Essential Information

Please refer to the following resources for information essential for the successful completion of courses and degree programs at Nazarene Theological Seminary. Links to these resources are available in the Essential Information section at http://support.nts.edu.

- NTS Mission Statement & Purpose and Degree Objectives
- Tips for online learning success
- NTS library services
- NTS textbook information
- Online technical requirements and Moodle support information
- NTS Student Handbook including statements on quality of work, plagiarism, and academic probation
- Handbook for Inclusive Language

Instructor Information

Professor: Eric Severson, Ph.D.  Email: erseverson@gmail.com
Office: (617) 745-3525
Office Hours: by appointment (email)

Catalog Description

This course deals with the problems that arise in relating the facts of human experience to the truths of the Christian faith.

Course Narrative & Rationale

Some of the most fundamental questions in life arise at the intersection between philosophy and theology. This course is designed to allow space for question about the meaning of religion, the nature of faith, the meaning of God, the nature of evil and human destiny.

Degree Objectives

Intersection of M.Div. Objectives and Course Outcomes

1. The development of wisdom and discernment through engagement with the intellectual challenge of the literature of the Christian faith, by the critical, scholarly study of the history and theology of Christianity, and of the literature and practices of Christian spirituality, ethics and ministry.

2. The growth of mature self-awareness and self-understanding as flawed human beings, reconciled to God and to each other within the Christian community, who are being transformed into the perfect likeness of Christ, filled with his Spirit, and gifted for the service of humanity.
3. The investigation of human society, thought and culture in order to articulate clear and coherent views of the context of the mission of the Church, and to develop an understanding of the Church as the community of faith with a passion for the gospel engaging in mission to different cultures.

**Course Outcomes**

This course intends to:

1. Survey the classical problems and issues in the philosophy of religion, including theodicy, the existence of God, the relationship between faith and reason, etc. (Readings and discussions, pre-module Weeks 1-5)
2. Explore the intersection of various cultures and religion (Readings and discussions, pre-module Week 6)
3. Demonstrate the ability to analyze, discuss and engage concepts across the various fields of philosophy as they intersect with religion and religious categories (daily discussion, reading journals, pre-module discussion boards and during module class meetings).
4. Students should display the ability to engage in reflection on philosophical concepts with exegetical depth and rigor (Short Reflection Paper).
5. Students should display the capacity to research and extend course concepts into areas in the field of philosophy of religion not covered in the course (Research Paper).

**Required Texts & Course Materials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Copyright</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy of Religion</td>
<td>William L. Rowe</td>
<td>978-0495007258</td>
<td>Thompson/Wads.</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The God Who May Be</td>
<td>Richard Kearney</td>
<td>978-0253214898</td>
<td>Indiana University</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sickness Unto Death</td>
<td>Kierkegaard</td>
<td>978-0691020280</td>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond Good and Evil</td>
<td>Nietzsche</td>
<td>978-0140449235</td>
<td>Penguin</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Course Requirements**

1. **Final Examination: Cumulative Final Examination (100 points) – June 29**

2. **Three Reading Journals (50 points each; 150 points total)**

   Since this is a reading and discussion course it is absolutely essential that students arrive at class each day having read the material and prepared for class discussion. Students will be required to keep a “reading journal” in which thoughts and questions about the various reading assignments are recorded. These journal entries should be carefully written and clear, though they are not considered “refined prose” and will be evaluated primarily for content and not for grammar/spelling/structure. In most cases, full points will be awarded to journal entries that make sincere attempts to address the material. The journal will be divided into two parts. Students will upload journals on June 17 (pre-Module reading), June 22 (from Week One of the course) and June 28 (from Week Two of the course). Each report will count for 50 points, totaling 150 points overall.

   For each assigned reading in the syllabus, students should provide a distinct journal entry that includes:
   a) Confirm that you completed the assigned reading, or list the percentage completed by the conclusion of that reading period.
   b) Several distinct ideas or thoughts inspired by the texts, or their intersection with ideas you have from life or other courses. Be sure to provide quotes and references in your journals; these may be helpful when you write your reflection papers.
c) These are not meant to add significant time to your reading. These are not graded for writing quality or clarity. These journals are simply a manner of confirming that students are performing a careful reading of the assigned texts.

