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# PHIL 347: Philosophy of Religion

**Lectures:** Tuesday, Thursday, 2–3:30, Spring 2018  
SWNG 122

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## Overview:

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of religion; it will offer a survey of a number of the central philosophical questions about religious beliefs. There will be a particular emphasis on the *epistemology of religion*—that is to say, questions about what makes certain religious beliefs reasonable or unreasonable. What evidence do we have for or against various theistic or atheistic stances? Is evidence necessary for reasonable belief? Just what is it to have a religious belief, anyway? We will examine influential arguments for and against the existence of God, and also consider ethical and political questions about how we should think about others' religious beliefs.

No prior philosophical experience will be assumed.

## Course Texts:

The required readings for the course will be made available via Connect. No textbook purchase is required.

## Topics (list subject to change):

- What is the relationship between religion and morality? Does it make sense to suppose that morality “comes from” God? Does it make sense to believe in morality in a secular framework?
- Religious freedom is a cornerstone of liberal democracy. What is important about the freedom of religion, and how far should it extend? For example, should people be exempted from democratically-established laws against which they have personal religious objections? Is it a different story if they have moral objections that are not religious?
- What is a religion? What is the relationship between religion and theism (the belief in one or more Gods)?

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- Some people think they have perceptual awareness of God in a way similar to the way you have perceptual awareness of this syllabus. How should we evaluate these claims?
- Are justifications for religious beliefs circular? Is it always bad for beliefs to be justified in a circular way?
- Some religions derive from a common set of beliefs, but have diverged in dramatic ways—Islam and Christianity provide one interesting such example. How should we think of this relation? What should we think about the question of whether Christians and Muslims “worship the same God”?
- Many monotheistic religious traditions hold that there is a morally perfect God in total control of the world. Is this view consistent with the manifest existence of suffering in the world?
- Is free will consistent with divine foreknowledge?

**Expectations:**

High academic standards are expected at UBC in general and in this course in particular. Students are expected to attend all lectures, and to read all the relevant readings. (Some students will find they get the most out of reading if they read before the corresponding lecture; others will get the most value out of letting the lecture introduce the material, then reading afterward. Doing both is highly encouraged!)

**Assessment:**

Details TBD. There will be at least one short-answer exam, and a number of written assignments. The exam will assess superficial comprehension of the course material; written assignments will develop philosophical analysis skills. There will be an in-class participation component as well. All grading details are TBD as of now (June 2017); students can email me for an updated syllabus later in the summer or fall.