

Montgomery College
Humanities Department
Takoma Park/Silver Spring

PHIL 143

TEMPLATE

Textbooks and other resources (*all required*):

Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions*, 9th Edition. ISBN: 9780205956401

Course Description:

Discusses theories of the source of religion and examines representative Eastern and Western religions. Philosophical implications of the presence of religion in human life will be explored. (HUMD[M]). **PREREQUISITE(S)**: *Assessment levels: EN 101/101A, MA 100, RD 120*. Three hours each week. Formerly PL 203. **PHIL 143 has a Global and Cultural Perspectives Designation.**

Course Outcomes: Upon course completion, a student will be able to:

- Discuss humankind's shared knowledge and wisdom of perennial questions about religion
- Analyze the language of religion and faith; the influence of language and cultures on persons' faith and perspective of the world
- Critically evaluate the 'proofs' for the existence of God and various religious cultures' treatment of the problem of evil
- Distinguish various religious cultures' world views: notions of the divine, human nature and society, faith and belief; the status of women and minorities in religious cultures
- Compare and contrast modern trends in religious issues and interests in a multicultural and multinational society

Grading Policy: The final grade will be determined as follows:

There are a total of 1000 possible points to earn in the class.

Final Grades will be determined as follows:

Attendance and Discussion	20% of Final Grade (200 points)
Philosophy Journal	20% of Final Grade (200 points)

Tests	40% of Final Grade (400 points)
Final Paper	20% of Final Grade (200 points)

Grade Scale:

A	90 – 100%	B	80 – 89%	C	70 – 79%
D	60 – 69%	F	< 60%		

Assignments:

Review Questions: Each week you will respond to questions about each module. Although these are ungraded and self-checked (do not submit them to me), they prepare you for graded tests. Completing short-answer items is essential to your success in the course. *If you do not complete the module review questions, you will not do well in the course.*

Attendance and Discussion: Active participation in online discussions contributes to your learning and is an important factor in your grade. Discussions take place within Blackboard. They are not live chats, but involve posting comments to discussion boards within each module.

Your discussion participation grade is a grade like any other, and is based on merit. Each module contains a discussion question to which you must respond. There are 14 discussion questions in the course, and your responses to them contribute a total of 200 points to your final grade. ***To get all of these points, you must: 1) post your response to the discussion topic, 2) comment on the posts of at least two of your peers, 3) respond to at least two comments that other students leave on your post, and 4) meet the quality requirements mentioned below 5) before the due date. Late discussion posts will not be graded.*** Discussion posts are due each Sunday by midnight. However, in order to give your peers time to comment on your post, I suggest posting your discussion response earlier in the week. In the event that you make a discussion contribution before Saturday but your peers do not respond, you may make up the additional points by making two additional comments on the posts of your peers.

Your discussion contributions will be graded on their quality. In order to participate effectively you will have to complete assigned readings, both from the module and in the textbook, prior to the discussion. You will demonstrate your fluency with the material through informed contributions, not merely through wild speculation. However, philosophy is more than remembering the ideas of others; it is using critical thinking skills in combination with your own interest to bring novel approaches to bear on understanding and interpreting the subject matter.

If you routinely make contributions to class discussion that meet the five criteria listed above, you will receive 200/200 points for your attendance and discussion grade. If the quality of your participation is average, you can expect to receive 140-170/200 points. ***If you fail to contribute to more than 3 discussion topics, no matter the reason, you will fail your participation grade.***

Original ideas and questions during class discussion are welcomed and encouraged!

Be aware that some of the course material can be controversial, and that discussions are discussions of ideas, never attacks on those who hold ideas. You are expected to maintain an attitude of respect to all during class discussions.

For more information about class discussions, see the headings entitled "What is an Online Discussion" and "Guidelines for Participating in an Online Discussion" in the Other Course Policies and Procedures section of this syllabus.

