Credit Hours: 3
Prerequisites/Department consent: Metropolitan School of Professional Studies students


Instructor contact information:
James Despres, M.A.
Metropolitan School of Professional Studies office
Phone: 202-550-2748
E-mail: 75despres@cua.edu
Office Hours: Online as Needed, or by Phone (202-550-2748; Please be sure to leave a clear message including your name and phone number).

MPH 350 Philosophy of Religion: This course focuses on a critical evaluation of philosophical problems of religion; nature of religion, religious experience, theistic proofs, religious knowledge, religious language, alternative views of God, problem of evil, relation of religion and value experience.

Instructional Methods: This course will employ Blackboard as the primary vehicle for delivery of course content, as well as assignments, discussion boards, essays, lectures, and presentations. When appropriate and possible, video and audio presentations will be available in conjunction with PowerPoints and documents.

The course is broken down into 8 Modules (basically ordered according to topic area). The topic areas for the course are as follows:

- Module 1: Faith & Reason
- Module 2: Anselm and the Ontological Argument
- Module 3: Arguments for God’s Existence: Aquinas
- Module 4: An Alternative Reading of the Ontological Argument
- Module 5: Teleological Arguments
- Module 6: Objections to (Rational) Arguments for God
- Module 7: (Some) Attributes & Miracles
- Module 8: Options from Benedict XVI

The above Modules are broken down (see below) into weekly assignments/readings.

Weekly Discussions/Discussion Boards are assigned for each week of the semester (excluding Spring Break and at least one more week). These weekly assignments will consist of some questions and/or prompts to which students are expected to respond by the indicated due dates. See the Discussions Tab for Expectations for Weekly Discussions as well as for due dates. Updates will be made as the semester proceeds (notifications of updates will be generated automatically).

In addition to Weekly Discussions, each student will be expected to complete Four (4) Blog entries in total for the semester. Over the course of the semester, one (1) blog entry will be available per Module. Students will have some freedom as to which blog entries to choose for completing his/her blog requirement. Further information regarding Blog entries will be made available under the Discussions/Blogs tab on the left hand side of the course in Blackboard. Expectations and prompts/question will be clearly indicated in each Blog assignment, as well as due dates.
Finally, two (2) (long) Essay Assignments will be assigned for the course. Expectations for papers will be made available during the first two weeks of the course. The papers will be assigned at 5–8 pages, double spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman, with a title page, page numbers, works cited, and footnote stipulations. Further details to follow under Announcements and within the Modules section(s). See below for Due Dates as well.

There is no final examination for the course.

Required Texts:
Supplements provided by Instructor. Available Online, by Email, or on Blackboard at Instructor’s discretion.

Recommended Text(s):
Benedict XVI. Regensburg Address, Spe Salvi, St. John Paul II, Fides et Ratio (Faith and Reason).

Reading Materials/Web Materials:
Most, if not all, reading materials for this course will be taken from Rowe, and Wainwright, Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings (see above).
Other reading materials include but are not limited to those listed in the Recommended Texts above.

Libraries
The CUA Libraries' wide range of resources and services, including databases, online journals, and FAQs are on the main web site. For assistance on papers and assignments, consult the research guides or schedule an appointment with a subject librarian.

Course Goals: The goals of this course are to develop critical reading, thinking, and writing skills, while addressing themes regarding human knowledge, its limitations, its role in a good human life and culture, and a philosophical approach to the knowledge of God and religion. Upon completing this course, students will be expected to be able to read and understand philosophical texts, and discuss philosophical topics related to the philosophy of religion in a manner that develops approaches and solutions to philosophical problems and questions. We will accomplish this through a series of writing exercises and exams based on the assigned readings and classroom lectures. Both the exams and assigned papers will require the student 1) to grasp the positions expressed by selected philosophers on a variety of philosophical issues and 2) to articulate them in the student's own words.

Goals for Student Learning: At the conclusion of the semester, the student will acquire a firm grasp of arguments for the existence of God; modern criticisms of these arguments; the nature of God; divine attributes, knowledge, foreknowledge, omnipotence and their relationship to human freedom; and the relationship between faith and reason. Also see handout on “Course Objectives.”

