

AN EXAMINATION OF THE VARIOUS CONCEPTIONS, THE HISTORY, THE PROBLEM AND EVOLUTION OF GOD—PHIL/REL 4800, SPRING 2010

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Jim Hill

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES:

- Learn precisely what the “problem of God” is. What are the various conceptions of God? How has the concept of God evolved?
- Learn the philosophical and historical background to the concepts, problem of God, and evolution of God—ancient and medieval philosophy; classical and contemporary rationalism and empiricism; the Enlightenment, existentialism, process philosophy, conflicts between science and religion, the new atheists and contemporary responses, the impact of evolutionary psychology on religion and the problem of God.
- Develop your own philosophical and religious position on the problem of God in light of the insights gained through the careful examination and assessment of readings and discussions.
- Continue to develop your skills in critical thinking and deep probing of philosophical issues, which you will demonstrate in your journals, presentations and discussions.

REQUIRED TEXTS: *THE LOSS AND RECOVERY OF TRANSCENDENCE*****

John Robertson

***THE CASE FOR GOD* Karen Armstrong**

***A HISTORY OF GOD* Karen Armstrong**

MEETING TIME: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-4:45p. Class will begin promptly at 3:30; please be in class on time. Class will end no later than 4:45p. (Please do not prepare to leave before I dismiss class.)

CLASS DECORUM: I note and record student attendance and absence. You may have two unexcused absences only; for every additional absence, you must write a two page paper on an assigned topic. For an excused absence, you must present to me a written excuse. You are responsible for any notes and announcements made for missed classes. You are expected to be in class and to participate in class discussion. If you must be late to class or must leave before class is over, please let me know in advance, and why you must be so. *Please turn off cell-phones right before and during class and do not text message in class.* (I expect students to give their full attention to class lectures and discussions.) I will compose a class e-mail list; you must check your e-mail daily for messages from me to include outlines for the next class.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS: There are three requirements for this course: **First:** Be in class, participate, take good notes, and stay in touch with me by making office visits and corresponding by e-mail; observe class decorum (above). **Second:** Keep a journal that will include the following: weekly tests/short papers/class presentations/reflections & observations on an issue pertaining to the theme of this course. **Third:** Submit a final project paper on the “problem of God” and how you resolve the problem. I will give you instructions for this final paper later in the course.

FINAL GRADE:

Your final grade will be determined on the basis of the following: (1) Your class attendance, participation, demonstrated interest and commitment to the course; (2) the average grade you receive on your journals; and (3) your final paper.

OFFICE HOURS:

By appointment or drop by. My office is upstairs in the Honors House. e-mail: jimhill@valdosta.edu. Honors House phone: 249-4894.

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Overview of the Course

- I. Introduction to the Course
- II. The Problem Stated
- III. Classical Theism
- IV. Classical challenges to Classical Theism
- V. Robertson: The Loss and Recovery of Transcendence: The Will to Power and the Light of Heaven:
 1. Scientific Objectivism
 2. Humanistic Subjectivism
 3. The Will to Power and the Loss of Experience
 4. The Recovery of Experience and the Openness to God
 5. The Galilean Vision
- VI. Armstrong: The Case for God and A History of God:
 1. The Unknown God
 - i. *Homo religiosus*
 - ii. God
 - iii. Reason
 - iv. Faith
 - v. Silence
 - vi. Faith and Reason
 2. The Modern God
 - i. Science and Religion
 - ii. Scientific Religion
 - iii. Enlightenment
 - iv. Atheism
 1. The New Atheists
 2. Responses
 3. Unknowing
 4. Death of God?
 5. Epilogue
- VII. Process Philosophy and God: A. N. Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne & John Cobb
- VIII. Evolutionary Psychology and God: Robin Wright
- IX. Existentialism and God: Augustine & Paul Tillich
- X. Summary of the Course
- XI. Class Presentations.