Note that certain information about your online activity is automatically recorded, such as the date you last logged on to the course, the number of discussion board messages read, the number of discussion board messages posted, and which course content pages you have read. Remember that you should be spending at least three hours each week covering the module content, and several more hours each week completing coursework, reading, and discussions. Students who receive A's in the course are generally those who spend the most amount of time logged in to the course and interacting with course material.

Philosophy Journal: You will keep a Philosophy Journal in which you reflect on course topics. You will write one journal entry a week, and in a few paragraphs (300-500 words), you will address the journal entry topic. Journal entries are designed to get you thinking about the course, and to give you the opportunity to express ideas you may not have had a chance to bring up in class discussion. So, read the journal entry topic, think about the question, and use this occasion to be an original, creative thinker!

Each journal entry is due on a Sunday before midnight. ***Late work will not be accepted. If you miss a due date, you will receive a zero for the journal entry.*** Details can be found within each module folder, under the "Assignments" tab, and in the course calendar.

Tests: Tests will consist of short answer questions that come directly from the module review questions. Consult the course calendar for due dates. These assessments will become available on a Monday and are due on a Sunday. Since this window of time is far broader than in face-to-face settings, ***there are few circumstances in which late work will be accepted. If you miss a due date, your expectation should be that you will receive a zero for the assessment.*** Details on each assessment can be found in the relevant folder.

Final Paper: The final paper assignment requires you to provide an evaluative comparison of world religions covered in the course, together with a reflective analysis. Details to be provided.

Grading of Written Work:

An "A" paper is substantial, well developed and effectively organized and presented. It demonstrates original or thoughtful engagement with content and sensitivity to diction, tone, and style. Its sentences are clear, precise, and well-structured. The paper is appropriately and formatted and virtually error-free.

A "B" paper contains a number of the strengths of an A paper, but it typically lacks the thoughtfulness, originality, and sensitivity of the superior paper. It is also virtually error-free.

A "C" paper fulfills the assignment and is adequately organized. The writer communicates ideas and develops a thesis, although supporting evidence may be minimal and organization

rather mechanical. The writing is not marred by habitual or serious grammatical errors. Thought and expression are competent.

A "D" paper typically is marked by failure to focus on a thesis, poor organization, lack of development, or recurrent mechanical errors.

An "F" paper may ignore the terms of the assignment, or it may be devoid of thesis, support, or organizing principle. Typically it contains numerous mechanical errors that seriously interfere with comprehension; it may also be marred by serious errors in documentation.

Final Exam: A final exam will be given on the day scheduled during the exam period. The final exam is mandatory and cannot be rescheduled. *Please state any additional information about your final exam.*

Class Policies:

Computer Access and Literacy Policy: Successful completion of this course requires you to access a computer and to be computer literate. This course is taught completely online. You are expected to access course material online, submit assignments in Blackboard, participate in online discussions, and take tests and exams in Blackboard.

I do not provide technical support for your computer, your programs, your email, or your ISP. If you need technical support, you may contact the helpdesk by phone at 240-567-7222, or by email at ithelpdesk@montgomerycollege.edu

If you need access to a computer, visit the Social Sciences Computer Center in the new Commons Building, or the general purpose/open access computer lab in ST 304. If you have a laptop, connecting to the internet on campus is possible via Montgomery College's wifi network. For details on connecting to the network, click the following link:
<http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/oit/NetworkAndComputing.aspx?id=152>

Timely completion and submission of assignments is your responsibility. Inability to access a computer does not excuse you from the late-submission grade reductions.

Technical Requirements: You will need the following to participate online:

1. Regular use of a computer with Internet access. For full details on recommended computer hardware and software see <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/distance/dm.html>
Expect to spend several hours online each week.
2. A web browser such as Internet Explorer or Firefox. For full details on compatible browsers and **Browser Tune-up instructions** for Blackboard see http://www.Blackboard.com/oriented/viewpage?name=exchange_browser_tuneup#settings
3. If you do not have Adobe Acrobat and the latest Microsoft Office package installed on your computer, you will need to download viewers for [Word](#), and [PowerPoint](#), as well as the [Acrobat reader](#).

