Credit value: 15
Module convenor: Professor Maria Rosa Antognazza

Assessment

Summative assessment: one two-hour exam (100%) in May/June

Formative assessment: one 2,500-word essay; deadline: Monday 27 February 4pm

Please note that the formative essay must be submitted by the deadline. Extensions can be granted by the module convenor, Professor Antognazza, only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. illness). Please contact your seminar tutor who will consult with Professor Antognazza.

Teaching pattern

One one-hour weekly lecture and one one-hour weekly seminar over ten weeks.

Module aim

The aim of this module is to give students a critical understanding of some of the key arguments and positions in the Philosophy of Religion via a close reading and discussion of some of the key texts in this area.

Module description

The first part of the module will focus on some arguments for the existence of God; the second part of the module will focus on religious epistemology, discussing some contemporary approaches to the rational justification of religious belief.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, the students will be able to demonstrate intellectual, transferable and practicable skills appropriate to a level-7 module and in particular will be able to demonstrate that they have:

- A capacity for philosophical reflection on theological issues.
- Knowledge and understanding of some of the main problems, theories, arguments and texts in the philosophy of religion.
- An understanding of how problems in philosophy of religion relate to personal religious belief/non-belief/agnosticism and everyday life.
- An ability to summarise and critically assess existing arguments and positions.
- An ability to support and to challenge views and positions by constructing arguments and citing relevant considerations.
- An ability to form philosophical views of their own which they are prepared to defend or amend in the light of criticism.

TEACHING PLAN AND READING
Divine Necessity and the Ontological Argument

- **Divine Necessity**

  Seminar reading (core: week 1):


- **Anselm’s ontological argument**

  Seminar reading (core – week 2):


- **Leibniz’s ontological argument**

  Seminar reading (core: week 3):


  **Further reading**


Alvin Plantinga and Religious Epistemology

- **The ‘proper basicality’ of religious beliefs**

  Seminar reading (core: week 4):


- **Warrant and Christian belief I**

  Seminar reading (core: week 5):

- **Warrant and Christian belief II**

  Seminar reading (core: week 6):

  Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, ch. 8 (pp. 241-289).

- **Replies**

  Seminar reading (core: week 7):


  **William Alston: Belief, Acceptance, Religious Experience**

- **Belief and acceptance**

  Seminar reading (core: week 8):


- **Perceiving God and doxastic practices I**

  Seminar reading (core: week 9):


- **Perceiving God and doxastic practices II**

  Seminar reading (core: week 10):

Further reading:


Essay titles

1. Discuss a version of the ontological argument.

2. Is belief in God ‘properly basic’?
   OR
   Outline and discuss Plantinga’s notion of warrant and its relevance to Christian belief.

3. Is the distinction between belief and acceptance in religious faith helpful?

4. Outline and discuss Alston’s notion of doxastic practice and its relevance to religious epistemology.