Meeting Times / Venue

Thursdays 9:30AM – 12:30PM / HSS Seminar Room 8

Instructor Information

Prof. Andrés Luco (given name “Andrés”; family name “Luco”)
Office: HSS-06-03 (Humanities & Social Sciences Building, Level 6, Room 3)
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Email: acluco@ntu.edu.sg
Consultation hours: Mondays 10:00AM – 12:00PM

Course Description

This course gives students a unique opportunity to explore profound questions of religion and faith in a philosophical framework. Students will be asked to take a reasoned stance on whether religious faith can be, or even should be, rationally justified by evidence. They will be challenged to assess arguments in favor of theism and atheism. They will consider whether science and religion are compatible, or whether one discredits the other. And they will contemplate whether religious assertions about the occurrence of miracles and the existence of an afterlife survive critical scrutiny. Finally, we examine whether religions can be worthy of our adherence, even if some of their fundamental tenets are false. The course will conclude with some reflection on the important roles that religion can play in people’s lives, apart from being a source of truth-claims.

These issues are among the great questions that have roiled the human mind. In Faith and Reason, students will confront them head-on in an intellectual environment that will demand both analytical rigor and mutual respect.

Course Goals

1. Students will know and be able to explain some basic issues, figures, and concepts in the philosophy of religion.
2. Students will improve their critical thinking skills by learning to analyze philosophical issues, to make and analyze meaningful arguments, and to produce critical evaluations of various philosophical positions.
3. Students will learn to develop, and articulate clearly, their own reasoned positions on some important philosophical issues.
Required Textbooks and Readings

The assigned readings for this course can be found in three sources: NTULearn, and two textbooks. These are the textbooks:

   - The textbook by Murray and Rea can be accessed online, free of charge, through the NTU Library. To access it, search the NTU library catalogue, or [click here](#).

   - The textbook by Meister contains many required readings. Students must purchase it at the Booklink bookstore.

The details of the Booklink bookstore:

Booklink Pte. Ltd.
S4-B5A-01, South Spine
Nanyang Technological University
50 Nanyang Avenue
Singapore 639798
Tel: (+65) 67349091 Fax: (65) 67343320

The course schedule below lists all the reading assignments for the semester. It also indicates where to find particular readings.

Coursework

- **Reading assignments (RAs).** The reading assignments (RAs) are listed below.
- **1 in-class midterm test.** The test will be conducted in class, and will take approximately 1 hour to complete. It will consist of one short-answer question requiring an answer of approximately 300 words, plus an essay of approximately 800 words. See the course schedule below for the date of the midterm.
- **2 typewritten essays.** No more than 2500 words each, excluding the bibliography. Essays must be submitted electronically through the NTULearn website. See the course schedule for the essay deadlines.

Calculation of Final Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Test</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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</table>
Class Meetings and Participation

You will be graded on your participation in class discussions. The participation grade will be based not only on your attendance, but also on the quality of your contributions to class discussions. To truly learn a subject, you must be able to ask questions and speak competently about it. You must have the maturity to give and take constructive criticism.

The participation grade is worth up to 5% of the total grade.

Participation grades:
- Unsatisfactory class contributions: 0/5
- Satisfactory contributions: 3/5
- Excellent contributions: 5/5

Unsatisfactory class contributions. Students who do not come to class regularly, or who do not contribute regularly in class discussions throughout the term, will receive 0 marks for participation. More than two unexcused absences from class meetings will result in a participation grade of 0. Failure to participate in class discussions on a regular basis could also result in a participation grade of 0.

Satisfactory contributions. Students who contribute regularly in class discussions throughout the term will be awarded 3/5 percentage points for participation.

Excellent contributions. Students who regularly contribute relevant, informed, and reasoned comments in class discussions throughout the term will be awarded 5/5 percentage points for participation.

Attendance Requirement

More than two unexcused absences from class meetings will result in a participation grade of 0. Students who are more than 20 minutes late for a class meeting will be counted absent.

