

Central Problems in Philosophy A | PIU11023

Year	Junior Freshman
ECTS Credits	5
Contact Hours	32 (22 hours of lectures; 10 hours of tutorials)
Pre-requisite	None
Semester	1
Module Leader & Lecturer	Dr Adrian Downey & Prof Paul O'Grady
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Module Outline:

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 Two: Philosophy of Mind (Dr Adrian Downey)

We shall cover three areas core to the philosophy of mind:

1. The metaphysics of mind/consciousness: is the mind/consciousness non-physical? Or perhaps identical to the brain? Or maybe it is a kind of software? etc.
2. The nature and ontological status of mental states: are beliefs and desires even real and, if so, what is their nature?
3. Extended Mind/Consciousness: is your mind/consciousness brain-bound, or is it instead constituted by the brain, body, and world. That is, could your phone, for instance, be literally said to be a part of your mind?



Assessment:

- Coursework: 1 essay (chosen from either Component One or Component Two)- 50%
- Examination: 1 examination 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. To prepare for it, the following readings will be useful:

Component One (Philosophy of Religion):

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

Component Two (Philosophy of Mind):

- *Folk Psychology as a Theory*, Dan Hutto
(<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/folkpsych-theory/>)
- *Extended Cognition*, Mark Sprevak
(<https://marksprevak.com/publications/extended-cognition/>)