

## **PHIL 3730: PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

SPRING 2021

Prof. Andrew W. Arlig  
On-line (asynchronous)



### DESCRIPTION

This class will introduce you to some ways of philosophically reflecting on ideas and themes drawn from religious texts and practices. It will be a mix of the traditional and the untraditional, the historical and the contemporary.

The course will have two main foci. The first is broadly speaking epistemological. We will examine the place of reason in religious faith and practice. We will start by examining some classical attempts to achieve religious insights by means of mere human reason—that is, human reason without any help “from above”. This will include attempts to prove that divine beings exist and to discover by rational means what these divine beings could or must be like. We will then start to examine traditional and contemporary worries about the limitations of mere human reason. For instance, we will examine apparent conflicts between what reason tells us and what Scripture says. We will also examine the claim of so-called mystics that human reason needs a boost or must be “left behind” at some stage in one’s ascent to the realm of the divine. Given that human reason might make mistakes, we will also need to ask whether we ought to put any restrictions on its use in

religious contexts. Precisely where is the divide between orthodoxy and heresy, faith and unbelief?

The other focus will be on divine justice, with a particular emphasis on how divine justice will play out in the end. Is there an Afterlife? If we live on, in what manner will we do so? Are humans the only creatures that will enjoy another life after this one? Is there a Heaven and a Hell, and if so, what might they be like? In doing so, we will reflect on whether we can make any sense of suffering and evil, assuming that divine beings are good and take an interest in our lives and deeds.

This course is open to all curious individuals with a Zoom app. It will help if you are open-minded and willing to entertain “unorthodox”, perhaps even “heretical” ideas. (You don’t have to *believe* them, you just have to entertain them!) Familiarity with religion or philosophy will be useful, but not necessary.

If you have any questions or concerns about the course, please feel free to email the instructor at: [aarlig@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:aarlig@brooklyn.cuny.edu).