Students will sign their names on a register to document their presence in class. The attendance register is the official record of class attendance. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the register accurately reflects his or her class attendance throughout the term.

Whether or not to excuse an absence is the prerogative of the instructor. Students who give adequate explanations for an absence can expect to be excused. Ideally, explanations should be supported by documented evidence. In the case of illness, for example, a medical note signed by a healthcare provider would suffice. Notice of extracurricular commitments signed by a coach or other relevant authority is also acceptable. In extraordinary circumstances, absences explained without any documentation may sometimes be excused. However, in most cases—especially after repeated absences—such explanations will be regarded with skepticism.
NTULearn Website

This course will rely heavily on an NTULearn website. Log in to NTULearn at https://NTULearn.ntu.edu.sg/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp.

The following information will appear on NTULearn:

- **Announcements.** Please check your email and NTULearn regularly.
- **Readings.** Readings to be downloaded from NTULearn are marked by the letter “E” in the section headed “Reading Assignments” below.
- **Course notes.** See details below.
- **Essay assignments** (along with a portal for electronic submission of essays).
- **Grades**

Course Notes and Lectures

“Course notes” will be posted on NTULearn every week. They are the basis for the lectures, and they are designed to clarify and reinforce the most important ideas in each week’s topic. The course notes are not part of the required reading assignments, but they will still be made available as recommended readings. Students may find it particularly helpful to read the course notes in preparation for writing essays.

Some students may be tempted to read only the course notes and nothing else. This is an unwise strategy. You will not fully understand the course notes without also doing the other readings. Also, you will be tested on material that appears in the assigned readings, but not in the course notes.

Plagiarism

To plagiarize is to present another person’s work as your own. Plagiarism is unethical, and it is a serious academic offense. Students suspected of plagiarism will be reported to the university authorities. Students found guilty of plagiarism can face heavy penalties, including expulsion from the University.

Sometimes, students commit plagiarism without even knowing it. To avoid such a fate, all students should read “A Guide to Academic Integrity” (URL: http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/ForEveryone/Pages/AGuidetoAcademicIntegrity.aspx). This invaluable resource was produced by NTU’s Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT).

It is the student’s responsibility to understand the Academic Integrity Policy at NTU. Documents explaining the policy can be downloaded from the NTULearn website for this course. Find them posted under the folder named “Essay Assignments.” They are also accessible at the following URL: http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/ForEveryone/Pages/NTUAcademicIntegrityPolicy.aspx
## Course Schedule

The schedule below lists the topic and the reading material that will be discussed in class meetings. For example, the class meeting in week 2 will cover the material in reading assignment (RA) 2. This schedule is tentative. It’s possible that some topics will take more than a single class session to cover. Also, some topics may be dropped in order to devote a sufficient amount of time to other material. Changes to the schedule will be announced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Week</th>
<th>Dates of class meetings</th>
<th>Holiday, recess, or special event</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment (RA)</th>
<th>Test, quiz, or essay deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14 January</td>
<td></td>
<td>What is the Philosophy of Religion?</td>
<td>RA1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>21 January</td>
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<td>Faith and Reason: Are religious beliefs rational?</td>
<td>RA2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>28 January</td>
<td></td>
<td>Miracles</td>
<td>RA3</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4 February</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Ontological Argument for God’s existence</td>
<td>RA4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11 February</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Cosmological Argument for God’s existence</td>
<td>RA5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>18 February</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Teleological Argument for God’s existence (Part 1)</td>
<td>RA6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>25 February</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Teleological Argument for God’s existence (Part 2)</td>
<td>RA7</td>
<td>Midterm Test (first hour of class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>29 February – 4 March</td>
<td>Recess Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>10 March</td>
<td>The Moral Argument for God’s existence</td>
<td>RA8</td>
<td>Essay 1 Due</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>17 March</td>
<td>Arguments against God’s existence: The Problem of Evil</td>
<td>RA9</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>24 March</td>
<td>Arguments against God’s existence: Naturalism</td>
<td>RA10</td>
<td></td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>31 March</td>
<td>Religion and Science: Are they compatible?</td>
<td>RA11</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>7 April</td>
<td>Life after Death</td>
<td>RA12</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>14 April</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>RA13</td>
<td>Essay 2 Due</td>
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Reading Assignments (RAs)

To prepare for class, you should complete the reading assignment (RA) for a given week before that week’s lecture meeting. For example, before attending the lecture in week 2, students should complete RA 2.

