



COURSE SYLLABUS

Course: **PROBLEM OF GOD**

COURSE DATA

Degree	Diploma in Humanities and Global Challenges
Academic Year	2025-26
Credits	6
Course type	Elective
Department	Faculty of Theology
Language of instruction	English
Name and email of instructors	Carlos Giménez Rodríguez (cgimenezr@comillas.edu) Marta Medina Balguerías (mmedina@comillas.edu)

SHORT DESCRIPTION

The course takes a critical look at philosophical endeavours in the quest for God as well as at religious dimensions and different social realities related to this question. It fosters students' ability to analyse different social and religious realities. It promotes coexistence between people of different religions and social and cultural traditions. It strengthens our capacity for dialogue and our knowledge of the different religious traditions of the world today.

CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE

I. FOUNDATIONS OF THE RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON

TOPIC 1: The quest for God linked to the quest for reality and to the quest of human life:

- 1.1. Mystery of reality and approaches to it
 - 1.2. Alternative ways of thinking the relation God-World-Self
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- 1.3. Thinking about God. Why should he exist? Classical and modern arguments
 - 1.4. Thinking about God. Why should he not exist? Arguments for atheism and problem of evil
 - 1.5. Man in search for meaning
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TOPIC 2: Basic phenomenological and sociological approach to religion:

- 2.1. Sciences that study religion. Phenomenology of religion
 - 2.2. Sociological approach to religion today:
 - 2.2.1. Secularization
 - 2.2.2. Re-enchantment of the world
 - 2.2.3. The rise of fundamentalisms and cults
 - 2.2.4. Current topics of discussion
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II. PLURALITY OF RELIGION

TOPIC 1: The diversity of religions

TOPIC 2: Hinduism

TOPIC 3: Buddhism

TOPIC 4: Judaism

TOPIC 5: Christianity

TOPIC 6: Islam

METHODOLOGY

Attendance classes:

- Lectures will provide the theoretical explanations and guidance needed to study each topic. In these classes, the professor will only focus on the most important or complicated aspects. Following the professor's guidelines, students should complete the explanations.
- Presentation of the students about their research.
- Seminar wise classes to share analysis and conclusions from the readings.
- The lectures will involve the use of computer-based media (PowerPoint, Word and Excel documents), electronic media (videos), the whiteboard and any other methods deemed appropriate by the professor.
- Formal and informal debates about issues connected with the lectures.

Non-attendance classes:

- Readings.
 - Research and preparation of presentations in groups.
 - Study of the theoretical content of the module.
 - Watching documentaries and/or movies related to the contents of the module.
 - Personal reflection and writing about the issues discussed in the class (especially regarding the philosophical part of the course).
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ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessment type	Assessment criteria	Percentage
PORTFOLIO	Portfolio that includes the student's personal reflections regarding the first part of the subject. Topics that must be covered in it will be provided during the lessons.	30%
PROJECT	Students will be asked to make a presentation in groups based on research of their own.	20%
EXAM	In the exam students are expected to show the understanding and critical engagement with the contents.	50%

- Committing any serious academic misconduct, such as **plagiarism** of previously published material, or **copying** in the exam or any other graded activity, **will imply not being able to pass the course in the ordinary assessment period.**
- The **use of AI** to create complete works or relevant parts, without citing the source or the tool or without being expressly allowed in the description of the work, will be considered plagiarism and regulated according to the General Regulations of the University. The professor may not allow the use of AI in some of the activities.
- At the beginning of the term the professor will announce the office hours for the course. Tutorials are an essential part of the development of the course, and students may attend tutorials during the course within those office times, but it is recommended that they are arranged in advance with the professor.
- Any non-face-to-face learning activity that requires the submission of an assignment/document, etc. will be submitted by the student through Moodle, always in PDF format.
- To be able to take the final exam, students must not have missed **more than one third of the classes without justification.** If this requirement is not met, the student may lose the right to be assessed both in the ordinary and extraordinary assessment period (art. 93-1 of the General Regulations). Failure to attend to the first hour of a two-hour lecture, means having missed the whole session in terms of attendance, regardless of whether or not the student the second hour.

