

HUM 0017 - INTRODUCTION TO ATHEISM

Catalog Description

Advisory: Eligibility for ENGL 1A

Hours: 54 lecture

Description: Introduction to the philosophy of atheism, its historical roots, major thinkers, and expressions in art, literature and philosophy. Includes history of free inquiry and thought, secular humanism, humanistic ethics and scientific naturalism. (CSU, UC)

Course Student Learning Outcomes

- CSLO #1: Identify and describe the diverse values and expressions found in various types of Atheism.
- CSLO #2: Analyze and evaluate various historical expressions of Atheism and their contribution to culture in philosophy, literature, poetry, and art.
- CSLO #3: Compare and contrast the diverse values and expressions found in various types of Atheism with dominant religious perspectives.
- CSLO #4: Communicate effectively orally or in writing on a topic of atheism related to its study in the Humanities.

Effective Term

Fall 2022

Course Type

Credit - Degree-applicable

Contact Hours

54

Outside of Class Hours

108

Total Student Learning Hours

162

Course Objectives

Students will through oral and written work:

1. Compare and contrast definitions of 'Atheism,' 'Agnosticism,' 'Rationalism,' and 'Empiricism;'
2. Define and evaluate both negative and positive atheistic positions;
3. Evaluate criticisms of the arguments for the existence of God as well as arguments against the existence of God;
4. Define and describe prophetic and revealed religious traditions;
5. Evaluate the legitimacy of prophecies, miracles and martyrs as evidence for metaphysical claims;
6. Describe, compare and contrast historical and theological approaches to the study of religion;
7. Examine and discuss historical and critical approaches to the studies of Christianity and Islam;
8. Describe and discuss evil, supernatural, natural and moral, as conceptualized by religionist and secularist perspectives;

9. Describe and evaluate non-religious moralities;
10. Chart and describe the role of atheism, agnosticism, religious skepticism and secular humanism through Western history including Classical Greece, Modern philosophy and the Enlightenment, Nietzsche and Postmodernism, British secularism and U.S. history;
11. Describe Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection as well as the characteristics of creationism and intelligent design;
12. Evaluate evolution by natural selection, creationism and intelligent design as scientific or pseudoscientific;
13. Describe the relationship between evolution by natural selection and both theism and agnosticism/atheism;
14. Describe and evaluate the role of politics in public acceptance of evolution by natural selection;
15. Examine, describe and assess expressions of Atheism/Agnosticism/Skepticism and Secular Humanism in Art, Literature, Music and Film.

General Education Information

- Approved College Associate Degree GE Applicability
 - AA/AS - Literature & Language
- CSU GE Applicability (Recommended-requires CSU approval)
 - CSUGE - C2 Humanities
- Cal-GETC Applicability (Recommended - Requires External Approval)
- IGETC Applicability (Recommended-requires CSU/UC approval)
 - IGETC - 3B Humanities

Articulation Information

- CSU Transferable
- UC Transferable

Methods of Evaluation

- Classroom Discussions
 - Example: After learning about the non-religious moralities, students will be prompted to evaluate secular moral theories, and based on these discussions, (2) students will write a short paragraph identifying which secular moral philosophy resonates best with them, and explain their choice. Submitted paragraphs will be evaluated by whether they include relevant concepts and coherent reasoning.
- Essay Examinations
 - Example: In a short essay, explain whether, in your view, there is an essential relation between religion and ethics. Identify one objection to your position and provide a reply to that objection. Use examples and passages from relevant readings to help explain and support your ideas.
- Objective Examinations
 - Example: A. Students will take a multiple-choice examination on aspects of atheism and agnosticism. For example: Which of the following matches the definition of negative atheism? (A) certainty of belief proportional to the evidence for that belief, (B) belief in a God or some gods, but not another God or gods, (C) asserts that no gods exist, (D) unpersuaded by the evidence that God or gods exist.
- Projects
 - Example: Create a poster board that charts and describe the role of atheism, agnosticism, and/or religious skepticism from Classical Greece to Modern philosophy and the Enlightenment.

Repeatable

No

Methods of Instruction

- Lecture/Discussion
- Distance Learning

Lecture:

1. Using a slide-presentation for an on-ground lecture, the instructor will present various definitions and perspectives of theism, atheism, and agnosticism, and model how to identify various claims as representative of theism, atheism, and/or agnosticism. Through an interactive discussion, students will be prompted to compare and contrast the different aspects of burden of proof related to each belief system.

Distance Learning

1. Students will watch a video of the instructor defining and presenting various arguments for God's existence. In a discussion board assignment, students evaluate one of the traditional arguments for God's existence in terms of its strengths and weaknesses.

Typical Out of Class Assignments Reading Assignments

1. Read "De Rerum Natura" by Lucretius, and be prepared to discuss why he thinks humans have nothing to fear from supernatural deities. 2. Read Sam Harris' The End of Faith, chapter 1 "Reason in Exile," and be prepared to discuss Harris' evaluation of 'religious moderates.'

Writing, Problem Solving or Performance

1. Compare/Contrast Paper 1 Instructions: For this position paper, you will be required to compare and contrast the attached essay by Richard Dawkins, "Is Science a Religion?," with the theme of The City of Truth. In order to do this successfully, you will need to a) Explain the theme of the novel, b) explain the thesis of Dawkins' essay and c) compare and contrast these two positions. With whom, if anyone, do you agree and why? Try the following technique for organizing your thoughts prior to writing your paper. Thinking before writing has been proven effective for writing good papers. After you have created your fiction analysis, you will have a snapshot of the key characters and elements of The City of Truth. Place your fiction analysis on the table in front of you. Next, draw two overlapping circles on your paper as shown below. Label the circle on the left "City of Truth." Label the circle on the right "Dawkins." As you read your fiction analysis and the essay, jot down any ideas in the relevant areas of your circles: In the left most portion of the diagram, you would jot down information from City of Truth. In the right most portion of the diagram, you would jot down information from Dawkins' essay. These would be the ideas that are unique or not-shared between them. In the center portion of the diagram, you would jot down the shared concerns between the two texts. 2. Select one of the following questions and answer it thoroughly in formal essay format. 1. Select three arguments for the existence of God. Do these work? Why or why not? (Be sure to formulate one thesis statement for your entire paper and work each of the arguments for God's existence into it.) 2. Is evil an objection to religion? Why, or why not? 3. What conception of the divine makes the most sense? Why? 4. Is there an essential relation between religion and ethics?

Other (Term projects, research papers, portfolios, etc.)

Required Materials

- Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism
 - Author: Susan Jacoby
 - Publisher: Metropolitan Books
 - Publication Date: 2014
 - Text Edition: 1st
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- Imagine There's No Heaven: How Atheism Helped Create the Modern World
 - Author: Mitchell Stephens
 - Publisher: Macmillan
 - Publication Date: 2014
 - Text Edition:
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- The God Delusion
 - Author: Michael Ruse (Author), Stephen Bullivant (Editor)
 - Publisher: Cambridge University Press
 - Publication Date: 2021
 - Text Edition:
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- The Cambridge History of Atheism
 - Author: Gordon Stein
 - Publisher: Prometheus
 - Publication Date: 2014
 - Text Edition: 1st
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- The Encyclopedia of Unbelief
 - Author: Tom Flynn
 - Publisher: Prometheus Books
 - Publication Date: 2007
 - Text Edition: 2nd
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:

Other materials and-or supplies required of students that contribute to the cost of the course.