

# PHILOSOPHY 535

## PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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<http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~corlett/Welcome.html>

(Professor Corlett's Website)

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**Note: From time to time, the California Faculty Association threatens to go on strike for various excuses that it deems sufficiently worthy to disrupt student academic success. Professor Corlett assures his students that he will not honor any CFA strike action and that he will continue to hold classes and fulfill each of his professional duties in terms of research, teaching and service as he always has throughout his career. He firmly believes that the academic success of his students outweighs whatever salary or benefit increases that a work strike might bring to him. It is his honor and privilege to serve students and the taxpayers of the great State of California as excellently as he has done so for nearly 20 years.**

**“...no student should be lame in his love of hard work.”—Socrates (Plato, *Republic* 535d)**

**“...weariness and sleep are enemies of learning.” (Plato, *Republic* 537b)**

**Office Location:** AL 432.

**Office Telephone Number:** (619) 594-6251.

**Office Hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:00pm-6:30pm. Students are encouraged to utilize the campus escort service given that office hours are often at night. **The campus escort service can be reached at: 619-584-6659.** Students may use Professor Corlett's office phone to contact the escort service during office hours. **Campus security may be reached at (619) 594-1991.**

**Course Description:** (Outcomes): Philosophical analysis of various concepts of the problem of God, including some related concepts to the problem of God. Various leading theories about the problem of God are enumerated and explored philosophically, including theism, atheism, and agnosticism. Students are to learn by way of their reading comprehension of the contents of the assigned readings the contents of these and other related concepts. Classroom lectures and discussions will track the content of the assigned readings that the students are expected to understand. Students are expected to become conversant with various ideas, arguments and analyses concerning the philosophy of religion at a graduate-level of understanding as this is a 500-level course.

**Course Requirements:** (Outcomes assessment): Undergraduate students are required to take two in-class essay-type, closed-book and closed-note examinations. These examinations will test the student's ability to understand the contents of the assigned readings and lectures that cover the contents of the above stated course outcomes. Each of these examinations is worth up to 50 points. Scores for each of the examinations are to be added and the course grade is to be determined according to the following scale:

93-100=A  
90-92=A-  
88-89=B+  
83-87=B  
80-82=B-  
78-79=C+  
73-77=C  
70-72=C-  
68-69=D+  
63-67=D  
60-62=D-  
0-59=F

Graduate students are required to take the same two examinations as the undergraduates take, but the *grades* on those examinations will be averaged

together with the *grade* on the term paper. They are required to obtain pre-approval of their term paper proposal no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> class meeting of the term. Failure to obtain approval by the Professor for the term paper by the 12<sup>th</sup> class session will result in a loss of one full grade on the term paper (ex.: from a “B” to a “C”) after the term paper has been graded for form and content. The term paper will be at least 30 pages in length, including footnotes. For details on term paper requirements, consult the “Requirements for Philosophy Term Papers.”

**Requesting an Examination Score or Course/Seminar Grade Change/Re-evaluation:** Students who request a change/re-evaluation of either an examination score or a course/seminar grade are gladly afforded the opportunity. If such a request is made, Professor Corlett reserves the right to re-evaluate the examination(s) or course/seminar assignments in their entirety. The result will be either (1) that the student’s score or grade is revised to an improved state wherein the score or grade is raised because the re-evaluation warrants it; (2) that the student’s score or grade is retained at its present category because the re-evaluation warrants it; or (3) that the student’s score or grade is revised to a lower one because the re-evaluation warrants it.

There is no extra credit offered for this course. Lecture notes are provided by way of Powerpoint slides only in class and during office hours.

Students who are absent for more than 6 class sessions (regardless of reason) will be penalized by having 30 points subtracted from their overall scores for the course. This means that students have up to 6 absences for documented medical reasons, documented family emergencies, documented auto accidents, etc.

Students caught using their electronic devices during class for purposes other than this course (notetaking) shall have 25 points subtracted from their overall course score.

Each student who takes the course for credit/no credit status must earn a score of 75 in order to pass the course.

**Respecting the Institution of Higher Education and Guarding Against Student Academic Cheating:** As noted, all assignments for this course are of the in-class variety except for graduate student term papers. The reason for this is because of the increasing and already rampant rates of student academic cheating, especially on non-in-class assignments wherein several students procure professionals or friends to complete assignments for them, etc. Proctored in-class assignments

tremendously reduce the opportunities for student cheating, thereby respecting the grading process and the academic institution as a whole.

### **Important Notes:**

*Each student is responsible for understanding everything said in class by the Professor and by students engaged in discussion with the professor even if the student is absent from class. **Absolutely no permission is granted to electronically tape or otherwise electronically duplicate class lectures for any purpose whatsoever as they are the copyrighted property of Professor Corlett.***

It is recommended that students take notes well and continuously during each class period.

The examinations are designed to test and measure the student's knowledge of the contents of the textbook readings and classroom discussions.

