

Hilary Term 2012 Lecture Prospectus Entry For
INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
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These lectures will introduce the main philosophical arguments pertaining to the Western monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Overview of the Lecture Series

Those who believe that there is a God of the sort Jews, Christians and Muslims worship believe that there is a being who is personal, incorporeal/transcendent, omnipresent/immanent, omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, perfectly free, perfectly good, and necessary. He has created the world; He is a source of moral obligations for us; He has revealed Himself to us; and He has offered us everlasting life. In these lectures, I shall first explore the meaning and consistency of this – the classical theistic - conception of God and then move on to consider some of the traditional arguments for and against the existence of such a being; specifically, I shall consider the Design Argument; the Cosmological Argument; the Ontological Argument; the Argument from Religious Experience; the Argument from Apparent Miracles; and the Problem of Evil. Finally, I shall consider Pascals' Wager and the relation between faith and reason.

Suggested Reading

You need do no reading prior to any of the lectures in order to gain full benefit from them. However, most weeks I'll suggest a few bits and bobs of reading which would provide you with alternative views to those I've given or useful expansion on some point or other. Brian Leftow's list of suggested reading - available by going to the Philosophy Faculty's webpage and hitting 'undergraduate', 'reading lists' (X2), 'FHS', and then '107' – will prove most useful, though modesty forbids me from recommending the first item on it. Most relevant books may be found in the Philosophy Library (10 Merton Street) and/or the Theology Faculty Library (41 St Giles). The major journals for the Philosophy of Religion are kept at the Theology Faculty Library. If you're attending these lectures prior to having your tutorials, you'd probably do best by doing as much as you can of the reading that I recommend from week to week and then, in the next vacation, going to Brian's list and working through a few things from the introductory section of that and perhaps a few things later on, e.g. on any topics that particularly interest you. Much more than that wouldn't be sensible prior to your having your series of tutorials. If you're attending the lectures simultaneously with having tutorials or afterwards, your tutor's reading list should be your guide, though you may want to use my (or Brian's) recommendations to supplement it, especially on topics you intend to answer on in Finals.

T J Mawson