PHHR 4001 PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: INDIA & WEST

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The Center for Dharma Studies, GTU

Spring 2017  
TH 12:40-3:30pm  
Class room TBA  
3 units

Office Hours:
Fr. Anselm: by appointment; I can be reached under (415) 567 7824 (St. Dominic’s parish, ask for) or aramelow@dspt.edu. I am also generally available after class.
Purushottama Bilimoria: available at the Center for Dharma Studies, 2452 Virginia Ave, behind GTU Admin Building, 3rd Floor (301); telephone (510) 649-2580; (631)3351366; and after class.

Course description:
The religions of East and West claim different experiences of an Ultimate Reality and with that, different conceptions of the Divine in their theologies. Between them, both claim varying answers to fundamental human questions, such as the problem of evil, sin and suffering, the nature of the human personhood and its destiny or purpose within the larger cosmological picture. Both East and West also employ philosophical concepts to argue for and against the existence and nature of God or the Transcendent, and of the soul, and understand with overlaps and differences the puzzles of divine action in the universe and history (e.g. via miracles, direct intervention, incarnation, and salvific telos), as well as questions of truth, theodicy and atonement. This Seminar will be an in-depth comparative study of these philosophical theologies, with a focus on Judeo-Christian and India’s Dharma traditions.

Seminar, research paper; intended audience: MA/MTS, PhD/ThD.

Course Objectives
The purpose of this course is to develop in each student

• a scholarly Knowledge of a range of philosophies that treat of theological and metaphysical issues in the traditions of the West (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), and from the East, namely, of Hinduism and Buddhism.

• a competence in evaluating Feminist and the Postcolonial critiques of classical-analytic Philosophy of Religion, with their own possible or impossible alternative responses to ‘The BIG Questions’.

• an appreciation of the importance of these ideas and critiques for developing a sensitive and tolerant outlook on others of different beliefs and on the world.

• a willingness to engage in debate and be flexible in the responses of one's own rational and/or faith commitments in these areas of theological importance.
Outcomes:
By the end of the course, students should be able to:
1. Identify the major questions and categories of philosophy of religion and philosophical theology across India and the West.
2. Evaluate the strengths and limitations of philosophical methods in the investigation of questions of religious and metaphysical or cosmological significance by comparing and contrasting classical and de/constructive approaches.
3. Interpret the significance of latter critiques from non-mainstream inquiries for shaping the methods and approaches of the classical philosophy of religion.
4. Analyze the humanist and moral consequences of philosophy of religion as conventionally practiced (e.g. evil perpetrated in prior and modern times).
5. Explain and assess various alternative approaches to major contemporary topics of concern in this field.

The student will demonstrate this knowledge through
1) Attendance of class (mandatory, and at least one departmental colloquium) 10%
2) Class participation by contributing to the discussions 10%
3) Taking turns in preparing texts that are to be discussed in class and a class presentation on a critical topic from the lectures. 10%
4) a 15-20 pp research paper (70% of grade)

The research paper is subject to approval.
We would ask you to give us your major research paper (#4 above) proposal by TH 11/2. This proposal should consist of a short paragraph, describing the topic of your choice (it might be good to talk to us about it some time before), and a bibliography. The bibliography is most important. Please make your bibliography as specific as possible. (Please familiarize yourself with the electronic research tools on the GTU library website.) It is not required but a good practice to write an outline as well.

The deadline for the paper is TH 12/14. Out of fairness to other students who submit their work on time, missed deadlines will result in a lower grade.

Readings:
will be posted on Moodle
Some handouts may be provided.

Class Schedule
TH 9/7
Faith and reason
• West
  b. E. Stump, “Athens and Jerusalem: The Relationship of Philosophy and Theology”
  c. J. Ratzinger: Regensburg Address

**East**


b. *Reason and Deconstruction in Buddhist philosophy of religion* by Peter Fenner (with P. Bilimoria); Topic 7 from p 9-12 (Logical analysis in contemplation). (From Philosophies of Religion India & The West, study guide, 2015)


TH 9/14

**Arguments for or against God**

**West**

a. *Aquinas*, Summa Theologiae I, 2, 3 and for overview: W. David Beck, God’s Existence, from “In Defense of Miracles”


d. W.L. Craig: "The Existence of God and the Beginning of the Universe."

