

**TENTATIVE OUTLINE**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Room 302, Brescia

**Philosophy 3997G**

2018

**Advanced Topics in the Philosophy of Religion:**  
**Religion, Reason, Science and the Individual**

Mon: 12:30-2:30

Dr. Dennis Hudecki

Wed: 1:30-2:30

**Course Description:**

The purpose of this course is to reflect upon some issues that arise from the conflict, or the apparent conflict, between reason (including scientific reasoning) and religious faith. Until the scientific revolution, which began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, philosophy and religion seemed to be on friendly terms. Since then, the relationship has been complicated and uneasy. As the 21<sup>st</sup> century unfolds, the intellectual disputes over religion have become increasingly intense. For some thinkers, religious faith is not only unjustified; it is now unacceptable. Dawkins writes, for example, "A case can be made that *faith* is one of the world's great evils, comparable to the smallpox virus, but harder to eradicate." Dawkins thinks, then, to say the least, that science and religion are for the most part incompatible. Kierkegaard disagrees and furthermore argues that science is in the habit of overstepping its legitimate scope of inquiry. What is the individual to do in the face of such disputes? This course will focus on the relationship between religious faith, reason and science in an attempt to sort out and clarify the issues. The views of several thinkers will be considered and many perspectives will be explored. Among the questions that will be addressed are:

- 1) Are science and religion compatible?
- 2) What is the relationship between faith and reason?
- 3) What approach should an individual adopt if it is the case the ultimate answers to the meaning of life are not known?
- 4) What is the significance of the fact that there are many different religions? Does it follow from this that one should have less faith or no faith in any one religion? Does it follow that no one religion, alone, can be the truth? Or are religious people nevertheless intellectually entitled to think that their religion, alone, is the truth?
- 5) Can one have an intelligent belief in God without having a proof for God's existence?

**Course Requirements:**

One essay (due April 5)	25%
One mid-term test (February 25)	30%
Class participation	10%
Final I examination	35%

**Required Texts:**

*Science and Religion: Are They Compatible?* Daniel Dennett and Alvin Plantinga, Oxford, 2010.  
ISBN 9780199738427

All other course materials will be photocopied and made available to the students.

**Office Hours:**

The easiest way for you to contact me is right after every class, in the classroom. I make myself available at that time for as long as needed, especially after Wednesday's classes. Furthermore, I will especially try to be in my office at Brescia on Tuesday's and Thursday's 4:00 to 5:30. Still, to make sure, you should phone ahead to make sure I am there. My office is in the portable complex that is located behind the Merici Lounge. You may have to ring the doorbell to get in. Please feel free to drop into my office anytime, or by appointment at a mutually acceptable time. You can also communicate with me by phone or voice-mail (tel: 519-432-8353, ext. 28245), or you can reach me via email at: <dhudecki@uwo.ca>. Please put something like "Philosophy 3997G" in the subject heading of any email you send me. Otherwise I may inadvertently delete it without reading it. (Please be warned that, because of the number of students I have, I may be slow in answering your e-mail.) Please do not hesitate to come in and see me regarding course matters or other matters. Feel free to visit if you want to philosophize about any issue--course-related or not! Regardless of why you are there, it will be my duty and my pleasure to try to help.

**Course Objectives:**

At the end of the course, students will:

- have become acquainted with the major themes and issues that prevail in the philosophy of religion;
- have been presented with and encouraged to think about the some of the most important philosophical issues that an individual human being must face over the course of their life;
- be better able to find within themselves and give expression to the philosophical questions that are most personally important to them;
- have an understanding of the central role that logical, rational arguments, (based on reasoning and evidence) play in the search for truth;
- be better able to distinguish good arguments from bad ones;
- be able to identify an argument's assumptions, premises and conclusions;
- be better able to articulate and defend their philosophical views in both written and spoken form;
- have a better appreciation of the discipline of philosophy.