To Login to Blackboard

1. Login to My MC at <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/>
2. Click the Blackboard Icon in the top right of the My MC homepage.
3. You will be taken to your My Blackboard screen.
4. In "My Blackboard" click on the title link for a course to enter the course.

Class Messages and Announcements: I will regularly post class announcements and send messages. You are expected to check these several times per week.

General Course Questions: When you have questions about assignments or other aspects of the course, do not email your questions to me unless the subject must be private. Post your questions in the *General Course Questions* topic in the discussions area. I will check this topic regularly and answer your questions.

Backing up your work: In this course you will complete most of your assignments on a computer. You are responsible for ensuring the safety of your work by making regular backups (extra copies). "The computer ate my homework, I lost my disk, my hard drive crashed, or my printer isn't working," are not acceptable excuses. Make frequent backups of your work and save the work in multiple places.

System Downtime: The Office of Information Technology conducts computer network maintenance on **Sunday morning from 12:01 AM to 6:00 AM each week**. During this time you may not be able to access My MC to login to Blackboard. Do not rely on this time to submit course work.

Submitting assignments electronically: In this course you will submit all of your assignments electronically within Blackboard. Because technology can be unreliable when you least expect it, submitting your work on time may require some creativity. Here are some alternate means to submit your assignments.

- Email your assignment directly to the instructor at jenkins.philosophy@gmail.com
- If your email isn't working properly and you can't access the course site, deliver the file on disk or as a hard copy to the instructor's office before the deadline, or, drop a hard copy in the mail before the deadline so the post date shows that you completed the work on time. Notify the instructor by telephone.

There is always a means to submit your assignments on time. Be creative, be persistent, and keep your instructor informed!

Information and Guidelines for Online Discussions: An online discussion is similar to an email conversation with some important differences.

- An online discussion can involve a number of participants, such as a team of students or an entire class.
- All messages stay posted in the discussion board for participants to read and re-read at any time.
- An online discussion can last for a week or longer.

If you are new to online discussions, you will find them as rigorous as any face-to-face classroom discussion. The purpose of a discussion is dialogue as a means of learning.

Here is what you should do for each discussion:

- *You are expected to read all posted messages.*
- Respond to each other promptly; however, you should not respond to all messages.
- Use the person's name when you reply to a message. It helps to keep all of us oriented. It helps us maintain a clearer sense of who is speaking and who is being spoken to. As we begin to associate names with tone and ideas, we come to know each other better.
- If you wish to send a private message, click *Forward* to open Blackboard Mail from the discussion area.
- Change the subject line of the message when you want to introduce a new topic. The value of this tip will become apparent as the number of messages grows.
- Feel free to reinforce each other's ideas with comments such as "Good Point" or "I agree" or "Thanks for the comments." Note, however, that these comments do not count toward your grade.
- The use of sexist, racist, or objectionable language is not acceptable and may result in your expulsion from the course.*
- Use emoticons to communicate humor, e.g. :-) ;-) :-0 :-/ :-(
- When you are writing for an online discussion, I strongly encourage you to compose your message in a word processor then **copy and paste** the text into the discussion message. Expect to spend time editing and revising your messages until they are clear. Composing your messages in a word processor first, will save you from losing your hard work if your browser crashes before you click the submit button.
- As a general rule, messages posted on the Discussion Board should be no more than **a few paragraphs in length**. If your message is longer, revise it to be more concise or separate your message into points and post each point as a separate message.

Please respect the views of all students. Class discussions are discussions of ideas, and should never be attacks on the people who express those ideas. Every word you write on a discussion board should be written with the understanding that you are to conduct yourself as you would face-to-face with another student, and should always be appropriate and germane to the subject matter. Offensive material may result in your removal from the course.