STUDENT WORKLOAD (in hours)

CONTACT HOURS	OUTSIDE CLASSROOM	OVERALL
60	90	150

READING LIST / RELEVANT REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barsalou, L.; Barbey, A.; Simmons, W. K.; Santos, A., "Embodiment in Religious Knowledge", *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 5:1-2, 2005, 14-57.

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- Bering, J., "Intuitive Conceptions of Dead Agents' Minds: The Natural Foundations of Afterlife Beliefs as Phenomenological Boundary", *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 2:4, 2002, 263-308.
 - Casanova, J., "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective", *The Hedgehog Review*, Spring & Summer 2006, 7-22.
 - Cordovilla, A., *Cristianismo y hecho religioso*, Comillas, Madrid, 2013.
 - Fessler, D.; Navarrete, C., "Meat is Good to Taboo", *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 3:1, 2003, 1-40.
 - Frankl, V., *Man's search for Meaning*, Boston, 1992.
 - Jaspers, K., *The Origin and Goal of History*, Oxford 1953.
 - Nicols, S., "Folk Intuitions on Free Will", *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 6:1-2, 2006, 57-86.
 - Stich, S., "Is Morality an Elegant Machine or a Kludge?", *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 6:1-2, 2006, 181-190.
 - Wiesel, E., *The Night*, New York, 2006.
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OTHER BOOKS AND ARTICLES

- Berger, P. L., *A rumor of Angels*, Anchor Books, New York, 1970.
 - González, L.; Santos, X. M., "Tourists and pilgrims on their way to Santiago. Motives, Caminos and final destinations", *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 13, 2015, 149-164.
 - Johnson, E. A., *Consider Jesus*, Crossroad, New York, 2005.
 - Johnson, I., "Two Sides of a Mountain", *Journal of Daoist Studies*, 5, 2012, 89-116.
 - Kim, B. et al, "The sacred and the profane: Identifying pilgrim traveller value orientations using means-end theory", *Tourism management*, 56, 2016, 142-155.
 - Lynch, G., *The New Spirituality*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2007.
 - Mishi Saran, *Chasing the Monk's Shadow. A Journey in the Footsteps of Xuanzang*, New Delhi, 2005.
 - Rodríguez Alisal, M.; Ackerman, P.; Martínez, D., (eds.), *Pilgrimages and spiritual quests in Japan*, London & NY, 2007.
 - Schrire, D., "The Camino de Santiago: The Interplay of European Héritage and New Traditions", *Ethnologia Europaea*, 36, No. 2, 2006, 69-86.
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HINDUISM

- 14 Questions People Ask About Hinduism retrieved from <http://aha-svtemple.org>
 - Gandhi, M., (1994), *The Essence of Hinduism*, Greenleaf Books.
 - Ghosh, B; Sombuddha Bagchi, S. , (2017), *Hinduism: Hinduism- Religion of Nature and Future*.
 - Wilson, N., (1968), *Three Ways of Asian Wisdom: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zen and their significance for the West*, A Clarion Book published by Simon and Schuster, New York.
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BUDDHISM

- *An Introduction to World Religions: Buddhism*, Dublin City University
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- Gassner.F, (2015),The Comparative Study between Buddhism and Christianity on peace and war, Universidad Católica Portuguesa, Facultad de Teología de la Universidad Católica Portuguesa.
 - Householder Fo'en, (2018), Buddhism for Beginners: Questions and Answers, Pure Land Buddhism Publishing Co.
 - Keown.D, (1996), Buddhism. A Very Short Introduction, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York.
 - Simão.J, (2019), "Some Tensions between Capitalism and Buddhism: A Reflection from McMindfulness", International Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Society, 9 (2019), 75-88.

JUDAISM

- Cohn-Sherbok,D, (2001), Messianic Judaism, (page 168-180), Continuum.
- Steven S. Schwarzschild, (2021), Essential Characteristics of the Jewish View of Reality: Judaism as a Living Historical Phenomenon.

