**PHIL 314 Philosophy of Religion**

Dr. Christopher E. Franklin

T/R 2:30–3:45pm, HAL 323

Spring 2021

“So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

—St. Paul

**Contact Information**

Office: HAL 300J

Office Hours: M 8:50–9:50, T 11–12 & 4–5, W 3-5 (by appt.), R 10–12 (by appt.) & 4–5

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**Course Description**

A sustained philosophical reflection on the nature and existence of God, addressing questions such as the rationality of belief in God, the role of evidence in religious belief, the problem of evil, the moral and cognitive significance of religious experience, and the relationship between God and morality.

**Texts**

George MacDonald, *Phantastes* (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1858 [1981])

Josef Pieper, *A Brief Reader on the Virtues of the Human Heart* (Ignatius Press, 1991)

Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford University Press, 2006)

Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015)

(Additional readings will be available on my.gcc and through hyperlinks below under the course schedule)

**Course Outcomes**

Through the course, students will:

1. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the main theories of the relationship between God and morality (#2, 3, 7; final)
2. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the main theories about the relationship between faith and reason (#2, 3, 7; précis 1, final)
3. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the problem of evil (#2, 3, 7; précis 2, final)
4. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the main theories of providence (#2, 3, 7; final)
5. Develop critical analysis and reasoning skills (Department objectives 4, 6, 8, 9; précises, paper)

**Department of Philosophy Departmental Objectives:**

1. Demonstrate the ability to understand and evaluate philosophical questions from a Christian theistic framework. This will require the student to see the relationship between faith and learning and how such a perspective applies to the critical and analytical questions posed by humans in the great search for wisdom.
2. Demonstrate ability to read, comprehend, and evaluate the thought of great philosophers of the past and present in terms of the presuppositions and historical contexts of their claims about the philosophical task as well as the implications of such thought in terms of ethical and social practice. This will require observation of and interaction with primary source texts that approach the great questions and concerns that philosophers have been asking for many millennia.
3. Demonstrate ability to comprehend the major issues in philosophy from the aforementioned Christian theistic perspective as well as the ability to interact with the concerns and perspectives of other philosophies, religions, and worldviews in order to develop the skills necessary to think through what one believes and why. This will require the development of skills necessary to evaluate an argument or a belief critically in terms of strengths and weaknesses.
4. Demonstrate basic and maturing research skills. This will include the ability to state theses, show those theses through analysis of primary texts, discuss the possible weaknesses of one’s own analysis, and test those theses against the best scholarship.
5. Articulate a worldview that integrates knowledge of philosophy with other disciplines in order to see the consequences of a consistent Christian theistic worldview. Students will recognize the tensions in this integration process rather than accepting simplistic answers and thus will be helped to grow into mature and thoughtful persons.
6. Demonstrate basic research and writing skills. This ability will be assessed through the evaluation of the assigned paper, both in draft and completed versions.
7. Demonstrate basic knowledge of philosophical concepts.
8. Demonstrate ability to research, write, and speak in the content area of Philosophy.
9. Be competitive and prepared for graduate school and seminary opportunities, as assessed by placement data and alumni surveys.

**Course Requirements**

**Attendance:** Each student will be allowed 2 unexcused absences. Beyond this, each unexcused absence will result in a 2% loss of the student’s total course grade. Excessive or frequent tardiness will count as an unexcused absence. If the student arrives late, it is his responsibility to make sure he is marked ‘present.’ Excused absencesare restricted to authorized college activities, loss of immediate family member, and illness/injury. See the Academic Policies Section of the *College Bulletin* for more information.

**Reading Log—20%**

Students will be required to keep a reading log indicating the percentage of the reading assignments completed *carefully, without skimming*, *and on time*. (Note: if there are multiple readings on a day, then they count as distinct reading assignments.) An easy way to do this is as follows. For each assignment, assign yourself a number between 0-100 that accurately represents the amount of the reading assignment that you completed *carefully, without skimming, and on time*. At the end of the course, add those valuesand divide by the total number of reading assignments. The log you turn in should include the percentage of reading completed for *each* assignment **and** the *total* percentage of reading completed. At the bottom of the log, you will include the following prompt with your name filled in and signature under the prompt: “I [blank] pledge that this log is, to the best of my ability, an accurate reflection of the percentage of readings that I completed carefully, without skimming, and on time.” A hard copy of this log is due at the beginning of lecture on 5/4. This document can be handwritten.