Sample Reading Report

100% of the reading assignment completed:
1. The editors quote Descartes wondering why more rigorous philosophical systems have not been built on the steadiness of mathematical certainty (2 + 2 = 4, etc.) (Modern Philosophy, p. 9). What is the significance of the fact that Descartes is founding “modern philosophy” with such abundant confidence in the helpfulness of math to guide philosophy?
2. Descartes seems to be arguing that his “Meditations on First Philosophy” is justified because it might help unbelievers come to faith in God (MP, 13-14). How does this square with the “doubt everything” paradigm that follows? This feels a little like he’s trying to get the “protection” he needs from the theology faculty in Paris by making them believe he is doing the church an evangelical service.
3. It seems like every one of these meditations interacts heavily with the idea of God, and where/how the human mind arrives at the concept of God. It seems like Descartes is either doing or battling theology.
4. What does Descartes mean by the word “nature”? For instance, when he says, “nature has taught me this” (MP, 29) - is he considering himself separate from “nature”?
5. The notion of the soul seems arbitrary here. Would Descartes need the concept of “soul” if he didn’t feel pressured by the church to use that language?

3. Short Reflection Paper (50 points, during Module, due June 25, 5:00 p.m.)

Students will write a “short reflection paper” of at least 1250 words each (12pt, double space, 1” margin, conform ed to Turabian) reflecting on philosophical or ethical issues raised within the assigned readings. Students should avoid generic paper topics (i.e. “Plato’s Metaphysics”) and strive to write a paper that explores the issue with significant creativity and depth (i.e. “The Unsettling of Plato’s Metaphysics in Timaeus”). These papers should take an exegetical approach to the readings. The must develop a clear thesis with support from the philosophers studied in class. Your reflections should include several citations from the assigned course readings. External research is acceptable but not required. Students will be expected to develop researched opinions in these reflection papers, emphasizing sources gleaned from the required readings. Significant grading deductions will be incurred for spelling/grammar errors, improper documentation, etc. Papers will be graded according to the following rubric:

- Grammar, spelling, sentence structure, readability, consistency of notations/spacing/pagination (10 points)
- Careful engagement of the text(s) under consideration (10 points)
- Logical connectedness of the paragraphs/points, visibility of a structure/outline, transitions between points/paragraphs (10 points)
- Thesis development, quality of argument, appropriate length/word count (10 points)
- Strength of conclusions, scope of argument (10 points)
- Total Points: 50

4. Research Paper (100 points, post-module, due July 22)

Students will write a research paper, of at least 3000 words (12 pt, double space, 1” margin, conformed to Turabian), reflecting on issues raised in the course but extending these reflections into external research. This paper must relate to some issue or theme within the broader field of Philosophy of Religion. Topics should be specific and narrow. Students should have their topics
approved by the professor before beginning research. Research and writing will occur after the module in the post-module period, building on knowledge and topics that have been discussed in the course. Significant grading deductions will be incurred for spelling/grammar errors, improper documentation, etc. Students are strongly encouraged to use multiple proofreaders and scrutinize all arguments before submission. Papers will be graded according to the following rubric:

- Grammar, spelling, sentence structure, readability, consistency of notations/spacing/pagination (20 points)
- Quality of research, accuracy of citations, connection of thesis to the scholarly field, use of primary sources (20 points)
- Logical connectedness of the paragraphs/points, visibility of a structure/outline, transitions between points/paragraphs (20 points)
- Thesis development, quality of argument, appropriate length/word count (20 points)
- Strength of conclusions, scope of argument (whether or not the paper accounts for the range of opinions on the topic), overall presentation of thesis (20 points)
- Total Points: 100

5. Participation and Attendance (100 points, during module)

Attendance is absolutely critical in this course – each segment of the course will build on the previous concepts making it impossible to follow the progression without good attendance. After one absence, any further unexcused absences (anything not related to 1. serious, documented illness, 2. death in the immediate family) will lower a student’s overall grade by 50 points (10% of overall grade) per absence. Contact the instructor (phone or email) prior to any planned absences and within 24 hours of illness-related absences.

In the pre-modular stage of the class, students are expected to converse in online forums about the assigned material. This participation needs to show thoughtful, considerate and sustained engagement of both the material and the work of classmates.

During the module, students will be awarded points for alert presence in class, contributing to dialogue and demonstrating adequate preparation for the daily discussion. Some students are more inclined to share their thoughts than others. The key to full credit on this course requirement is active engagement, which is evidenced by timeliness, awareness of classmates and their needs, preparation for class, and constructive participation in discussion.

An important note about laptop and phone use: Under no circumstances should students send and receive calls, or instant/text messages in class. Laptop computers have a detrimental impact on classroom discussion, even when they are used appropriately. Since this course emphasizes discussion and dialogue, computers are strongly discouraged in the classroom. If a student wishes to utilize a laptop in class she/he must sign a contract indicating that the wireless receiving on the laptop will be disabled during class, and that the computer will be used for note-taking only. Each violation of this policy (accessing the internet, email, e-books, documents, etc.) will result in a 25-point deduction in the course grade (5% of the overall grade).

