



## 350G Philosophy of Religion

Fall 2022

### Course Outline

**Date:** 7 September through December 9

**10:00 – 11:20 Wednesday St. Eugene de Mazenod Room and Friday St. Francis Room,**

**Instructors Name:** David Goa

**Office:**

**Office Hours:** by appointment or 11:20 – noon, Wednesday and Friday

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### Course Description

Across the centuries human beings have longed for something beyond the natural order of goods. This course considers such questions as: Can God's existence be proved? What is the relationship between experience and revelation in religion? Is there a way to harmonize the claims of faith and reason? Seminal works by authors such as Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, Justin Martyr, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, Hume, Nietzsche, Weber, Newman, MacIntyre and St John Paul II may be studied.

### Course Objectives

#### B.A. Program Students

- a) The intellectual tradition of Catholicism in Western Culture provides the ground upon which our engagement with the Christian East, Judaism, and Islam will be considered. Students will deepen their understanding of Catholic tradition in dialogue with the primary texts of the course.
- b) Knowledge of Western philosophical consideration of ontology, epistemology, and ethics, with reference to Saint Thomas Aquinas, will be a common dialogue partner.
- c) Skills in reading, writing and oral communication. Reading the primary texts central to this course provides an opportunity to engage the thought of others, enlarge one's appreciation of context and the religious community's perspective, glimpse the genius of

thought, and learn to think along with the best of another tradition out of the heart of the best of one's own tradition.

- d) Skills in logical analysis and research. Clear analysis rooted in what the primary text offers and research approaches in service to context and the genius, limits, and *telos* of the traditions we are studying will be central.
- e) Opportunity for Growth in Christian discipleship. "The love of learning and the desire for God" will inform our engagement of all aspects of this course including the gift of reason and clear thinking in service to spiritual maturity and a life of service.

## Textbooks

### Jewish Tradition

"Job", *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, a translation with commentary, Robert Alter (2011).

"Job: Our Contemporary", *Messengers of God, Biblical Portraits & Legends*, Elie Wiesel (1976): 211 – 235.

*J.B.*, a Play in Verse, Archibald MacLeish (1956).

### Islamic Tradition

"Political Regime", *Alfarabi, the Political Writings*, Volume II, translated, annotated, and with introductions by Charles E. Butterworth (2015): 3 – 94.

*Religion vs Religion*, Ali Shariati, translated by Laleh Bakhtiar (1993).

### Eastern Christian Tradition

"Commentary on the Our Father", *Maximus the Confessor, Selected Writings*, translation with notes by George C. Berthold (1985): 101 – 125.

*The Life of Saint Macrina*, Gregory of Nyssa, translated by Kevin Corrigan (1996).

*On the Soul and the Resurrection*, St. Gregory of Nyssa, translated by Catharine P. Roth (1993).

## Recommended Reading

*The Genius of Judaism*, Bernard-Henri Levy (2017).

*Christianity and Classical Culture, the Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism*, Jaroslav Pelikan (1993).

*The Christian Mystical Tradition, from Plato to Denys*, Andrew Louth (1981).

*Islam & Modernity, Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, Fazlur Rahman (1982).

## Course Requirements

Preparation for each class is noted below. Attendance and participation in each seminar as we work through the texts is both a personal responsibility and an opportunity to learn together in conversation. If you have a compelling reason for absence kindly notify the professor. Written assignments as well as your class presentations including conversation during each seminar

will be assessed for the following: (1) clarity of thought (written and oral), 10%; (2) engagement with the text, 60%; (3) clear analysis rooted in what the primary text offers and research approaches in serves to context and the genius, limits, and *telos* of the traditions; and, engagement with Catholic tradition, 40%.

1. First essay. Each student will write a reflective essay on the gifts of philosophical perspectives addressing one or more of the following: (a) why is the study of philosophy foundational to the study of theology?; (b) does the ground of philosophy of religion provide opportunities to engage a variety of theological traditions within the Christian orbit and such perspectives in other religious traditions?; (c) may philosophical perspectives provide opportunities for engaging civil conversation across contemporary contested issue and themes? Due 28<sup>th</sup> September. **20% of course grade**
  
2. Pre-reading in preparation for each class seminar. We are using a set of primary texts from several religious traditions. These texts will be read prior to the days appointed for seminars on the portion of the specific text slated for discussion. Each student will prepare a speaking note highlighting their thoughts on the text including raising questions and queries regarding the text and what has been provocative in the text. Due as noted in the class schedule. **20% of course grade**
  