**Two Précises—15% each**

A précis is an analytical summary of another piece of writing (a book, journal article, etc.). The précis should summarize the main ideas and arguments of the piece of writing into a shorter passage that is a fraction of its original length. Précises are similar to abstracts and aim to reveal the main ideas and core structure of a longer piece of writing. Writing an excellent précis requires mastery of the text: one must be able to judge what is essential and inessential to accurately presenting the author’s main ideas and arguments. An excellent précis will depart from the author’s original style or order of presentation in order to effectively capture the main ideas and arguments within a shorter span. One cannot mention every part of the original piece of writing, but must use judgment to focus attention on what is most important and central. Finally, an excellent précis will not simply repeat word for word what the author says but will analyze the work and reproduce a bare-bones presentation in the student’s *own words* (using quotations *very* sparingly). The audience of a précis is someone unfamiliar with the original work who is trying to determine whether the work is something she should read.

*Your précis must include a clear summary of the author’s central claim(s) and the structure of the book.* Moreover, a key to an excellent précisis that it is organized by the *logic* of the book, not necessarily the temporal sequence. If your précis summarizes the book by saying ‘And then the author said this’ and ‘Then the author said that’, it will be a poor précis, as this format will neither allow the necessary space to cover the key features of the work nor make clear how the work hangs together as a whole. No part of your précis should include a critique of the author. If you use space to raise an objection, you are wasting space.

Précis one will be of Alvin Plantinga’s *Knowledge and Christian Belief* and is due on 3/2. Précis two will be of Peter van Inwagen’s *The Problem of Evil* and is due on 4/8.

**N.B.** The précises must cover the entire book, even those chapters you are not assigned in the schedule below. The extra reading should not be included in your reading log

Each précis should be turned in in hard-copy form at the beginning of the class it is due with the following format: typed, 12pt font, double-spaced, the word count appearing under your name at the top of the first page, and with appropriate citation. Maximum word count for each précis is 1000 words (excluding notes and bibliography).

See the handout **Minimal Standards for Written Work** posted on my.gcc concerning formatting requirements. Any work that fails to meet *any* of the minimal standards will automatically receive a third of a letter grade penalty and will receive an additional half letter grade penalty for each 24 hour period from the time the student is informed of the problem until the student turns in a properly formatted work.

**Paper—25%**

The student is to select an idea, argument, or puzzle covered in any part of the course reading that he or she so chooses. *The topic must come from the reading,* though you are welcome to engage primarily with works outside of the course reading. Here is a brief description of the assignment, but you *must* see the handout **How to Write a Philosophy Paper** on my.gcc for clearer guidelines concerning what the paper requires, how best to satisfy these requirements, and how I will grade the papers. The first part of the paper should set out to explain the central argument or puzzle that the student is engaging. The second, and most important, part of the paper should, in the case of an idea or argument, seek to defend or critique the idea or argument or, in the case of a puzzle, offer a solution or explain why you think there is no solution. This part of the paper is not to be a summary of someone else’s thought/argument, but is to be something of *your own creation*. This is difficult and success requires time. Thus, you should select your topic as soon as possible and consider and cultivate your response over a couple of weeks. If you wait to the last minute it will be impossible for you to articulate any *well-developed* thought of your own. You are welcome and encouraged to discuss all parts of this paper with me in office hours.

The paper is due by 2:30pm on 4/22 and must be submitted to my email address (franklince@gcc.edu) in a word doc. You *must* name the file as follows: Your Last Name Paper (so Jane Doe will name the file of her paper: Doe Paper). ***You also must submit the paper to Turnitin (in our my.gcc course site under coursework tab) by 2:30pm***.

The word count is between 2000–2500 words (excluding notes and bibliography). Too many or too few words will be penalized by how many words over or under you are.

See the handout **Minimal Standards for Written Work** posted on my.gcc concerning formatting requirements. Any work that fails to meet *any* of the minimal standards will automatically receive a third of a letter grade penalty and will receive an additional third of a letter grade penalty for each 24 hour period from the time the student is informed of the problem until the student turns in a properly formatted work.

**Final—25%**

There will be a final cumulative exam given on May 7. Prior to the exam I will post *the exam* on my.gcc. The exam will consist of 10 numbered (1­­­–10) essay questions. On the day of the final exam, I will roll a ten-sided die twice: whatever numbers the die lands on will be the essay questions students write on. If I roll the same number twice, there will be a surprise.

**No electronics of any kind are permitted during the exam for any reason. If you access an electronic device in any way for any reason, you will receive a 0 on the exam. Students are also not permitted to leave the classroom while taking the exam.**

**In case students have to take any of the exams (midterms or final) in an online format due to Covid, students are not permitted to use any resources while taking the exam: not their notes, textbook, internet, etc.**

Consult the exam schedule now, and make appropriate travel preparations in light of the exam schedule published by the Registrar’s office. College policy is that final exams may only be administered during finals week, in accordance with the times scheduled by the Registrar’s office, and may not be changed or eliminated to suit the convenience of either the instructor or the students. Students who have 3 exams on a particular calendar day during the final exam period may request permission to change the exam time, but I cannot guarantee that there will be a time that will work for the student.

