

Philosophy of Religion  
Philosophy 340  
Spring 2022  
Mid Term Exam  
Due Monday, March 7

Write a 4-5 page essay on one of the following topics. All papers must be properly word processed or typed with 1" margins on the top, sides and bottom. Use double-spacing and no larger than 12pt font. Turn in by uploading to Laulima as either a Word file or pdf file. Use the following format to title your file: lastname 340 Midterm.

### *Conceptions of God(s)*

What is the difference between the realist and non-realist approach to religious beliefs? How does radical theologian Don Cupitt defend the non-realist approach? To what extent would you agree with his view? In *Greek Gods, Human Lives*, what does Mary Lefkowitz explain to be the great lesson humans can learn from Hesiod's tales of the Greek gods? Does what she has to say also apply to other conceptions of gods, the gods of India or the gods in Hawaiian culture? What are some of the similarities and differences between the conceptions of God(s) we have so far examined in the course? To what extent might it be important, whether one is religious or not, in thinking about the various conceptions of God(s)?

### *Soteriology and Religion*

What are the different soteriological goals of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and how is the goal reached in each of these religions? Are there soteriological goals in religions where the gods are personifications of natural forces, as in the pre-Hindu Vedic conception of gods, the Greek gods, or the gods of native American and Hawaiian conceptions of gods?

### *Indian Conceptions of Ultimate Reality*

What is the difference between the Advaita Vedanta conception of ultimate reality suggested in the Chandogya Upanishad about the relationship between Brahman and Atman and the Mahayana Buddhist conception of *sunyata*? To what extent is appropriate to say that both these traditions have a belief about a transcendent reality underlying the natural physical world? What is the difference between the soteriological goals of Hinduism and Buddhism? How does the Mahayana conception of the *bodhisattva* perhaps suggest a different soteriological goal in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism?

### *A Biography of God*

In his book *God: A Biography*, Jack Miles aims to tell the story of God's life as set out in the Hebrew Bible. Why does he think this story is so important, especially for those in the West, whether they believe in God or not? What does he find about the character of God as developed in the Hebrew Bible that is so compelling and why is this important?

### *The Cosmological Argument*

Explain the cosmological argument for the existence of God. How does Aquinas's argument from contingency differ from Leibniz's sufficient reason argument? What is the kalam version of the cosmological argument? What is the cosmological argument for atheism? To what extent do you find any of these arguments convincing?

### *The Teleological Argument*

Explain the teleological argument for the existence of God. What is William Paley's famous version of this argument? Explain the objections to the teleological argument from David Hume and from Darwinian evolution. To what extent do you find any of the teleological arguments convincing?

### *The Ontological Argument*

Explain the ontological argument for the existence of God. How did Saint Anselm of Canterbury put this argument in the 11th century? What is the objection to this argument given by Anselm's fellow monk Gaunilo? Explain Descartes's version of this argument given in the 5th Meditation. What is Kant's objection to the ontological argument?

### *Deus sive Natura*

What is Spinoza's conception of God, neatly summed up in the Latin phrase: *Deus sive Natura*? How did Spinoza come to this conclusion and what are the implications of this view? To what extent is Spinoza's view of God a form of pantheism?

## **Grading Rubric**

### **1) Writing 20%**

Grammar, spelling, composition, and style. Your essay should be well organized. There should be an introduction, development of a theme, and a conclusion.

### **2) Philosophical Content 50%**

The essay should reflect an adequate understanding of the texts. Your exposition of the text should include *at least two quotations* from the primary text material. All quotes should be properly marked within the text and must include a reference to the text cited.

### **3) Commentary 30%**

Your own thoughtful reflections on the topic.