The following abbreviations indicate where to find a particular reading:

- N = NTULearn website: [https://ntulearn.ntu.edu.sg/webapps/login](https://ntulearn.ntu.edu.sg/webapps/login)
- Murray & Rea = An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion
- Meister = The Philosophy of Religion Reader

Some reading assignments include recommended readings and videos. This recommended content is optional, and no test questions will be asked about it. However, the recommended materials may help you improve your understanding of the topics.
RA 1: What is the Philosophy of Religion?
- Murray & Rea, “Preface”
- Stephen Prothero, “Introduction” (N)

RA 2: Faith and Reason: Are Religious Beliefs Rational?
- William Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief” (Meister)
- Blaise Pascal, “The Wager” (Meister)
- Alvin Plantinga, “Belief in God as Properly Basic” (Meister)

RA 3: Miracles
- Murray & Rea, pp. 200 – 209
- David Hume, “The Unreasonability of Belief in Miracles” (Meister)
- Richard Swinburne, “A Case for Miracles” (Meister)

RA 4: The Ontological Argument for God’s Existence
- Murray & Rea, pp. 123 – 135
- St. Anselm of Canterbury, “The Classical Ontological Argument” (Meister)
- Gaunilo of Marmoutier, “Gaunilo’s Response to Anselm” (Meister)

RA 5: The Cosmological Argument for God’s Existence
- William Lane Craig, “The Kalam Cosmological Argument” (Meister)
  - Recommended: Watch the television program Curiosity with Stephen Hawking: “Did God Create the Universe?” URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiyrRbYNm0Q (run time 42 minutes)

RA 6: The Teleological Argument for God’s Existence (Part 1)
- Murray & Rea, pp. 146 – 149
- Michael J. Behe, “A Recent Intelligent Design Argument” (Meister)
- Philip Kitcher, “At the Mercy of Chance?” (NTULearn)
  - Recommended: Watch Stated Clearly video, “Can Science Explain the Origin of Life?” URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgQLyqWaCbA (run time > 7 minutes)

RA 7: The Teleological Argument for God’s Existence (Part 2)
- Murray & Rea, pp. 150 – 155
- Robin Collins, “A Recent Fine-Tuning Argument” (Meister)
- Neil A. Manson, “The Fine-Tuning Argument” (NTULearn)

RA 8: The Moral Argument for God’s Existence
- Paul Copan, “The Moral Argument” (Meister)
- Erik J. Wielenberg, “Cudworth’s Revenge” (NTULearn)
  - Recommended: Murray & Rea, pp. 227 – 249
RA9: Arguments Against God’s Existence: The Problem of Evil
- J.L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence” (NTULearn)
- Alvin Plantinga, “A Free Will Defense” (Meister)
  - Recommended: Murray & Rea, pp. 158 – 180

RA10: Arguments Against God’s Existence: Naturalism
- Michael Ruse, “The Naturalist Challenge to Religion” (NTULearn)
- Alvin Plantinga, “Naturalism and Science” (Meister)

RA11: Religion and Science: Are they compatible?
- Stephen Jay Gould, “Two Separate Domains” (NTULearn)
- Jerry A. Coyne, “Why Accommodationism Fails” (NTULearn)
  - Recommended: Murray & Rea, 193 – 200, 209 – 226

RA12: Life after Death
- Murray & Rea, all of chapter 9 (pp. 258 – 286)
- Sri Aurobindo, “Rebirth and the Self” (Meister)

RA 13: Conclusion
  - Recommended: Michael Ruse, “The Meaningful Life” (NTULearn)