Department Policies:

Important Student Information Link

*In addition to course requirements and objectives that are in this syllabus, Montgomery College has information on its web site (see link below) to assist you in having a successful experience both inside and outside of the classroom. It is important that you read and understand this information. The **link below provides** information and other resources to areas that pertain to the following: **student behavior (student code of conduct), student e-mail, the tobacco free policy, withdraw and refund dates, disability***

support services, veteran services, how to access information on delayed openings and closings, how to register for the Montgomery College alert System, and finally, how closings and delays can impact your classes. If you have any questions please bring them to your professor. As rules and regulations change they will be updated and you will be able to access them through the link. If any student would like a written copy of these policies and procedures, the professor would be happy to provide them. By registering for this class and staying in this class, you are indicating that you acknowledge and accept these policies.

<http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/mcsyllabus/>

Communication: The College considers the Montgomery College e-mail account to be the official means of communication between students and faculty. It is recommended that you check this account routinely for official communication or as directed by your professor. Some items you may find there are: course announcements, invoices, important admission/registration information, waitlist status. To check your e-mail, log into your MyMC online account and locate the e-mail icon in the upper right hand corner of the page.

Academic Honesty: Montgomery College's policies on academic dishonesty are found in the *Student Handbook* and under *Section VIII* of the *Student Code of Conduct* available at the following link: http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/pnp/#Chapter_4. Each student is expected to do his or her own work. Any student found cheating or plagiarizing will be given an F for the assignment. If the same student is involved in a second incident of cheating, the case may be referred to the Student Discipline Committee, a grade of F for the course may be awarded, and/or the student may be dropped from the course.

Absence Policy: Regular online access of the course, together with timely completion of online assignments (including graded discussions) is required. Philosophy is a deep conversation about life, death, morality, knowledge, truth, and reality. A conversation requires both parties. If you fail to participate in more than three discussions, you will fail your attendance and participation grade. If you fail to login to the course for more than three weeks, you may be dropped for nonattendance.

Campus Closure and Delayed Opening: Your participation in this online class should not be affected by school closures or delays due to inclement weather. However, if you depend on being physically present at the college in order to participate in this course, the following information will be useful.

Please consult the college website and local television and radio programs to hear of weather-related college closings and delays. A message will be placed on the front page of the website in the event of a closure or delayed opening. Do not call security for information on weather-related closings and delays. You may call the Takoma Park/Silver Spring campus main number 240-567-1501, which will be updated with an automated message.

You can register for the "Montgomery College ALERT!" program to receive email and text message notifications about school emergencies, delays, and closings. For more information about the program, including information on how to register, click on the following link:

<http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/EDU/Plain2.aspx?id=4106>

Disability Support: Any student who may need an accommodation due to a disability, please make an appointment to see me during my office hours. In order to receive

accommodations, a letter from Disability Support Services (R-CB122; G-SA175; or TP-ST120) will be needed. Any student who may need assistance in the event of an emergency evacuation must identify to the Disability Support Services Office; guidelines for emergency evacuations for individuals with disabilities are found at: www.montgomerycollege.edu/dss/evacprocedures.htm.

The Takoma Park/Silver Spring DSS office is located on the first floor of the ST building. Here is contact information for the DSS office, as taken from the DSS website:

- Dr. Cathy Wilson, Counselor: Cathy.Wilson@montgomerycollege.edu Room ST137 240-567-1475 (VOICE or TTY).
- Edward Muchene, Counselor: Edward.Muchene@montgomerycollege.edu Room ST138 240-567-1477 (VOICE).
- Renee Gisriel, Student Services Specialist: Renee.Gisriel@montgomerycollege.edu Room ST227 240-567-1610 (VOICE).
- <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/dss/>

Please note that even if you are entitled to take tests in the testing center, **deadlines still apply**. If you do not take a test by the due date, you will receive a zero for that test. It is your responsibility to schedule appointments at the testing center in a timely fashion. Test dates are available in the course calendar at the end of this syllabus; please schedule your test appointments now. Also, students with disabilities are expected to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct.