Course Requirements:
Reading Assignments – You are expected to have each assigned reading prepared before “coming to class”—i.e., you must not only read the reading at least once in its entirety, but you must have read it thoughtfully and/or critically, and must do so prior to completing the tasks set out for each week/module. Use of Cliff Notes, Monarch Notes, Spark Notes, and other similar reading aids is emphatically discouraged. There are no substitutes for the required texts, and there is no substitute for the time and mental energy a student is to devote to them.

Class Participation – Active, regular and thoughtful participation is required of all students—i.e., all students should be prepared to both ask and answer intelligent questions about the text and course material. Active, regular and thoughtful
participation in online discussion(s) is required of all students. No extra credit assignments will be granted. Each student must log in to the class on Blackboard at least twice per week and must make at least one original entry for the discussion thread per week, as well as respond to two (2) different student entries. In other words, each student must respond to each discussion question(s) per week, as well as make at least two responses to entries made by other students. It is the student’s responsibility to review all discussions, including entries from other students, and to keep current with Blackboard for this course.

Papers – During the course of this semester, you will be required to submit two (2) papers electronically. The goal of these papers is to help you formulate and express your philosophical thoughts in writing. Each assigned paper is due by the due date specified below before 11:59PM.

Late papers will not be accepted.

Further details will follow. Grammar, spelling, and format of the document all comprise aspects of your paper and will affect the grade of your paper.

As George Orwell has stated, “A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?”

Examinations – There are no examinations scheduled for this course (see below). Paper assignments and weekly discussion sessions and Blog entries, however, are required for this course.

Remember that the online software for this course does not permit late submissions of any kind. I am forgiving. Computer software is not.

Thus, if you foresee an unavoidable and extraordinary conflict with any one of the due dates listed below, you must notify me prior to that date. While I reserve the right not to administer and/or provide a make-up time if I do not think the situation warrants it, or to accept a late submission, it is very important to contact me promptly if you are having difficulty meeting course requirements.

If business or personal obstacles prevent you from participating in the online discussions or prevent you from submitting any of your work in on time, let me know immediately so that we may make any necessary arrangements. Metropolitan School of Professional Studies has procedures, including tutoring, to accommodate difficulties.

You must contact me during the semester if you need assistance or accommodations. All work must be submitted by the dates due (see below) to count for credit.

Expectations and policies:

Academic honesty: Academic honesty is expected of all CUA students. Faculty are required to initiate the imposition of sanctions when they find violations of academic honesty, such as plagiarism, improper use of a student’s own work, cheating, and fabrication.

Academic integrity is not merely avoiding plagiarism or cheating, but it certainly includes those things. More than anything, having academic integrity means taking responsibility for your work, your ideas, and your effort, and giving credit to others for their work, ideas and effort. If you submit work that is not your own – whether test answers, whole papers or something in-between – I have a responsibility to hold you accountable for that action. I also have a responsibility to treat you with respect and dignity while doing so.

The following sanctions are presented in the University procedures related to Student Academic Dishonesty:

“The presumed sanction for undergraduate students for academic dishonesty will be failure for the course. There may be circumstances, however, where, perhaps because of an undergraduate student’s past record, a more serious sanction, such as suspension or expulsion, would be appropriate. ...In the more unusual case, mitigating circumstances may exist that would warrant a lesser sanction than the presumed sanction.”

OR

“The presumed sanction for undergraduate students for academic dishonesty will be failure for the course. In the context of graduate studies, the expectations for academic honesty are greater, and therefore the presumed sanction for dishonesty is likely to be more severe, e.g., expulsion. ...In the more unusual case, mitigating circumstances may exist that would warrant a lesser sanction than the presumed sanction.”

There is no group work in the class; therefore, you should not collaborate with classmates on work that is to be submitted for an individual grade.

For more information about what academic integrity means at CUA, including your responsibilities and rights, visit http://integrity.cua.edu.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:** Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact Disability Support (dss.cua.edu) to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

**Other Policies or Expectations:**

**Late Work** – **Late work will not be accepted.** Assignments turned in after the date and time they are due will be considered late and will not be accepted (see above).