3. Student presentation as assigned in our first class. This is an opportunity to read and think along with one other student and prepare for a joint class presentation. Each group will engage a deep reading of a portion of one of our primary texts, prepare a synopsis of their reading and thinking as a conversation guide, and lead the class in discussion. Due on the date assigned for your seminar. **20% of course grade**
  
4. Final essay. The focus of your final essay will be determined in conversation with the professor. A thesis statement along with an outline for its development plus a bibliography will be submitted and approved one month prior to the due date. The paper will follow the standard rubrics for NTC work. Papers will be approximately 20 manuscript pages. Due December 14<sup>th</sup>. **40% of course grade**

### **Late Submission Policy.**

Late submissions, without permission, will be subject to a grade deduction of 10%. This will accumulate every two days.

### **Course Schedule**

*"Where is Wisdom to be Found and Where is Her Place of Habitation?"*

We will focus on themes in the philosophy of religion found in a selection of primary texts in Jewish, Eastern Christian, and Islamic traditions. We will carefully read and discuss these primary texts and deepen our understanding of the ways the love of wisdom is at play within each primary text and the intellectual patrimony of these three faith communities. Our discussion will enlarge the circle of conversation with the authors mentioned above, with the primary texts anchoring this course, and with several contemporary works that engage the primary texts.

7 September

- Course introduction: syllabus
- Course work and expectations
- Our approach to the study of primary texts
- Discussion: “Where is wisdom to be found and where is her place of habitation?” On wisdom, philosophy, spiritual discipline, faith and culture and public life.

9 September

- Job and the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible
- How the Jews read the Bible
- Job in Rabbinical and contemporary works

14 September

Reading “Job”, *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, a translation with commentary, Robert Alter (2011). Section 1

16 September

- Reading Job: section 2

21 September

- Reading Job: section 3

23 September

- Reading Job: section 4

28 September

- Reading Job: section 5
- First essay. Due 28<sup>th</sup> September.      **20% of course grade**

30 September

- Contemporary reading: “Job: Our Contemporary”, *Messengers of God, Biblical Portraits & Legends*, Elie Wiesel (1976): 211 – 235.

5 October

- Contemporary reading: *J.B., a Play in Verse*, Archibald MacLeish (1956).

7 October

- Islam: revelation and social order
- Islam and philosophy
- Islam and political authority
- Alfarabi and the philosophical tradition of Islam

12 October

- A poet reads Al-Farabi. Guest conversationalist Shamas Nanji, author of *Al-Farabi, the Philosopher Who Invents* (2012).

14 October

- “Political Regime”, *Alfarabi, the Political Writings*, Volume II, translated, annotated, and with introductions by Charles E. Butterworth (2015): 3 – 94.

19 October

- “Political Regime”, *Alfarabi, the Political Writings*, Volume II, translated, annotated, and with introductions by Charles E. Butterworth (2015): 3 – 94.

21 October

- “Political Regime”, *Alfarabi, the Political Writings*, Volume II, translated, annotated, and with introductions by Charles E. Butterworth (2015): 3 – 94.

26 October

- Reading “Political Regime”, *Alfarabi, the Political Writings*, Volume II, translated, annotated, and with introductions by Charles E. Butterworth (2015): 3 – 94.

28 October

- *Religion vs Religion*, Ali Shariati, translated by Laleh Bakhtiar (1993).
- A discussion on Shariati’s argument: a “religion of revolution” and a “religion of legitimation.”

2 November

- Reading the Greek Patristics: gathering of texts
- Saints Maximus the Confessor and Gregory of Nyssa
- Spiritual discipline and the roots, soil and pathways toward holiness (*theosis*)

4 November

- “Commentary on the Our Father”, *Maximus the Confessor, Selected Writings*, translation with notes by George C. Berthold (1985): 101 – 125.

9 and 11 November Reading Week

16 November

- “Commentary on the Our Father”, *Maximus the Confessor, Selected Writings*, translation with notes by George C. Berthold (1985): 101 – 125.
- Discussion of each student’s final paper thesis, outline, and bibliography.

18 November

- “Commentary on the Our Father”, *Maximus the Confessor, Selected Writings*, translation with notes by George C. Berthold (1985): 101 – 125.