Classroom Behavior: Please review the *Standards of College Behavior* in the *Student Handbook* or *Section VII* of the *Student Code of Conduct* available at the following link: http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/pnp/#Chapter_4. The college seeks to provide an environment where discussion and expression of all views relevant to the subject matter of the class are recognized and necessary to the educational process. However, students do not have the right to obstruct the faculty member's ability to teach nor the ability of other students to learn. The instructor has the right to determine appropriate conduct in the classroom, and it is expected that students will conduct themselves at all times in a manner that is respectful of their instructor and their peers. Students who do not adhere to these policies may have their access to the course suspended.

FERPA. The *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act* prohibits the instructor from discussing a student's grade and performance in the course with anyone but that student. All exceptions/allowances must be submitted in writing by the student.

PHIL 143 satisfies a General Education Humanities Distribution requirement.

Montgomery College's General Education Program is designed to ensure that students have the skills, knowledge and attitudes to carry them successfully through their work and their personal lives. This course provides multiple opportunities to develop competency in oral and written communication and critical analysis and reasoning. For more information on the General Education Program, go to www.montgomerycollege.edu/gened.

PHIL 143 has a Global and Cultural Perspectives Designation. The General Education program will contribute to a student's ability to "apply the principles and methodologies of a variety of disciplines to consider the ideas, history, values, and/or creative expression of various cultures within the global community" through designated courses that emphasize

Global and Cultural perspectives. All students are required to take at least one course with Global Cultural perspectives designation.

PHIL 143 is has a Global Awareness focus. The **Global Awareness** focused course is composed of subject matter that addresses or leads to an understanding of the world outside the United States. The course may be an in-depth area study that is concerned with the examination of culture-specific elements of a region, country, or culture group outside the United States, with the study contributing to an understanding of the world; a world language course with a significant cultural component; a comparative cultural study with an emphasis on areas outside the United States; or an in-depth study of cultural interrelationships that are global in scope and not centered on the United States, such as the global interdependence produced by problems of world ecology, multinational corporations, migration, or the threat of nuclear war.

Course Calendar/Schedule:

**Module work includes 1) assigned reading 2) ungraded review questions 3) discussion board 4) Journal.*

Week	Module	Tests
1	1: What is Philosophy of Religion?	
2	2: Religious Positions	
3	3: Reason, Knowledge, and Belief	
4	4: Evidentialism	Test 1 – available Mon. due
5	5: Nonevidentialism I: Pragmatism and Fideism	
6	6: Nonevidentialism II: Pascal's Wager	
7	7: Hinduism	
8	SPRING BREAK	
9	8: Buddhism	
10	9: Judaism	
11	10: Christianity	Test 2 – available Mon.
12	11: Islam	
13	12: The Problem of Evil	

14	13: Divine Command Theory – Part 1	
15	14: Divine Command Theory – Part 2	
16		Final Paper due Sunday

Reading Assignment

You should read the lecture notes ***in addition to*** whatever other reading is listed here.

Handouts are found in each module folder. All other reading comes from the Fisher text *Living Religions, 7th edition*.

Module	Reading
1	Lecture notes only
2	Lecture notes only
3	Lecture notes only
4	Handouts – Aquinas, <i>The Five Ways</i> ; Paley, <i>The Watch and the Watchmaker</i> ; Hume, <i>Critique of the Argument from Design</i> ; Dawkins, <i>The Blind Watchmaker</i>
5	Handout – William James, <i>The Will to Believe</i>
6	Handout – Blaise Pascal, <i>Pensees</i>
7	Fisher Chapter 3: Hinduism
8	Fisher Chapter 5: Buddhism
9	Fisher Chapter 8: Judaism
10	Fisher Chapter 9: Christianity
11	Fisher Chapter 10: Islam
12	Handout – Adams, <i>Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God</i>
13	Handout – Arthur, <i>Morality, Religion, and Conscience</i>