**No extra credit assignments will be granted.**

**As a general rule, late submissions of any kind will not be granted.** Requests made for late submission of examinations within 24 hours of the due date and time, if granted, will result in a penalty of 10% of the total for the examination per day after the due date the examination is not submitted.

**Incomplete Work** – Failure to fulfill any of the requirements of this course will result in an F for the course. And to reiterate, plagiarism will result in an F for the course.

“**Attendance** Policy” – As an online course, an effective attendance policy must take into consideration that there is no official “class time” for this course. All work for this course will be submitted online and there will be no set time scheduled for simultaneous discussion. **Thus, the “attendance” policy will coincide with that of Class Participation. See above.**

**Academic Support Services**

The university’s primary academic support resources are located on the 2nd floor of the Pryzbyla Center. These affiliated offices and services include:

- **Kenneth Killiany** is MSPS’s internal writing tutor who provides individualized writing support. He can be reached at killiany@cua.edu. Please put “Metro SPS Writing Help” in the subject line.

- **The Center for Academic Success** provides academic support services for all students through a broad base of programs and services, including Tutoring Services, Workshops, Academic Coaching, Individual Skills Meetings, Peer Mentoring, and more.

  **Phone:** (202) 319-5655  **Email:** cua-academicsuccess@cua.edu  **Web:** success.cua.edu

- **The Writing Center** provides free, one-on-one consultations with trained graduate instructors for writing projects across all disciplines at any stage of the process, from brainstorming to revising. Appointments in the main location, Mullen 219, can be scheduled in advance online (http://english.cua.edu/wc/). Drop-in appointments are also welcome based on availability (see website for days and hours).

  **Phone:** (202) 319-4286  **Email:** cua-writingcenter@cua.edu  **Web:** english.cua.edu/wc/
**The Math Center** is staffed with Math Faculty and Tutors who are trained to assist students struggling in areas ranging from the basics to complex problems in calculus and statistics. Any student who feels he or she may need assistance in this or any other math class is welcome to visit the Math Center in Pryz 202 Monday through Thursday between the hours of 4:00 and 10:00pm. No appointment is necessary and services are absolutely free.

**Phone:** (202) 319-5655  **Email:** cua-academicsuccess@cua.edu

**Disability Support Services** provides programs and services designed to support and encourage the integration of students with disabilities into the mainstream of the university community.

**Phone:** (202) 319-5211  **Email:** cua-disabilityservices@cua.edu  **Web:** dss.cua.edu

**The Counseling Center** provides free individual and group counseling services, psychiatric consultation, alternative testing, and emergency services to CUA students. In addition, we provide consultation services and outreach programs to the CUA community. Appointments can be scheduled in person in 127 O’Boyle Hall, or by phone.

**Phone:** (202) 319-5765. **Web:** counseling.cua.edu

**Assessment/Grade Determination:** Grades will be determined according to the following factors and scale. Please pay particular attention to the adjectival description of the letter grades.

The University grading system is available at [http://policies.cua.edu/academicundergrad//gradesfull.cfm#II](http://policies.cua.edu/academicundergrad//gradesfull.cfm#II) for undergraduates and [http://policies.cua.edu/academicgrad//gradesfull.cfm#iii](http://policies.cua.edu/academicgrad//gradesfull.cfm#iii) for graduate students.

