



Central Problems in Philosophy A | PIU11023

Year	Junior Freshman
ECTS Credits	5
Contact Hours	22 hours (18 hours of lectures; 4 hours of tutorials)
Pre-requisite	None
Semester	1
Module Leader & Lecturer	Prof. Farbod Akhlaghi & Prof. Paul O'Grady
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Module Outline:

This module has two components. Each component covers a set of central problems in philosophy, the first covered by Prof O'Grady and the second by Prof Akhlaghi.

Component 1: Philosophy of Religion (Prof. Paul O'Grady)

This course offers an introduction to some of the main topics in philosophy of religion. It analyses how philosophical approaches to religion differ from other kinds of approach. Then two traditional arguments for God's existence are explored in some detail. The cosmological argument is one, which seeks to argue from certain phenomena in the world to the existence of a non-spatio-temporal cause of these. The general features of such arguments are explored as well as standard objections to them.

Then a classical and a modern version of this argument are examined. The argument to design is another traditional argument for God's existence. A famous version of this from William Paley is examined along with important objections to it from evolutionary theory and from the great Scottish philosopher, David Hume. Then a modern version of this argument developed by Richard Swinburne is assessed. Finally the problem of evil is examined. This is the supposed incompatibility of the existence of an all good and all powerful God with the existence of evil. Different versions of the argument are explored and the free will defence in the version devised by Alvin Plantinga is assessed.

Component 2: Moral Philosophy (Prof. Akhlaghi)

How should we approach conversation with others? What do we owe our friends? Could it be wrong to have children? The aim of this component is to introduce you to some of the central problems in moral philosophy through engaging with moral questions that arise in the course of our everyday lives: with friends, family, romantic partners, social media, and more. It is natural, in thinking through such questions, to wonder if morality is all a matter of opinion or whether there are any moral facts at all. We will thus also cover some key debates about the nature of morality, asking, for example, whether there are moral facts, whether they are objective, and how we could know what is right and wrong.



Assessment:

Coursework: one essay (chosen from either Component One or Two): 50%

Examination: one exam question (chosen from the Component for which an essay was not submitted): 50%

Recommended Reading List:

An extensive and detailed reading list will be made available at the start of the module. The following are helpful preparatory background reading:

For Component One:

- An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion, Brian Davies, OUP, 2004

For Component Two:

- Shafer-Landau, Russ. (2021). *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (Fifth Edition or later). Oxford: Oxford University Press.