***Students caught cheating on examinations or term papers shall be awarded a grade of "F" for the course and shall be prosecuted to the fullest extent of SDSU regulations!***

**Auditor Policy:** No course auditors are permitted.

**Visitor Policy:** While visitors to Professor Corlett's classroom sessions are welcome, due to safety considerations those wishing to visit a classroom session are welcome to do so only with prior approval by Professor Corlett. Violators of this policy are subject to being reported to SDSU campus police officers as intruders for immediate removal. This policy is designed to not discriminate between SDSU administrators, faculty, staff, students, or non-SDSU individuals. Professor Corlett is devoted to a safe and uninterrupted classroom experience for each of his students. **An education at SDSU is increasingly expensive for students, their parents, and taxpayers in general, so this course imposes a zero tolerance for the disruption of student learning.**

Class session attendance is crucial for learning the course material well. Students absent from or arriving late to more than two class sessions, regardless of reason, are subject to be dropped from the course with a grade of "F" at the professor's discretion. Students who are absent the first day of class without prior approval from the professor shall be dropped from the course.

Examinations may be re-scheduled only if the student obtains approval from the professor *prior to* the examination to be re-scheduled. Otherwise, no re-scheduled examinations are permitted. Since the taking of both examinations is required for a passing grade in the course, a student's missing an examination and not having such approval will cause the student to fail the course. For those obtaining such pre-approval, a re-scheduled examination might not have the same content as the one given to the rest of the class on the original date of examination.

**Students who continually disrupt the classroom learning experience of other students by speaking out of turn (i.e., without being explicitly recognized to speak in turn by the Professor) in class, interrupting class lectures or discussions, interrupting other students who are speaking in turn, etc. shall be dismissed from the course for the remainder of the term, earning a grade of "F" for the course. An education at SDSU is increasingly expensive for students, their parents, and taxpayers in general, so this course imposes a zero tolerance for the disruption of student learning.**

Students with special documented medical needs should avail themselves of Disabled Student Services, SS 1661, and should immediately discuss such needs with the Professor so that such needs might be accommodated for testing purposes.

SDSU Counseling & Psychological Services. If any student feels the need to talk to someone or seek confidential guidance for the benefit of their personal, academic, or social well-being, professionals are here to help. For more information visit the links listed below or call for a phone consultation. Phone number: (619) 594-5220. Address: 5700 Hardy Ave., Suite 4401, San Diego, CA 92115 (4th floor of the Calpulli Center). Hours: Mon.-Fri. 8am-4:30pm. Website: <http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/cps/>.

**Expectations of Students:** Pursuant to standards at academically respectable universities throughout the United States, students are expected to study the assigned readings and notes for this course at least 6 hours per week (two hours for each hour of registered coursework for this course) and to participate philosophically in classroom discussions.

### **Required Course Readings:**

1. John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (Prentice-Hall, 1990).
2. J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford University Press, 1982).

3. J. Angelo Corlett, *The Errors of Atheism* (Continuum Books, 2010).

These course readings represent the reasoned perspectives of a leading theist, the leading atheist, and a leading agnostic (respectively) in the field of philosophy of religion. They also consist in a range of levels of philosophical discourse, including an introductory level book as well as an advanced level book. They also represent both traditional topics and discourse in philosophy of religion as well as some perspectives never before advanced in philosophy of religion. Each book is endorsed by distinguished scholars in the field. Students are advised to access each book legally and in the most cost efficient manner possible.

**NOTE: Students are advised that it is illegal to violate federal copyright laws which prohibit the illegal downloading or otherwise accessing of all copyrighted materials. Publishers are aggressive and increasingly successful in filing and winning lawsuits against students and others who violate such laws.**

### **Tentative Course Outline:**

Session 1: Introduction to the Course and to the Philosophy of Religion.

Session 2: Faith and Reason: *The Miracle of Theism*, Chapter 11; *Philosophy of Religion*, Chapters 5-6.

Session 3: Traditional Arguments for the Existence of God: The Ontological Argument. *Philosophy of Religion*, Chapters 1-3; *The Miracle of Theism*, Introduction and Chapters 2-3.

Session 4: Traditional Arguments for the Existence of God: The Cosmological Argument. *Philosophy of Religion*, Chapters 2-3; *The Miracle of Theism*, Chapter 5.

Session 5: Traditional Arguments for the Existence of God: The Teleological Argument. *Philosophy of Religion*, Chapters 2-3; *The Miracle of Theism*, Chapter 8.

Session 6: The Problem of Evil. *Philosophy of Religion*, Chapter 4; *The Miracle of Theism*, Chapter 9.

Session 7: The Problem of Religious Language. *Philosophy of Religion*, Chapter 7.

Session 8: Verificationism and Falsificationism. *Philosophy of Religion*, Chapter 8.

Session 9: **Examination #1**. Preface and Introduction to *The Errors of Atheism*.

Session 10: Atheism: *The Errors of Atheism*, Chapters 1-3.

Session 11: Agnosticism: *The Errors of Atheism*, Chapter 4: The new agnosticism.

Session 12: Naturalizing theism: *The Miracle of Theism*, Chapter 13; *The Errors of Atheism*, Chapter 5:

Session 13: Liberating theism: *The Errors of Atheism*, Chapter 6.

Session 14: Defending process-minimalist theism: *The Errors of Atheism*, Chapter 7 and Conclusion.

Week 15: The New Agnosticism. **Term papers due for graduate students.**

Final exam week: **Examination #2. Time and date to be pre-announced in class.**