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  
Phone: (617) 237-0105  
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

<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>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</td>
<td>Nietzsche</td>
<td>978-0521602617</td>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>2006</td>
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Course Requirements

1. **Course Discussion Score (300 points – 50 points each for 6 discussion weeks)**

   Each week students will be expected to participate in active dialogue concerning the readings, lectures and course material. This requirement is equivalent to classroom attendance and participation, and it plays a critical role in this online environment.

   Online courses rely on thoughtful and regular reflections on the course material. Students are expected to read online posts almost every day, and post meaningful, high quality responses at least three days each week. Quality responses are considered discussion posts that either present a new topic/thread, or critically reflect on another person’s post or the professor’s questions. For posts to count toward participation and attendance, they should be several sentences long. Conversational discourse is acceptable, but students should edit and proofread posts before they are submitted. Spelling and grammar problems often derail good conversation. The course schedule below outlines the posting expectations for each week.

Discussion will be scored as follows:

- 50 points: students read all assigned readings, respond thoroughly to each question, and interact thoughtfully with other students.
- 45 points: strong achievement of assignments and readings; a few responses could have been more probing or thoughtful. If any of your assignments are late you cannot receive higher than a 45.
- 40 points: satisfactory achievement of assignments and responses, though several areas could have shown more thoughtful and careful reflection. Late work will quickly lower your grade to this level.
- 35 points: some late or missing work, or unsatisfactory responses
- 30 points: significant missing work or failure to interact responsibly and helpfully with the class.
- 29 points or below: unsatisfactory performance in this aspect of the course for the week.

2. **Two Short Reflection Papers (100 points – 50 points each)**

   Students will write three short reflection papers of at least 1250 words each (12pt, double space, 1” margin, conformed 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 the 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 many 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 (20 points)
   - Careful engagement of the text(s) under consideration (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 (20 points)
   - Total Points: 100

3. **Research Paper (200 points)**

   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 same rubric of the reflection papers, though greater emphasis will be placed on research in the evaluation of these papers.
Distribution of Student Learning Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Participation in forums, groups, etc.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Assignments and Learning Activities</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams &amp; Quizzes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td><strong>155</strong></td>
</tr>
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Method for Submitting Assignments

All written assignments will be submitted through the Moodle course website. Assignments should not be submitted by email or hard-copy.

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:

- 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).

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.

Audio and Video Recordings
In order to foster a safe learning environment in which various viewpoints are respected, audio or video recordings or transcripts thereof by students is prohibited without the permission of the faculty member in charge of the course. If permission is granted, redistribution of these recordings or transcripts thereof outside the scope of the course is prohibited.

Students enrolling in videoconferencing courses or participating in certain synchronous Moodle activities should be aware that their images and voices will be transmitted digitally through the videoconferencing equipment and may be recorded. Continued enrollment in these courses constitutes willingness to participate in the class with these conditions. If you have privacy concerns, please discuss your enrollment with the Registrar.
Course Outline

Unit 1: Traditional Problems in the Philosophy of Religion
Week 1: May 19-24
- Monday: Watch/Listen to Lecture 1 and all introductory materials.
- Tuesday: Post on Lecture 1 Discussion thread
  o Two quality posts required, along with ongoing conversation. Please do not limit your postings to this numeric requirement – be a good conversation partner, even if it means you “speak up” more than can be required in the syllabus.
- Wednesday/Thursday: Read Rowe 1-68
  o Three quality posts required, along with ongoing conversation (always part of the conversation expectation). Please respond to the professor’s discussion prompt and either create your own discussion thread or participate meaningfully in another student’s thread.
  o On your first post, list the percentage of the reading your completed for the day (100%, 90%, etc.). This helps us stay accountable to one another and helps the professor evaluate student completion of the assigned reading.
  o Optional (short!) reading from Søren Kierkegaard on the topic of theodicy is available as a PDF file.
- Thursday/Friday: Read Rowe 91-132
  o Three quality posts required. Please respond to the professor’s discussion prompt and either create your own discussion thread or participate meaningfully in another student’s thread.
  o On your first post, list the percentage of the reading your completed for the day. Please do this on the first post any day with reading assigned.
- Saturday: Each week, review your participation in this week’s discussion threads.
  o Have you answered questions given to you by your peers or the professor?
  o No reflection paper is due this weekend, but you will be able to use topics from Week 1 in future reflection papers. Jot down some notes about topics that you might want to write about. The more thorough you are now, the easier it will be to write when the first paper is due next weekend.