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1 Daily attendance records must be reported for those obtaining V.A. and Department of Education benefits. Students must make the professor aware if their attendance must be recorded.
### Distribution of Student Learning Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-module hours</th>
<th>module hours</th>
<th>post-module hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face Class Sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Participation in forums, groups, etc.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams &amp; Quizzes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Method for Submitting Assignments

All written assignments will be submitted through the Moodle course website.

### Inclusive Language

NTS is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, NTS urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions, and in their writings. All written work presented to meet course requirements must use gender inclusive language.

### Learning Accommodations

In accordance with the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NTS is committed to providing students with disabilities the opportunity to participate and benefit from its programs and activities. Accordingly NTS will make reasonable modifications to its programs and activities to accommodate otherwise qualified students with disabilities, unless such modifications would impose an undue burden on the operation of the particular program or activity or would fundamentally alter the nature or purpose of the program or activity. Students needing accommodations should contact the Office of the Registrar. They also should contact the instructor no later than the end of the first class session to discuss learning needs and adaptive strategies that have been beneficial for the student in the past.

### Policy Regarding Late Work & Missed Exams

Papers will lose 10% possible value for every day they are late. Extensions will be denied except for reasons involving severe illness or a death in the family. No papers will be graded that are more than 5 days late. If a student misses an exam, it cannot be made up unless the absence is due to severe illness or a death in the family. Make-up exams should be scheduled immediately.

### Course Grading

- Final Exam (end of Module): **100 points**
- Three Reading Journals (one pre-module, two during module): **50 points each, 150 total**
- Short Reflection Paper (during module): **50 points**
- Research Paper (post-module): **100 points**
- Attendance and Participation: **100 points**
- **Total possible points: 500**

Grades: A (460-500), A- (450-459), B+ (440-449), B (410-439), B- (400-409), C+ (390-399), C (360-389), C- (350-359), D (300-349), F (0-299).
## Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Week/Day</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| May 7-13| Pre-Module 1 | Watch course introductory video  
Rowe 1-18  
Journal 1, Online class discussion 1 | Introductions                |
| May 14-20| Pre-Module 2 | Rowe 19-68  
Supplemental Reading (SR) #1: Kierkegaard  
Journal 2, Online class discussion 2 | Proving God?                 |
| May 21-27| Pre-Module 3 | Rowe 91-110  
SR #2: Murphy  
Journal 3, Online class discussion 3 | Faith and Reason             |
| May 28 - June 3 | Pre-Module 4 | Rowe 112-132  
SR #3: Hick  
Journal 4, Online class discussion 4 | Theodicy                     |
| June 4-10| Pre-Module 5 | Rowe 162-177  
SR #4: Sartre  
Journal 5, Online class discussion 5 | God and Freedom              |
| June 11-17| Pre-Module 6 | Rowe 178-190  
SR #5: Religions Diversity Collection  
Journal 6, Online class discussion 6 | World Religions              |
| June 19 | Day 1 | Kearney 1-38  
Marion 1-52  
Journal 7 | The God Who May Be |
| June 20 | Day 2 | Kearney 39-52  
Marion 53-138 (139-197 recommended)  
Journal 8 | The Crossing of Being |
| June 21 | Day 3 | Kearney 53-79  
Nietzsche 31-73  
SR #6: Levinas  
Journal 9 | God and Desire |
| June 22 | Day 4 | Kearney 80-111  
Kierkegaard 5-74  
Journal 10 | The Possible and the Impossible |
| June 25 | Day 5 | Kierkegaard 75-131  
SR #7: Luther  
Journal 11 | Sin, Despair, Hope |
| June 26 | Day 6 | Nietzsche 74-128  
SR #8: Hegel  
SR #9: Buber  
Journal 12 | Philosophy’s Frontier: Religion |
| June 27 | Day 7 | SR #10: Heidegger  
SR #11: Derrida  
Journal 13 | Day 7 |
| June 28 | Day 8 | SR #12: TBA  
Journal 14 | Day 8 |
| June 29 | Day 9 | Final Exam | Day 9 |
| July 2-15 | Post-Module 1-2 | Research and Writing  | Post-Module 1 |
| July 16-22| Post-Module 3 | Final Paper Due July 22, 5:00 p.m. | Post-Module 1 |

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2 Students are expected to begin the class having completed these readings during the pre-modular period of the course. If students choose to read these texts each day for class discussion, they should adjust study-time and other obligations accordingly.