This course will examine the key issues and problems for Western Religions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, from a Philosophical perspective. Topics to be covered include the nature and significance of religion and religious experience, arguments for and against the existence of God, the nature of God, the problem of evil, the relation between science and religion, and the role of textual and theological debate in the development of a religious Philosophy.
PROGRAM LEVEL LEARNING OUTCOME(S) Supported by this course:

Evaluate philosophical concepts as they pertain within and outside of the discipline and across cultures and belief systems.

Describe the basic problems in philosophy and traditional approaches to the issues.

COURSE LEVEL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME(S) Supported by this course:

1. Understand the primary components of religions, religious experiences, and religious practice.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the various arguments for and against the existence of God.
3. Analyze the differing viewpoints on the historical development of Western Religions and their texts, with particular focus on the development of the Christian religion.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Compare and contrast differing conceptions of the nature of God.
2. Compare and contrast differing conceptions of the nature and function of religion.
3. Identify, analyze, and evaluate differing conceptions of revelation.
4. Identify and evaluate different reasons for believing in God’s existence.
5. Identify and evaluate different reasons for withholding belief in God’s existence.
6. Describe sociological and psychological accounts of the phenomenon of religion.
7. Analyze varying accounts of the significance of claims of miracles.
8. Identify and assess differing views of the relationship of reason and faith.
9. Identify and analyze varying accounts of mystical and other religious experience.
10. Define and evaluate alternative accounts of the relation of science and faith.
11. Analyze the evolution of religious belief in Abrahamic religions.
12. Describe differing viewpoints on the significance of religious texts and their historical development in religious belief and practice.

COURSE CONTENT:

LECTURE CONTENT:

A. Basic Concepts of Religion
   1. The Nature of Religion
   2. The Idea of God
   3. The Concept of Revelation
   4. Mystical and Ordinary Religious Experience
   5. Exclusivism, Pluralism, and Tolerance

B. Grounds for Belief or Disbelief in God
   1. The Cosmological Argument
   2. The Ontological Argument
   3. The Teleological Argument
   4. The Moral Argument
   5. The Problem of Evil

C. Faith and Science
   1. Science and the Origins of the Universe and of Life
   2. Intelligent Design vs. Evolution
   3. The Role of Miracles in Religious Belief
4. The Conflict between Faith and Reason
D. Theological Questions
   1. Life after Death
   2. Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom
   3. Resurrection
   4. Paradoxes of Omnipotence
E. Development of Abrahamic Religions
   1. The Critical Tradition in Judaism
   2. The Debate Over the "Historical Jesus"
   3. Understanding the Importance of Differences between the Synoptic Gospels, "Q", and other early Christian texts
   4. The Development of Islam and the Koran

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:
A. Lecture:
B. Independent Study:

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES:
1. Lecture and explanation of topic concepts, using white- or chalkboard, overhead projector, PowerPoint presentation, video, or other delivery modes as needed.
2. Instructor will provide verbal and written feedback to students’ questions during lecture, and on student papers and exams.
3. Small group discussions, with instructor feedback.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:
Reading Assignments
   Students will spend significant time reading assigned topics for the course outside of class. These are to include, but are not limited to, classic arguments in the topic (such as Pascal's Wager and Anselm's Ontological Argument), contemporary analyses of these arguments (ie, Norman Malcom's assessment of Pascal's Wager), and writings covering contemporary issues (such as Intelligent Design).

Out-of-class Assignments
   Argumentative essays, reading assignments, reading reflections, and/or quizzes.

Writing Assignments
   Multiple essays describing, comparing, and analyzing the different topics of the course are to be assigned. Students should also write brief reflections on the writings.

METHODS OF STUDENT EVALUATION:
Midterm Exam
Final Exam
Short Quizzes
Written Assignments
Essay Examinations
Objective Examinations

Demonstration of Critical Thinking:
   1. Short analytical papers on course topics as specified; and/or
   2. Examinations covering texts and lecture material; and/or
   3. Short, objective quizzes to assist in absorbing technical terms and concepts.
Required Writing, Problem Solving, Skills Demonstration:

Students will write two or more short, analytical papers concerning topics covered in the syllabus. The aim of each paper will be to clearly set out and explain a significant problem or issue in the philosophy of religion by detailing the component concepts and the logical relationships between them. The emphasis will be on conceptual clarity.

TEXTS, READINGS, AND RESOURCES:

TextBooks:

Other:
1. Open Education Resources, such as classical religious texts (ie, Bible, Torah, Koran) and classic commentaries (ie, St. Thomas Aquinas, Maimonides)

LIBRARY:

Adequate library resources include: Print Materials
Non-Print Materials
Online Materials

Attachments:

Attached Files