Reports of grades in courses are available at the end of each term on [http://cardinalstation.cua.edu](http://cardinalstation.cua.edu).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Participation/ Discussion Boards</th>
<th>A  Excellent</th>
<th>4.0</th>
<th>93-100%</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 Blogs</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st Essay Assign.</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Essay Assign.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>77-79%</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>73-76%</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
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<td>D Lowest passing</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>60-69%</td>
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<td>F Failing</td>
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<td>&lt;60%</td>
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<td>F# Failure—the student ceased to participate in class</td>
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<td>I Incomplete</td>
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<td>W Withdrawal</td>
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See also: [http://metro.cua.edu/faculty/facresources.cfm](http://metro.cua.edu/faculty/facresources.cfm)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and Reading Assignment</th>
<th>Pages</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Module 1** | **Week 1** | **Jan 9 - 13** | **Introduction, Syllabus**  
Faith & Reason (*Fides et Ratio*/Faith and Reason): Faith needs reason, theology needs philosophy  
Sokolowski: Why Study Philosophy, and in light of the Encyclical * Faith and Reason*? | *Fides et Ratio*  
Introduction: §1-5  
Readings Posted to Blackboard |
| **Module 2** | **Week 2** | Jan 17 – 20  
(Jan 16: MLK Day/No Classes)  
(Jan 20: Inauguration Day/No Classes) | Faith & Reason, Cont.  
Optional Reading: *Rowe / Wainwright*: 442-43  
Jan. 19: Martin Luther King Day (Holiday) | Chpt. 2-4: §16-48  
Chpt. 6: §64-79 |
| **Module 3** | **Week 3** | Jan 23 - 27 | Ontological Argument for God’s Existence: Anselm of Canterbury  
**January 23: Last Day to Register or Add Course for Credit; Last Day to Drop Course without Record** | *Rowe / Wainwright*: 95-101 |
| **Module 4** | **Week 4** | Jan 30 – Feb 3 | Gaunilo’s Objection to Anselm’s Ontological Argument | *Rowe / Wainwright*: 95-101 |
| **Module 5** | **Week 5** | Feb 6 - 10 | Arguments for God’s Existence: Aquinas’ Five Ways (Ways 1, 2, & 5)  
Supplementary Readings posted to Blackboard | 126-28 |
| **Module 6** | **Week 6** | **Feb 13 - 17** | Aquinas’s Five Ways, Cont.  
Supplementary Readings posted to Blackboard  
**Paper #1 Due: 11:59 PM Sunday 19 February 2017** | 126-28 |
| **Module 7** | **Week 7** | Feb 20 - 24 | Alternative Reading of Ontological Argument  
**Friday, February 24: Last Day to change to Audit; Last Day to resolve grades of Incomplete from previous semester**  
Readings posted to Blackboard (Sokolowski, *God of Faith & Reason*) |  |
| **Module 8** | **Week 8** | Feb 27 – March 3 | “Teleological” Argument: William Paley  
**Last Day for Spring 2017 graduation candidates to submit online diploma applications (use Cardinal Station)** | 155-61 |
<p>| <strong>Module 9</strong> | <strong>Week 9</strong> | <strong>March 6 - 10</strong> | Spring Recess (No Classes) |  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module 6</th>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th>March 13 - 17</th>
<th>Objections to Arguments for God: Hume and Kant</th>
<th>137-40; 104-108</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>March 20 - 24</td>
<td>More on Hume and Kant</td>
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<td>Readings Posted to Blackboard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>March 27 - 31</td>
<td>Other Modern Difficulties</td>
<td>3/29: Easter Monday (No Classes)</td>
<td>Readings Posted to Blackboard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Module 7**

| Week 13 | April 3 - 7 | Divine Knowledge & Divine Omnipotence & Human Freedom | 32-38; 59-63; 24-32; |
| Week 14 | April 10 – 14 | God & Evil Free Will | 216-24; 271-74; Optional: 274-84 |
|         | Apr. 10: Founders Day | | |
|         | Apr. 13-17: Easter Recess | | |

**Week 15**

| April 18 - 21 | Miracles: Hume | Paper #2 Due: 11:59 PM, Friday 21 April 2017 | 492-99 |

**Module 8**

| Week 16 | April 24 - 28 | Benedict XVI: Regensburg Address Benedict XVI: Spe Salvi—Hope and Christianity | Readings posted to Blackboard |
| Week 17 | May 2 - 6 | Final Exam Week No Final Exam is Scheduled for this Course | |

Though no final exam is scheduled for this course, the following applies according to the University: The final exam must be given on the day and time assigned by the Registrar. Final examinations must be administered in the final examination period. Please plan accordingly for travel, work or appointments.

**The above schedule, policies, and assignments are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances or at the discretion of the instructor.**

**Bibliography:**


TBD