**Honesty**

College policies with regard to honesty in taking tests and writing papers will be strictly followed. The college administration and faculty are very concerned about cheating and take active steps to prevent it. **Any student caught cheating on or plagiarizing any assignment will receive an F for the course.**

See the college’s policy on Academic Integrity in the 2020–2021 college *Bulletin.* The use (or possession) of former examinations from this course in preparing for tests is considered a violation of the GCC honesty in learning policy as stated in the college *Bulletin*.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

**Preamble**

Grove City College is deeply invested in upholding academic integrity and honesty. Three of the college’s five core values, faithfulness, excellence, and community, directly relate to academic integrity because any violation of academic integrity is a form of theft and deceit that affects the one stolen from, as well as the community of students and faculty at the college. In addition, cheating is a violation of three of the Ten Commandments: the prohibitions against stealing, lying, and coveting. However, as the Ten Commandments and the totality of Scripture demonstrate to us, we are fallen creatures who at times do what we ought not do.

Accordingly, the college has created a policy both to define what cheating is and to describe our process for dealing with allegations of cheating in order to discourage cheating and provide an opportunity for meaningful repentance and restoration when students do cheat.

**Pledge**

As a student of Grove City College, I pledge to do my work faithfully with honesty in accordance with my calling as a student working for Christ’s glory.

**Cheating and Plagiarism may be present in many areas, including (but not limited to) the following:**

1. Doing Papers, Outside Work. Work done out of class, which a student submits as his/her own work to a professor, should be his/her own and should not contain that which has been obtained from another, other than properly credited references, sources, and citations.
2. Taking Exams, Tests, Quizzes. Work done on a test, exam, or quiz, which a student submits to a professor, should be his/her own and should not contain that which has been knowingly obtained from another. By default, no resources are permitted unless explicitly allowed by the instructor.
3. Preparing for Exams. A student should not seek to gain an advantage on an exam he/she is about to take by obtaining advanced access to particular questions or advance copies of a professor's exam, or by giving access to other students. This includes access to exams from prior semesters.
4. Group Work. In courses where group work or teamwork is allowed, the members of the group may collaborate and share resources among themselves, but not with other groups or prior and subsequent classes.
5. A student should not cooperate with, aid, or encourage another student’s violation of the above rules, even though he or she receives no direct benefit. Any student who does so is also guilty of cheating, and can have their grade from current or past semesters (if relevant) reduced.
6. Instructor-Imposed Limitations. Faculty may add (via syllabus, assignment instructions, or verbal instructions) additional rules and limitations pertaining to cheating in their particular discipline, class, and assignment.

**Special Note: Plagiarism includes**

1. Any direct quotation of another’s words, from simple phrasing to longer passages, without using quotation marks and properly citing the source of those words.
2. Any summary or paraphrase of another’s ideas without properly citing the source of those ideas.
3. Any information that is not common knowledge—including facts, statistics, graphics, drawings—without proper citation of sources.
4. Any cutting and pasting of verbal or graphic materials from another source and representing as one’s own work—including books, databases, web sites, journals, newspapers, etc.—without the proper citation for each of the sources of those materials; this includes any copyrighted artwork, graphics, or photography downloaded from the Internet without proper citation.
5. Any wholesale “borrowing,” theft, or purchasing of another’s work and presenting it as one’s own, whether from the Internet or from another source.
6. Any presentation of “ghost-written” work including—whether paid for or not—as one’s own original work, including papers, computer code, visual artwork, and other forms of written and non-written work.
7. Making one’s work available for copying by others, as well as copying work posted on the Internet or otherwise made available by another.
8. Self-citation: you cannot submit the same work for two different classes. If you use part of an earlier work, or ideas from an earlier work, you should reference it, as with any other source.

**Computer Policy**

Computers are not allowed. Digital technology *is* how Socrates *appeared* to the Athenians: corruptor of the youth and creator of false gods. As Socrates was meant to be, so digital technology will be in my classroom, banished. However, if you have a concern about this policy, please contact me.

**Policy on late assignments:**

Do not ask for exceptions on late work; I accept no excuses except Provost excuses. Without a Provost excuse, late work is assigned a 0. It is crucial that you realize that failure to turn in an assignment you finish before the deadline constitutes turning in the assignment late. Failure to remember to bring the assignment or failure to print out the assignment in time are not excuses: they are confessions of negligence

**Disability**

Accessibility & Accommodations: It is Grove City College’s goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on a disability, please let me know immediately so that we may discuss options. You are also welcome to contact the disability services office to begin this conversation or to establish accommodations. The Disability Services Coordinator may be reached at 724-264-4673 or DisabilityServices@gcc.edu

**Counseling**

If you are experiencing undue personal or academic stress at any time during the semester or need to talk to someone who can help, you should contact the Counseling Center at 724-458-3788 or email Mrs. Hummel, staff assistant, at [mhummel@gcc.edu](mailto:mhummel@gcc.edu).