Week 2: May 26-31
- Monday: Watch/Listen to three files and read SR#1 – Levinas (“Useless Suffering”)
  o Week 2 Introduction
  o Lecture 2a and 2b
- Tuesday: Lecture 2 Discussion thread
  o Three quality posts required, including your original notes/reflections on the lecture and the reading.
  o Post at least once on the lecture and at least once on the reading. Direct quotations from the reading or the lecture help keep the conversation focused.
- Wednesday: Read and post about Kearney 1-19.
  o Three quality posts required; be sure to maintain conversations from Tuesday’s threads.
- Friday: Posting and paper preparation:
  o At least three quality posts and then focus on paper preparation.
- Saturday: First Reflection Paper Due: Select one of the topics from the first two weeks of class and reflect on this subject in a 1250 paper. The thesis of your paper should be
narrow, clear and stated early in the paper. These “Short Reflection Papers” do not require external research, though students are welcome to incorporate external sources. The papers must focus on the author(s) and ideas of the course. Several citations should be made to the course reading most pertinent to the student’s thesis. Students are expected to investigate their thesis with careful and accurate research taken from the text(s). Creative application of the material is permissible. However, students should be careful to avoid drifting away from the concepts as they are expressed by the philosophers and theologians assigned in class.

**Week 3: June 2-7**
- Monday: Read Kearney 20-38
- Tuesday: Listen to Lecture 3a and post three quality responses or conversational interactions to the lecture and the reading.
- Wednesday: Read Kearney 39-52
- Thursday: Listen to Lecture 3b and post three quality responses or conversational interactions. Be sure to maintain conversations from Tuesday’s threads.
- Friday: Read Kearney 80-112  
  - Three quality posts required on the final sections of Kearney’s book.
  - Maintain conversations from earlier in the week.
  - Optional interview with Richard Kearney will be available on Moodle.
- Saturday: Review your participation in this week’s discussion threads.
  - Have you answered questions given to you by your peers or the professor?
  - No reflection paper is due this weekend, but you will be able to use topics from Week 3 in future reflection papers. Jot down some notes about topics that you might want to write about.

**Unit 2: God, Desire, Love**

**Week 4: June 9-14**
- Monday: Read Kearney 53-79 and Plato’s *Symposium* (PDF provided). Post a few initial thoughts on these reflections on love in a single discussion starter post.
- Tuesday: Listen to Lecture 4 and read *Song of Songs* (use NRSV). Post three quality responses or conversational interactions to the lecture and the reading.
- Wednesday: Discussion day. Please post five times on threads from Monday and Tuesday.
- Thursday-Saturday: Watch the Nietzsche documentary posted online. Read Nietzsche, Part 1 (pages 1-60) and provide three quality posts/interactions about Nietzsche. Be sure to sustain and complete the conversations from earlier in the week.
- Saturday: Second Reflection Paper Due (same instructions as the first paper). Be sure to carefully note any corrections or suggested changes in your first graded paper.

**Week 5: June 16-21**
- Monday: Listen to Lecture 5a, read Nietzsche Part 2 (pages 61-118) and post a few initial thoughts in a single discussion starter post.
- Tuesday: Read Nietzsche, Part 3 (Pages 119-188). Post three quality responses or conversational interactions to the lecture and the reading.
- Wednesday: Listen to Lecture 5b. Maintain conversations from earlier in the week.
- Thursday: Read Kierkegaard xii-9. Post three quality responses or conversational interactions to the lecture and the reading.
- Friday: Read Kierkegaard 10-31. Post three quality responses or conversational interactions to the reading

**Week 6: June 23-28**
- Monday: Read Kierkegaard 32-91 and post a few initial thoughts in a single discussion starter post.
- Tuesday: Listen to Lecture 6 and read Derrida 1-34. Post three quality responses or conversational interactions to the lecture and the reading.
- Wednesday: Read Derrida 35-52. Post three quality responses or conversational interactions to the lecture and the reading. Be sure to keep up on threads from earlier in the week.
- Thursday – Saturday
  - Sustain conversations from earlier in the week.
  - Post your term paper topic under the “Term Paper Topic Discussion” thread.
  - Interact with your classmates about their papers (at least three quality responses and discussions required).
  - Research and write the final paper.
- Saturday: Final Research Paper Due. Pay close attention to the requirements for this important component of this course as listed above.