CHRISTIANITY

- Basics of Christianity, (s.f), retrieved from Peacewithgod.net.
- Christianity in View Comparison Table, retrieved from <http://christianityinview.com>
- Rhodes.R,(1960), The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations. Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon.
- The Three Main Branches of Christianity Today, retrieved from <https://www.wesleybakersfield.org>
- World Council of Churches Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue World Evangelical Alliance (s.f) Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World.

ISLAM

- Abdur-Rahman Abdul-Kareem Al-Sheha,(2017),Islam is the religion of peace, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform
- Arkoun.M.,(1994), Rethinking Islam. Common Questions, Uncommon Answers, Westview Press.
- Ciftci, S. (s.f), Islamophobia and Threat Perceptions: Explaining Anti Muslim Sentiment in the West.
- Maurin, É; Nicolás Navarrete, N. (2019) Behind the Veil: The Effect of Banning the Islamic Veil in Schools, IZA, Institute of Labor Economics.
- Omer, B., (2021),Opion Article: I Left Islam for Liberal Values. Now Woke Liberals Are Embracing a New Religion, Newsweek.
- Toenies, S,(2008), What Catholics Should Know About Islam, General, Knights of Columbus Supreme Council.

WEB RESOURCES

- www.vatican.va (Catholic documents, news, events, press releases)
 - www.religion-online.org (religion news and links)
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- <https://apnews.com/article/3dc6b0999bf04614b1de21863cbfdd66> Women strive for larger roles in male-dominated religions (Women and religion).
 - <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/terrorism,-war-and-the-problem-of-religious-violence/11656464> Terrorism, war and the problem of "religious violence" (Religion and violence).
 - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53055632> (US Supreme Court backs protection for LGBT workers) LGBT AND RELIGION.
 - <https://www.britannica.com/browse/Religious-Beliefs>
 - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Lutheranism/History>
 - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anglicanism>
 - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nestorianism>
 - <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/christianity-protestantism>
 - <https://www.encyclopedia.com/philosophy-and-religion/christianity/protestant-denominations/protestantism>
 - <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/christianity-pentecostalism>
 - <https://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/religion>
 - <https://catholic-resources.org/Courses/Christianity-Branches.htm>
 - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity/Christianity-and-world-religions>
 - <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/branches>
 - <http://estaticos.elmundo.es/aula/laminas/religiones.pdf>
 - <http://estaticos.elmundo.es/aula/laminas/hinduismo.pdf>
 - <http://estaticos.elmundo.es/aula/laminas/buda.pdf>
 - <http://estaticos.elmundo.es/aula/laminas/islam.pdf>

VIDEO

Monotheism:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djFAxvZ20qQ>

Zorotheism:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2tqV9u9vzY>

Hinduism:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EICcU9oN-s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTko0gJGmcs>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INv2gdpfXPQ>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWTdCorvOWU>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhTpJxLJi2I>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8sj8pHSFuE>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16S_XjHqcZM

Buddhism:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lxq-RiLb-6M>
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-_cJU-pFwQ
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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCA6ioTLw-Q>
 - Islam:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAyY7Cq1V5A>
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NT_btKLIho
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoC1fRavjUU>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojSkGvxFi4M>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDSTgKIQAzE>
 - Judaism:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfVy5uwwktA>
 - Christianity:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQHMB7V9LIE>
 - General: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQjS6NGvIQ0>
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWOpn8tRBME&feature=emb_logo
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6bmHWtLqB8&feature=emb_logo
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o8olELbNxE&feature=emb_logo
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdZcqAss92w&feature=emb_logo
 - Religion today:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzgQOY_usdw
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6U0Bvsrn8o>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN3wkG1s4TA>
 - https://www.ted.com/talks/alaq_murabit_what_my_religion_really_says_about_women
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMb1UkkZsR8>
 - https://www.ted.com/talks/sharon_brous_it_s_time_to_reclaim_religion
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKdzYmVSMus>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYVfqvXo7WY>
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