



**BRISBANE COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY
UNIT OUTLINE**

BACHELOR OF THEOLOGY

UNIT TITLE	PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
UNIT CODE	H52067
UNIT STATUS	Elective
HOST FIELD	H
PREREQUISITE/S	H51060 Introduction to Philosophy
INCOMPATIBLES	Nil
CREDIT POINTS	10cp
REQUIREMENTS	3 hours per week contact and 7 hours per week study over a 13-week semester.
FREQUENCY OF OFFERING	Annually – Semester 1
PREPARED BY	Dr Richard Colledge
UNIT COORDINATOR	Dr Richard Colledge
TEACHING STAFF	Dr Richard Colledge, Dr Greg Moses
DATE PREPARED	1 September 2006

Rationale

In the west there is a long and rich tradition of rational reflection upon the nature and value of religious belief, and within the Christian tradition the creative tension between faith and rationality, religion and philosophy, has been particularly productive. Over the last century and a half, philosophical reflection on the meaning, structure and epistemological status of religious faith claims has been particularly intense, so much so that no intellectually credible contemporary theology can afford to avoid such debates. This unit give students of theology the opportunity to familiarize themselves with both traditional problems in the philosophy of religion, as well as some of the latest debates in the field.

Relation to program

This unit plays a valuable role within the programs of the BCT in helping students to understand and explore the philosophical underpinnings of theological reflection as pursued elsewhere in their program, and to reflect upon the phenomena of religious experience and faith in their relationship with reason. The unit therefore provides a useful companion to a range of other Bachelor of Theology units, especially in contemporary and historical theology, spirituality and ministry.

Aims

The unit aims to give students of theology the opportunity to confront some major issues within traditional and contemporary philosophy of religion, and thereby to provide useful philosophical background for an insightful and intellectually credible theology and spirituality. It is intended that students engage at some depth with a range of classic and contemporary texts in the philosophy of religion. In this way, the unit seeks both to enrich students' studies in contemporary theology and to prepare them for further work in philosophy and philosophical theology, should they choose to pursue such studies

Learning Outcomes	
At the end of this unit the student should be able to:	
1.	Outline the major questions pursued in contemporary philosophy of religion;
2.	Identify and analyse a range of responses to these problems both by major historical figures and in contemporary debate;
3.	Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these positions;
4.	Develop a coherent interim position concerning the philosophical issues encountered.

Content

- 1 The nature of Philosophy of Religion and its relationship to theology
- 2 Arguments for and against the existence of God:
 - Design (teleological) arguments
 - Cosmological arguments
 - Ontological arguments
 - Value/transcendental-based arguments.
- 3 Models of God-World interaction:
 - Traditional theism
 - Deism
 - Pantheism
 - Panentheism
 - Process theology
- 4 Religious discourses:
 - Three major approaches: kataphatic, apophatic, hyperontic
 - The Medieval analogy approach (Aquinas)
 - Language game approach (Wittgenstein et al)
 - Evocation approach (Ramsey, de Pater)
- 5 God and the problem of evil
 - Defining evil and suffering
 - Logical and empirical arguments against an omnipotent, omni-benevolent God
 - Traditions of theodicy: Varieties of Free-Will and Teleological defences
 - On the Christian theodicy of the Cross
 - The problem of religious violence
- 6 Religious experience
 - Defining religious experience
 - The varieties of religious experience
 - Theories concerning the experiential roots of religion
 - Interpreting cross-creedal experiential sameness and difference
 - The value of religious experience

Organization and Teaching Strategies

Each week a 2 hour (2x 50 min) lecture is given which introduces the major debates and issues concerning a particular area of the philosophy of religion. During the third tutorial hour, the lecturer guides student discussion of set readings dealing with the previous week's topic. In addition to the 3-hour face-to-face mode, students are encouraged to make use of electronic means of communication with the lecturer (and/or other students) concerning the weekly readings and early drafts of assigned work.

Assessment

	Type of assessment	No of words	Weighting %	Due date	Learning Outcomes covered
1	Short written responses to five of the tutorial readings. This task examines the depth of the student's understanding of the major issues and themes explored in the unit.	3000 (total)	40%	Week 8	1, 2
2	Research Essay. This task examines the depth of the student's engagement with a single issue or (past or present) thinker.	3000	60%	End-semester	1, 2, 3, 4

Notes on Assessment

- Item 1 Will develop the student's knowledge of the major philosophical problems and answers within contemporary philosophy of religion and the ability to engage in reflective analysis of philosophical concepts.
- Item 2 Will develop the student's ability to apply the disciplines of logical thinking and the ability to define and analyse problems.