23 November

- *The Life of Saint Macrina*, Gregory of Nyssa, translated by Kevin Corrigan (1996).

25 November

- *The Life of Saint Macrina*, Gregory of Nyssa, translated by Kevin Corrigan (1996).

30 November

- *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, St. Gregory of Nyssa, translated by Catharine P. Roth (1993).

2 December

- *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, St. Gregory of Nyssa, translated by Catharine P. Roth (1993).

7 December

- *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, St. Gregory of Nyssa, translated by Catharine P. Roth (1993).

9 December Last Class

- Discussion: what we learn from other people’s faith.
- Discussion: what we learn from other people’s philosophical patrimony.
- Why does it matter?

14 December Final essay submitted, **40% of course grade.**

## General Academic Information

### Course Attendance

No credit will be given for a course if the student has been absent, for any reason whatever, from one-third or more of the lectures and/or seminars scheduled for the term. Likewise, no credit will be given if term assignments or other assignments are or remain incomplete.

### Leave of Absence and Policy for Incompletes

Extensions to an incomplete grade may be granted in extenuating circumstances, but may not exceed 16 weeks following the end of the course. Students who fail to complete course work by the agreed deadline will have a grade assigned which is based on work completed.

### Academic Integrity

Acts of academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) are subject to an appropriate penalty. The grade "F" may be assigned to a student guilty of such acts by the professor of the course in which the infraction occurred. A second offense against academic integrity renders the student liable to automatic dismissal from NTC. Further details are available in the Academic Calendar in the Academic Misconduct Policy.

### Academic Grievances

Students may appeal grades received; the procedure is outlined in the Academic Calendar in the Grade Appeal Policy. For other grievances, students will refer to the Student Grievances Policy also outlined in the Academic Calendar.

*NOTE: The GPA is computed on the basis of cumulative grade point (letter) values, not percentage values. All courses are included in this calculation except those exceeding degree requirements and/or received as transfer credits from other recognized institutions.*

### Grading System

Undergraduate Studies		
Grade Meaning	Grade	Grade Point
Excellent	A+	4.0
	A	4.0
	A-	3.7
Good	B+	3.3
	B	3.0
	B-	2.7

Graduate Studies		
Grade Meaning	Grade	Grade Point
Excellent	A+	4.0
	A	4.0
	A-	3.7
Good	B+	3.3
	B	3.0
	B-	2.7

Adequate	C+	2.3
	C	2.0
	C-	1.7
Marginal	D+	1.3
	D	1.0
Fail	F	0.0

Adequate	C+	2.3
	C	2.0
	C-	1.7
Fail	D+	1.3
	D	1.0
	F	0.0

### **Written Assignments - Style and Format**

Newman Theological College requires that all written work be submitted in acceptable academic format and style. Please note the following regulations:

#### **Regulations**

Research papers, book reports, article summaries, reflection papers, and essays should be double-spaced, printed on one side only, and submitted on white, 8.5" x 11" paper.

A standard type style, such as Times New Roman, with a 12-point font size, must be used. The instructor will specify the most recent edition of the style manual to be used:

1. Kate Turabian, "A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
2. Joseph Gibaldi & William Ahters, eds., "MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers" (New York: Modern Language Association of America).
3. American Psychological Association "Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association" (Washington: APA Publications).

Copies of these standard references may be purchased in the NTC bookstore.

Ignorance of standard form is not considered an acceptable excuse for deviation from required standards of format and style.

#### **Academic Regulations**

The following Academic Regulations are located in the Academic Calendar for your reference:

- Changes in Registration: Add/Drop/Withdraw Notice
- Course Work
- Final Examination Schedule
- Incomplete Grade Policy
- Inclusive Language

### **Related Academic Matters**

The following Related Academic Matters are located in the Academic Calendar for your reference:

- Grade Reports & Posting
- Glossary of Academic Terms

### **Other Related Policies**

The following policies are located in the Academic Calendar for your reference:

- Academic Misconduct Policy
- Grade Appeal Policy

### **Recording of Lectures**

Audio or video recording of lectures, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior consent of the instructor. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

### **Student Accessibility Services:**

A student with special needs that could affect their performance in class should contact their professor during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. They should also register with Student Services by contacting the Dean of Students, Lorraine Spenrath at 780-392-2450; email [lorraine.spenrath@newman.edu](mailto:lorraine.spenrath@newman.edu)

**Bibliography** (May be distributed in class.)