

## **PHIL 1112.103: Philosophical Conversations—Speaking for God**

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:40 - 9:55 AM, Goldwin Smith Hall, Room 348

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Office: Goldwin Smith Hall, Room 224; Pre-set Office Hours: 10-11:30 AM

More office hours available by appointment!

### **Course-description:**

In this course, students will learn how to improve the clarity, conciseness, and persuasiveness of their writing while also delving into a topic in the philosophy of religion. The focus of the class in both the texts we read and in student papers will be questions like: What does it mean for someone to be authorized to speak for the divine? What does respect for the divine entail? What beliefs about divinity might make a difference to how we answer these questions?

### **By the end of this class, you should be able to:**

- Read and understand critical and argumentative writing.
- Write clearly and concisely.
- Accurately reconstruct and explain the arguments of others (even if you don't agree with their conclusions) in writing.
- Explain your own reasoning so that other people can understand it (again, even if they don't agree with your conclusions) in writing.

### **Requirements:**

- Attendance at all classes
- Readings finished before class, with 1-2 sentence responses emailed to me by 4pm the day before class
- 6 essays, of varying length, turned in on time
- Group work assignments to be completed in class

### **Readings:**

Most readings for this course are available for free online, through Cornell University Libraries. Any that are not available through the library's online resources will be posted on the course Blackboard ([blackboard.cornell.edu](http://blackboard.cornell.edu)).

### **Other Policies:**

*Plagiarism:* Every student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Academic Code of Integrity. Any work submitted for academic credit must be the student's own work. I have provided a link to the university's Essential Guide to Academic Integrity on Blackboard, and I encourage you to look it over if you haven't done so already. If you are ever unsure about whether what you are doing counts as plagiarism, just come talk to me or send me an email before you turn your assignment in, and we can make sure you are producing your own work—not somebody else's. There is no penalty at all for talking to me about whether your paper counts as plagiarism before you hand it in!

*Deadlines:* There are a lot of writing assignments in this class. If you need a deadline-extension on your work, don't panic—just ask! As long as you let me know that you need an extension at least two days before the paper due date, we will probably be able to work something out. Outside of extensions, all work needs to be turned in on time. Late work will receive a mark-down of half of a letter grade for every day it is late.

*Electronics:* Readings for this course are online. I find it easier to look at and take notes on hard copies of readings, so I like to print out my readings. However, I will not assume that all of you are the same way. I will allow the use of laptops/tablets for the purpose of looking at readings in class, if you prefer not to print them out. I am trusting you to be adults and choose this method only if you can avoid being distracted by the internet.

**Grading:**

- Participation (attendance, reading responses): 10%
- Homework/Group Work: 10%
- Essays: (1)5%, (2)5%, (3)15%, (4)20%, (5)15%, (6)20%

**Calendar:**

*Tuesday, Aug. 25*

Reading due: None!

*Thursday, Aug. 27*

Reading due: Al-Ghazali, "The True Nature of Prophecy as a Universal Human Need," Ch. IV in *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty*

*Tuesday, Sept. 1*

Reading due: Maimonides, Chs.XXXII (pg.219) – XXXVIII (pg.230) in *Guide for the Perplexed* (There are two copies that are available online for "full view" via the Hathi Trust through Cornell libraries. Use the one that says the original was from Cornell University.)

**Summary due**

*Thursday, Sept. 3*

Reading due: Maimonides cont'd.. Chs. XLVI (pg.245) – XLVII (pg.250)

**Essay 1 due**

*Tuesday, Sept. 8*

Reading due: Spinoza, "Of Prophecy" and "Of the Prophets," Chs. 1 – 2 in *Theological-Political Treatise*

**Essay 2 due**

*Thursday, Sept. 10*

Reading due: Steven Nadler, "Spinoza, Maimonides, and Prophecy"

*Tuesday, Sept. 15*

Reading due: Frank B. Linderman, Ch. 9 from *Pretty-shield, Medicine Woman of the Crows*

Jerome I. Gellman, Sec. 1, 4, 13-15 in "Mysticism and Religious Experience" in  
*The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*

*Thursday, Sept. 17*

Reading due: John H. Whittaker, "Literal and Figurative Language of God"

**Outline for Essay 3 due**

*Tuesday, Sept. 22*

Reading due: Nelson Pike, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action"

*Thursday, Sept. 24*

Reading due: Plato, Socrates's *Apology*

(<http://www.sjsu.edu/people/james.lindahl/courses/Phil70A/s3/apology.pdf>)

**Essay 3 due**

*Tuesday, Sept. 29*

Reading due: Cornel West, "Introduction" in *Prophesy Deliverance!*

Cornel West, "Prophetic Religion and the Future of Capitalist Civilization"

*Thursday, Oct. 1*

Reading due: Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. "On Prophecy and Critical Intelligence"

*Tuesday, Oct. 6*

Reading due: Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Rabble," "The Higher Man," and "The Sign," in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

*Thursday, Oct. 8*

Reading due: Paul J. Griffiths, "Nontheistic Conceptions of the Divine" in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*

**Essay 4 draft due**

*Tuesday, Oct. 13*

Fall Break, no class!

*Thursday, Oct. 15*

Reading due: None!

**Bring in Piece of Writing**

*Tuesday, Oct. 20*

Reading due: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Exordium I-IV, Eulogy on Abraham, and Problem I

*Thursday, Oct. 22*

Reading due: Andrew F. Smith, "Biblical Literalism"

*Tuesday, Oct. 27*

Reading due: Immanuel Kant, excerpts from *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*  
**Essay 4 rewrites due**

*Thursday, Oct. 29*

Reading due: Moses and the Green One  
**Essay 4 rewrites due**

*Tuesday, Nov. 3*

Reading due: James Rachels, "God and the Concept of Worship"

*Thursday, Nov. 5*

Reading due: Robert A. F. Therman, "*Buddhist Hermeneutics*"  
**Sign up to meet for Essay 6 proposals throughout next week**

*Tuesday, Nov. 10*

Reading due: Zera Yacob, "God, Faith, and the Nature of Knowledge"  
**Essay 5 due**

*Thursday, Nov. 12*

Reading due: C. Stephan Evans. "Faith and Revelation" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Religion*

*Tuesday, Nov. 17*

Reading due: Allen Dwight Callahan, "Reading and Using Scripture in the African American Tradition"

*Thursday, Nov. 19*

Reading due: Amina Wadud, Ch.6 in *Inside the Gender Jihad*

*Tuesday, Nov. 24*

Reading due: None!  
**Essay 6 draft due**

*Thursday, Nov. 26*

Thanksgiving: No class!

*Tuesday, Dec. 1*

Reading due: None!

*Thursday, Dec. 3*

Reading due: Anthony Fisher and Hayden Ramsay, "Of Art and Blasphemy"

**OR**

Peter Linford, "Deeds of Power: Respect for Religion in Star Trek: Deep Space Nine"

*Final: TBD*

**Essay 6 final due**