Bibliography

Textbooks

Required weekly reading list, such as the following:

- Rée, J. "Laughing all the Way Back to Church". *The Australian Financial Review* 30 July, 2004, 45.
- Colledge, R. "The Unity of Faith and Reason". *The Catholic Leader* 24 April, 2005, 8.
- Colledge, R. "Thinking about God's Existence". *The Catholic Leader* 27 July, 2003, 10.
- Cahn, SM. "The Irrelevance to Religion of Philosophic Proofs for the Existence of God" in *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*. Ed LP Pojman; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1987, 76-79.
- Davis, ST. "What Good are Theistic Proofs?" in *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*. Ed LP Pojman; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1987, 80-87.
- Hick, John. *Arguments for the Existence of God*. London: Macmillan, 1970, 37-52.
- Davies, Paul. *The Mind of God*. London: Penguin, 1992, excerpts from 39-72; 194-222.
- Paley, William. Excerpt from "Natural Theology" in *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*. Ed LP Pojman; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1987, 29-31.
- Hume, David. Excerpt from "Dialogues concerning Natural Religion" in *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*. Ed LP Pojman; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1987, 32-38.
- Mascall, Eric L. *He Who Is: A Study in Traditional Theism*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966, 116-125.
- Moonan, Lawrence. "Omnipotence" in *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide to the Subject*. Ed Brian Davies; Oxford: OUP, 1993, 80-86.

- Hughes, Gerard J. "Omniscience" in *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide to the Subject*. Ed Brian Davies; Oxford: OUP, 1993, 86-94.
- Hartshorne, Charles. *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1984, excerpts from 1-49.
- Polkinghorne, John. *Science and Providence*. London: SPCK, 1989, 36-58.
- Colledge, Richard. "Innocent Suffering and the Christian God: Some Philosophical Reflections". *Compass* 39 (2005), 5-8.
- Dostoevsky, F. *The Brothers Karamazov*. London: Heron Books, 1967, 276-88.
- Clarke, WN. *The One and the Many*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001, 44-58.
- De Pater, Wim. "Sense and Nonsense in Talking About God". *St Louis Quarterly* 6 (1968), 7-48. Excerpts.
- James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: The Modern Library, 1994, excerpts from 92-171.
- Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959, 5-24.

Recommended

- Davies, Brian. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: OUP, 1993.
- Jackson, Roy. *God of Philosophy: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. Sutton, Surrey: TPM, 2001.

References – Books

- Anderson, Pamela Sue. *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion: The Rationality and Myths of Religious Belief*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.
- Baker, Deane-Peter & Patrick Maxwell (eds). *Explorations in Contemporary Continental Philosophy of Religion*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003.
- Cahn, Steven M & David Shatz. *Questions About God: Today's Philosophers Ponder the Divine*. New York: OUP, 2004.
- Davies, Paul. *The Mind of God: Science and the Search for Ultimate Meaning*. London: Penguin, 1992.
- Davis, Stephen T. *God, Reason and Theistic Proofs*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Dembski, William A. *Intelligent Design: The Bridge between Science & Theology*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1999.
- Feinberg, John S. *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problem of Evil*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.
- Ford, Lewis S. *Transforming Process Theism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000.
- Larrimore, Mark J. *The Problem of Evil: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.
- Miethe, Terry L & Antony Flew. *Does God Exist?: A Believer and an Atheist Debate*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.
- Morris, Thomas V. *God and the Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason*. New York: OUP, 1994.
- Plantinga, Alvin. *Warranted Christian Belief*. Oxford: OUP, 2000.
- Quinn, Philip L. "Epistemology in Philosophy of Religion" in *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*. Ed Paul K Moser; Oxford: OUP, 2002, 512-538.
- Swinburne, Richard. *The Coherence of Theism*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993.
- . *The Existence of God*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991.
- Trigg, Roger. *Rationality and Religion: Does Faith Need Reason?* Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.
- Wynn, Mark. *God and Goodness: A Natural Theological Perspective*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Yandell, Keith E. *Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1999.

References - Journals

- Chambers, Timothy. "On Behalf of the Devil: A Parody of Anselm Revisited". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100 (2000), 93-113.
- Gale, Richard M. "Swinburne on Providence". *Religious Studies* 36 (2000), 209-219.
- Geirsson, Heimir & Michael Losonsky. "What God Could Have Made". *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 43 (2005), 355-376.
- Klein, Charles J. "On the Necessary Existence of an Object with Creative Power". *Faith and Philosophy* 17 (2000), 367-370.
- Leslie, John. "Fine Tuning and Divine Design". *Maritain Studies Etudes Maritainiennes* 18 (2002), 3-13.
- Oppy, Graham. "Paley's Argument for Design". *Philo* 5 (2002), 161-173.
- Richmond, Patrick. "Neuroscientific Determinism and the Problem of Evil". *Science and Christian Belief* 16 (2004), 139-156.

References - Online and Other IT resources

- "Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy": Western Concepts of God:
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/g/god-west.htm>
- "Philosophy of Religion" Resources and Links website:
http://www3.baylor.edu/~Scott_Moore/Phi_Rel_info.html
- "Ars Disputandi: The Online Journal for Philosophy of Religion":
<http://www.arsdisputandi.org/>
- "The Secular Web": <http://www.infidels.org>