**East**


c. The moral argument for God; argument from scriptural authority to Ontological Arguments and Shankara’s objections. (From Philosophies of Religion India & The West, study guide, 2015; pp 120-123)


TH 9/21

**Arguments for or against God continued**
Conceptions of the Ultimate or Divine

West
- C.S. Lewis: “The Rival Conceptions of God,” in *Mere Christianity*
- Linda Zagzebski: *Omnisubjectivity* (online; for print see [here](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/concepts-god/)).

East
- ‘The Upanishads: Brahman and the Unity of Being’: Topic 4, pp. 92-98 (From Philosophies of Religion India & The West, study guide, 2015); *Selections from the Upanishads* (accompanying Readings in Moodle): *Divinity of the Self*; pp 83-90 ((From Philosophies of Religion India & The West, study guide, 2015).
  Summary in ‘Self and Brahman : the Vedas to Upanishads’ from *Horizons of the Self in Hindu Thought* (P. Bilimoria)
- Shankara’s investigation into ultimate reality: Brahman; Ramanuja’s view of Brahman, Samkhya Cosmological Argument, Madhva’s dualism. (From Philosophies of Religion India & The West, study guide, 2015): pp.108-119; 124-128.) Additional readings: *Commentaries on Brahmasutra/Vedantasutra by Shankara and Ramanuja* (Readings to above segments)
- *Suturing the Body Corporate (Divine and Human) in the Brahmanic Traditions*. Special Issue on *Panentheism* and *Panpsychism*, *Sophia*, (Springer) vol 49 No 2, pp 237-259.
• East
  c. Critiques of Causality in Vedanta (see Sharma above); subscription to in Nyaya under Udayana.

TH 10/19

Nothingness and Negation

• West
  a. some shorter primary texts:
     i. Aquinas: for creatio ex nihilo: S. theol. I, 45, I-5, De ver. 1, 1 ad 7
     ii. Heidegger: What is Metaphysics?
     (optional, additional readings:)

• East

TH 10/26 Reading Week

TH 11/2 paper proposals due

Individuation and Personal Identity
(including the One and the Many, conceptions of death and afterlife)

• West


• East


TH 11/9

Individuation and Personal Identity continued

TH 11/16

Evil, Sin, Redemption, Theodicy

(agency of person: free will, justice, atonement, and karma)

• West

a. Free Will

i. Aquinas: De Malo VI.


b. Theodicy/Atonement

i. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra gentiles III, Chapter 71 and Summa theologiae I, 49, 2.


iv. W.L. Craig, *The Problem of Evil*


• East
  f. further suggested reading (optional):

TH 11/23  Thanksgiving, no class

TH 11/30  

Evil, Sin, Redemption, Theodicy continued

TH 12/7  

Critique and Metacritique:  
how East and West might think about postcolonial and feminist critiques.

West


East

chapter 6

TH 12/14

Aesthetics

• West
  b. Lawrence Feingold: "Transcendental Properties of Being and the Hierarchy of Creation"

• East
  a. A Taste of India Aesthetics: Slide presentation and overview by Colette Walker (in person)
  b. Introduction: Contemporary Indian Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art, Arindam Chakrabarti (University of Hawaii, Manoa, USA), in The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Indian Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art.

Course or Instructor Policies

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the presentation of another’s ideas, methods, research, or words without proper acknowledgement. It runs the gamut from failing to cite a reference (sloppy scholarship), to passing off another’s work as one’s own. It includes close paraphrasing as well as lifting of entire lines nearly verbatim without acknowledgement. As the effects of the plagiarism will be the same regardless of intent, intent will not be construed as essential to the act, although it may be considered in determining whether the charge of plagiarism should be pursued or what the penalty may be. For general requirements for proper acknowledgement in written work, see the most current edition of Kate Turabian, Manual for the Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations and The Chicago Manual of Style.
Arrangements in Cases of Documented Disability
If you will need special arrangements for meeting course requirements for reasons of documented disability, please speak to one of the instructors very early in the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. A description of the GTU policy regarding accommodation for differently abled students is online at: http://gtu.edu/admissions/life-at-gtu/students-with-disabilities

Honor Code
Students in all courses and phases of the Doctoral Program are subject to the GTU Honor Code, described on p. 15 of the on-line Student Handbook. Please note: “Documented evidence that a student has violated the honor code may result in immediate expulsion from the program.”

Other GTU Policies
Students and faculty in required Doctoral Seminars are also subject to GTU Institutional Policies, detailed on pp. 54 ff. in the on-line Student Handbook, including: Non-discrimination, AIDS non-discrimination, and Drug Free Environment (52), Inclusive Language (54), Plagiarism (55 ff.), Exceptions and Accommodations (63 ff.), and Sexual Misconduct (65 ff.).