**COVID Policies**

1. Grove City College is continuing to monitor the COVID-19 outbreak, and we are committed to maintaining a safe and healthy campus community. In order to care for each other, you are required to wear a *face mask in all academic buildings including in all classrooms, labs, studios, hallways, and restrooms*. Additionally:
   1. Students and faculty should maintain social distancing (minimum 6’ distance) to the extent possible during class.
   2. Students should arrive no earlier than 5 minutes before class to reduce contact between students during class change periods.
   3. Students showing any symptoms related to COVID-19 (outlined in the Campus Health and Safety Plan) *must not attend class*. Instead, they should report their condition through the College’s COVID-19 portal, work closely with the College’s medical staff, and not return to class in person until approved by the Zerbe Health Center.  During this time, every effort will be made to provide remote learning opportunities.
   4. Office hours may be held virtually, and if faculty voluntarily elect to hold face-to-face office hours, both students and faculty should wear a face mask.
2. If you feel ill, please report your health status in the portal so that the lectures can be provided to you via Teams.

**Topics and Assignments** (schedule subject to change)

1. **Introduction to Philosophy of Religion**

1/26 Introduction to Philosophy of Religion

Reading: Syllabus; How to Write a Philosophy Paper

1/28 Christian Image of Man

Reading: Pieper *A Brief Reader on the Virtues of the Human Heart* (whole book)

1. **Epistemology of Religion**

2/2 Worries about the Rationality of Faith

Reading: Plantinga, Preface and chs. 1–2

2/4 Wittgensteinian Fideism

Reading: Norman Malcom ‘The Groundlessness of Belief’ (my.gcc)

2/9 Belief based in practical reason

Reading: William James ‘The Will to Believe’ (my.gcc)

2/11 Aquinas/Calvin Model

Reading: Plantinga, ch. 3

2/16 Extending the Aquinas/Calvin Model

Reading: Plantinga, chs. 4–6

2/18 Objections

Reading: Plantinga, chs. 7–9 and afterword, pp. 125–26

* Recommended but not required: Keith DeRose ‘[Voodoo Epistemology](https://campuspress.yale.edu/keithderose/voodoo-epistemology/)’

2/23 Virtue of Faith

Reading: Terence Cuneo ‘[Ritualized Knowledge](https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol31/iss4/1/)’

1. **Nature of God**
2. **God’s Providence: Omnipotence and Omniscience**

2/25 Two Accounts of Providence

Reading: Thomas Flint ‘Two Accounts of Providence’ (my.gcc)

3/2 Two Accounts of Providence (cont.)

Reading: N/A

**Précis 1 Due**

3/4 Worries about Molinism

Reading: Robert M. Adams ‘[An Anti-Molinist Argument](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2214100?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)’

3/9 Risky Providence

Reading: John Sanders ‘Risk and the Divine Character’ from his *The God who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence* (my.gcc)

1. **God and Evil: A Problem**

3/11 The Problem

Reading: van Inwagen, Lectures 1 and 2

3/16 Free Will Defense Part I

Reading: van Inwagen, Lectures 4 and 5

3/18 Free Will Defense Part II

Reading: van Inwagen, Lecture 6

3/23 Calvinist/Thomist Response

Reading: Daniel M. Johnson ‘Calvinism and the Problem of Evil’ (my.gcc)

3/25 Skeptical Theism

Reading: William Alston ‘[The Inductive Problem of Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2214090?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)’

**Easter Break 3/29-4/2**

4/6 Virtue of Hope

Reading: Josef Pieper ‘Hope’, from his *Faith, Hope, Love* (my.gcc)

4/8 Virtue of Hope (cont.)

Reading: N/A

4/8 **Précis 2 due**

1. **God and the Good**

4/13 Divine Command Theory

Reading: Plato, selections from *Euthyphro* (my.gcc); Robert M. Adams ‘A New Divine Command Theory’ (my.gcc)

4/15 Divine Command Theory (cont.)

Reading N/A

4/20 Christian Platonism

Reading: Norman Kretzmann ‘Abraham, Isaac, and Euthyphro: God and the Basis of Morality’ (my.gcc)

4/22 Christian Platonism (cont.)

Reading: N/A

**Paper Due**

4/27 From Teleology to Deontology

Reading: John Cottingham ‘Morality’ (my.gcc)

4/29 Virtue of Love

Reading: George MacDonald *Phantastes* (the entire book)

5/4 Virtue of Love

Reading: N/A

**Reading Log Due**

5/6 Study Day

**Final Exam Friday May 7, 6–8pm**