### **Lecture Schedule:**

Dawkins: Religious faith is an evil

Socrates: Apology: Humans do not know the answers to the highest questions;

Are religious moral beliefs compatible with reason? (Brunner, Mercier, Ewing, Dennes)

Aquinas: Religion is compatible with reason

Hume: Religion is not compatible with reason

Augustine and Hume on the Problem of Evil

Wittgenstein: Problems with Hume's understanding of language

Kierkegaard: Philosophical Fragments: The Socratic Unknown and the individual

Kierkegaard: "Subjectivity is truth": The Socratic Unknown and the individual

Johnson: Science and the individual

Clifford: you must never believe anything without evidence

James: sometimes you can and should believe things without evidence

Stephen Jay Gould: Science, including evolution-theory, and religion are two non-overlapping realms

Pope John Paul II: "Lessons from the Galileo Case: Message on Evolution"

Dennett: Naturalism (i.e., the view that all explanations must be natural; there cannot be religious or metaphysical explanations) is true

Plantinga: Naturalism is false

Hick: Is religious exclusivism wrong? Yes

Plantinga: Is religious exclusivism wrong? No

Flew: Is religion unfalsifiable and therefore meaningless? Yes

Mitchell: Is religion unfalsifiable and therefore meaningless? No

### **Test**

There will be a term test, worth 30% on March 5

### **Essay**

The essay is worth 25% and is due on April 11

### **Participation**

The 10% participation mark is determined solely by attendance. (Approximately a half-mark is deducted for every missed hour.)

### **Final Exam**

The final exam will be worth 35% % of your final grade. It will cover the material from the whole course.

### **Some Other Important Dates:**

First class: Mon., Jan. 8

Reading Week: Feb. 19-23

Easter: April 1

Our Last class: Wed., April 11

Final Exam period: April 14-30

## **2017-18 BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS**

### **1. POLICY REGARDING MAKEUP EXAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEADLINES**

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation. Academic accommodation for illness will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her academic responsibilities. Minor ailments typically treated by over-the-counter medications will not normally be accommodated. Documentation shall be submitted as soon as possible to the student's Academic Advisor indicating the period of illness and when the student should be able to resume academic responsibilities. Students must submit their documentation along with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Please note that personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings,

work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are **not** grounds for academic accommodation.

A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is **required** if a student is seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. A SMC can be downloaded from: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf). The student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that her ability to meet academic responsibilities was seriously affected. Please note that under University Senate regulations documentation stating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill” is **not** adequate to support a request for academic accommodation.

Whenever possible, requests for academic accommodation should be initiated in advance of due dates, examination dates, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and Academic Advisor in a timely manner.

The full policy on requesting accommodation due to illness can be viewed at: <http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg117.html>

## 2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal problem that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds may not be considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult an Academic Advisor. If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines (refer to the Registrar's website, <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/> or the list of official dates <http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg7.html> ). You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

The Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent absence from the class or laboratory (<http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg130.html> )

## 3. ABSENCES

**Short Absences:** If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

**Extended Absences:** If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work and arrange academic accommodations, if appropriate.

## 4. POLICY ON CHEATING & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Students are urged to read the section on Scholastic Offences in the Academic Calendar. Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Misconduct in the Western Academic Calendar.

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Student Services Centre, or the Registrar. A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

### **Plagiarism:**

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### **Computer-marked Tests/exams:**

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

## **5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS**

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal signed by the student must be sent to the Department Chair. If the response of the department is considered unsatisfactory to the student, she may then submit a signed, written appeal to the Office of the Dean. Only after receiving a final decision from the Dean may a student appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic. A Guide to Appeals is available from the Ombudsperson's Office, or you can consult an Academic Advisor. Students are advised to consult the section on Student Academic Appeals under Academic Rights and Responsibilities in the Western Academic Calendar (<http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg112.html>).

Note that final course marks are not official until the Academic Dean has reviewed and signed the final grade report for the course. If course marks deviate from acceptable and appropriate standards, the Academic Dean may require grades to be adjusted to align them with accepted grading practices ([http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/evaluation\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf) and [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/finalgrades.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/finalgrades.pdf)).

## 6. PREREQUISITES

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisite(s).

## 7. SUPPORT

### Support Services

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/>. The website for the Student Development Centre at Western is <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>.

### Mental Health and Wellness

Students may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to your learning, such as increased anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, feeling down or lost, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. Services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about mental health and wellness at Brescia at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/life/mental-health-wellness/>. Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental\_Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### Sexual Violence

All members of the Brescia University College community have a right to work and study in an environment that is free from any form of sexual violence. Brescia University College recognizes that the prevention of, and response to, Sexual Violence is of particular importance in the university environment. Sexual Violence is strictly prohibited and unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Brescia is committed to preventing Sexual Violence and creating a safe space for anyone in the Brescia community who has experienced Sexual Violence.

If you or someone you know has experienced any form of Sexual Violence, you may access resources at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/life/sexual-violence/>.

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Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.