



**PH 273 *Is Christianity True?* (3)
Winter 2002 (Directed Study)**

Instructor: Terry Fach
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Required Texts

Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (2nd edition), by M. Peterson, W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach, and D. Basinger.

The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader, edited by James F. Sennett

Course Description

This course guides students in critical study of some notorious problems in the philosophy of religion, with particular emphasis on theistic religions. PH 125 *Introduction to Philosophy* is a prerequisite for this class.

The expectation of this class is that of a senior-level philosophy course. The topics covered are outlined below.

Course Objectives

1. An improved, explicit understanding of the way in which philosophical and religious concepts and reasoning work;
2. An improved ability to consider critically, and yet sensitively, some of the assertions, assumptions, and arguments connected with theistic traditions; and
3. Improved general skills of thinking sensitively and yet critically about religion and similar subjects.

Course Requirements

Reading

1. Introduction to Philosophy of Religion: What is philosophy of religion? What is the relationship between faith and reason? **Read: RRB, chs. 1 & 3; R.M. Adams, "The Virtue of Faith"**

2. Theism and Rationality: What kind of being do theists believe in, and what makes believing “rational”? **Read: RRB, ch. 4; Plantinga’s essay “On Ockham’s Way Out”**
3. Support for Theism: What are the traditional arguments for the existence of God? Are any of them good arguments? **Read RRB, ch. 5**
4. Religious Experience: Could private experiences of God be good evidence that God exists? **Read: RRB, ch. 2 & 7**
5. Arguments Against God: How can belief in God be reconciled with the existence of evil and suffering? **Read: RRB, ch. 6; Plantinga’s “The Free Will Defense”**
6. Faith and Basic Belief: Does the idea of “faith”, or “basic belief,” make arguments irrelevant? **Read: RRB, ch. 7; Plantinga’s “Reason & Belief in God”**
7. Life after Death: **Read: RRB, ch. 10**

Writing

1. Two Review Essays (30% X 2)

Summarize and evaluate two of the articles by Plantinga. Length of this essay is 5 – 8 pages.

2. One Research Essay (40%)

Write an essay, 8 - 12 pages in length on a topic selected from a list supplied by the instructor.

Due Dates

All written work is due by **April 16, 2002**.

Office Hours

I can be reached by phone (voice-mail) at Nazarene University College (571-2550 ext. 229). My office hours this term are Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1 – 2:30 pm. If you cannot meet me during office hours, I can arrange to see you at another time that is mutually convenient. You can also reach me by e-mail: terry.fach@nuc.edu

Grading Criteria

It goes without saying that some of the grading done in a course like this depends on the critical judgement of the marker. That does not mean that the standards of good writing and argumentation are entirely a matter of individual preference. Part of what you will learn in a class like this one is the set of standards used by academics teaching in this discipline. If you have

questions about what lies behind the assignment of a particular grade, or if the comments on an assignment leave you uncertain as to what you would need to do to improve it, please consult me and I will be happy to discuss the matter with you.

What follows is a rough guide to grading criteria used in this course:

An **A** essay or examination answer is free from most stylistic, technical and factual errors, demonstrates an excellent grasp of the subject matter, is exceptionally well-organized and well-argued, and exhibits a fair degree of originality (where that is required).

A **B** essay or examination answer is free from most stylistic, technical and factual errors, demonstrates a good grasp of the subject matter, is well-organized and well-argued beyond the level of mechanical repetition of text or lecture material and shows some promise of originality.

A **C** essay or examination answer contains some stylistic, technical or factual errors, demonstrates an average grasp of the subject matter, but in a repetitive and mechanical fashion, and exhibits some elementary organizational and argumentative ability but without any evidence of originality.

A **D** essay or examination answer contains excessive stylistic, technical or factual errors, fails to demonstrate a grasp of the subject matter in even a routine or mechanical fashion, is poorly organized and void of argument and originality.

The following chart matches letter grades with a brief description and percentages:

A+	Exceptional	96-100
A	Excellent	91-95
A-		86-90
B+	Very Good	82-85
B	Good	75-81
B-		72-74
C+	Satisfactory	68-71
C	Adequate	63-67
C-		60-62
D+		56-59
D	Marginal	50-59
F	Failure	49% and below