1/23 St. Anselm *Proslogion* pp. 1-25*
- 1/28 St. Thomas Aquinas Summa **A and B** * Exam I prompt emailed
- 1/30 Martin Luther [“The Freedom of a Christian”](#) pp. 8-27*
- 2/4 Søren Kierkegaard *Judge for Yourself* pp. 89-123 **Exam I Due (Creeds, Sts. Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas)**
- 2/6 Søren Kierkegaard *Judge for Yourself* pp. 123-143*
- 2/11 Attend Wiley Lecture and read Brian Bantum’s *Redeeming Mulatto* pp. 87-109 PDF
Crill Hall 11:00-11:50(attend any 1 of the 4 Wiley Lectures, but try to attend all 4)
- 2/13 Brian Bantum *Redeeming Mulatto* pp. 111-138 PDF*
- 2/18 Søren Kierkegaard *Judge for Yourself* pp. 145-179 **Wiley Reflection DUE (1 page -formal)***
- 2/20 Søren Kierkegaard *Judge for Yourself* pp. 179-213*
- 2/25 Martin Buber *I and Thou* pp. 51-85 *
- 2/27 Martin Buber *I and Thou* pp. 122-168 *
- 3/4 -3/8 **Spring Break**
- 3/11 **Exam II (Luther, Kierkegaard, and Buber)**
- 3/13 Read Emmanuel Levinas *Ethics and Infinity* pp.21-52 (No Class) Begin Reading Reflection (RR),
1 page per day
- 3/18 Emmanuel Levinas *Ethics and Infinity* pp. 55-92 RR *
- 3/20 Emmanuel Levinas *Ethics and Infinity* pp. 95-122 RR*
- 3/25 Mayra Rivera *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* pp. 55-82 PDF RR*
- 3/27 Jacques Derrida [“To Forgive”](#) pp. 21-51 PDF RR*
- 4/1 Martin Luther King, jr. [Letter From Birmingham Jail](#) [Audio](#) RR*
- 4/3 James Cone *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* pp. 1-52 *
- 4/8 James Cone *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* pp. 53-119 *
- 4/10 James Cone *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* pp. 120-166*
- 4/15 Elisabeth Johnson [She Who Is](#) “Jesus-Sophia” pp. 150-169 PDF RR*
- 4/17 *God Without Being* Marion pp. xix-24 PDF RR **Reading Reflection (RR) DUE (8 pages)**
- 4/18-4/22 Easter recess
- 4/24 FLEX **Cone paper due**
- 4/29 10:30-1:00 Monday **IN CLASS FINAL EXAM (Levinas, Rivera, Derrida, King, Johnson, Marion)**