



G330 Reason and Christian Belief

3 credits. Prerequisites: G143 Worldviews and Contemporary Culture
This course transfers to the University of Saskatchewan for Horizon students.

 Saskatoon Campus  Livestream  Video on Demand

November 12 to December 20, 2024
Term B / Fall 2024
Monday - Thursday / 9:00 – 10:30 AM (CST)
10:00 – 11:30 AM (EST)

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A genuine and robust faith will not shrink from the process of testing, for it is confident that it will indeed pass the test.” – C. Stephen Evans and R. Zachary Manis

Course Goals

Course Description

A study of philosophical issues arising from religious belief and practice, such as: the relation between faith and reason, arguments for the existence of God, the problem of evil, the relation between religion and science, and religious pluralism.

Relationship to MCS-Horizon’s Missions

As part of MCS-Horizon’s mission to prepare leaders for Christian life and ministry, this course helps students evaluate philosophical reasons for, or objections to, having faith in God. Therefore, the primary area of competency development that applies to this course is:

- **Contextual Awareness:** demonstrated by a maturing orthodox Christian worldview, a healthy self-understanding, and engagement of people and cultures with wisdom and discernment.

Core Competencies and Learning Outcomes



To demonstrate competency in *Contextual Awareness* students will:

1. Compare and contrast an evangelical Christian worldview with that of postmodernism.
 - *Assessment:* Postmodernism Learnings Summary.
2. Analyze, interpret, and critique texts related to religious belief.
 - *Assessment:* Response to Objections Papers.

3. Respond to philosophical objections to belief in God.
 - *Assessment:* Response to Objections Papers.
4. Explain his or her level of confidence for believing in God using philosophical resources.
 - *Assessment:* Belief in God Paper.

In addition, students will gain an introductory understanding of the primary issues in philosophy of religion.

Course Work

Required Readings

Evans, C. Stephan, and R. Zachary Manis. *Philosophy of Religion: Thinking about Faith*. 2nd edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009. (ISBN: 978-0830838769)
DTL: <https://thedtl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/932458673>.

Peterson, Michael L., and Raymond J. VanArragon, ed. *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 2020. (ISBN: 978-1119028451).
DTL: <https://thedtl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1098229679>.

There will be a weekly quiz on reading to be taken Tuesdays on Populi.

**While students have the benefit of accessing many of their textbooks online through the [Digital Theological Library](#), they will not have access to the Digital Theological Library upon graduation. Therefore, we encourage students to purchase select textbooks to build their personal library.

Course Assignments and Activities

1. Weekly Quizzes on Readings – 10%.

Students will complete the appropriate quiz on Populi by Monday 11:59 PM on the week the readings are due (except for the first week of classes). Students may take a second attempt at the quiz before Thursday 11:59 PM of that week.

- To complete this assignment, students will follow these guidelines:
 - Complete the appropriate lesson in Populi.
- **Related learning outcome(s): #2.**
- **Assignment length: N/A**

- **Due dates:**

Topic	PR – Evans and Manis	CD - Peterson	Date
Intro, Postmodernism	Chapters 1-2	(all of PM)**	Nov. 13
Faith & Reason, Problem of Evil	Chapter 7-8	Chapter 6	Nov. 18
Science, Pluralism	Chapters 3 & 6	Chapters 8 & 10	Nov. 25
Existence of God	Chapter 5	Chapter 15 (rec)	Dec. 2
Religious Experience	Chapter 4	Chapter 4 (rec)	Dec. 9

* **rec** – recommended, not mandatory

** PM = Postmodernism Readings/Viewings.

2. *Postmodernism Learnings Summary* – 10%

In 300 words or less, you will discuss the similarities and differences between an evangelical Christian worldview and that of postmodernism. To complete the assignment, you will:

- Begin by defining and describing postmodernism (100-150 words).
 - Note how postmodernism is both consistent with and inconsistent with an evangelical Christian worldview (100-150 words).
- For success in this assignment, students will follow these guidelines:
 - Follow the MCS-Horizon Format Guide.
 - Complete the appropriate lesson in Populi.
 - Explicitly draw on and cite both the class lecture material and your *PM* reading/viewing (links will be listed on Populi). I am *not* looking for you to report on what other authors have said, but rather for you to draw on their material and synthesize¹ it (where it has influenced your view) into your own evaluation of postmodernism.
 - Review the rubric for this assignment.
 - Related learning outcome(s): #1.
 - **Assignment length:** no more than 300 words.
 - **Due date:** November 15.

3. *Responses to Objections* - 45% (3 x 15%)

In three papers you will respond to philosophical objections that are sometimes made regarding Christianity and sometimes even belief in a divine being in general. The three papers are based on the following material:

→ **Evil (due Nov 22)**

- Respond to William Rowe’s argument in “Evil Discredits God” by using information from
 - *PR* ch 7.
 - Class lecture material.
 - *CD* ch 6 “Is Evil Evidence Against Belief in God?” pp. 139-164.

→ **Science (due Nov 29)**

- Respond to Michael Ruse’s argument in “Science Discredits religion” by using information from

¹ Put it together and state it in your own words.

- *PR* ch 6.
- Class lecture material.
- *CD* ch 8 “Does Science Discredit Religion?” pp. 193-218.

→ **Pluralism (due Dec 6)**

- Respond to Peter Byrne’s argument in “It is Not Reasonable to Believe That Only One Religion is True” by using information from
 - *PR* ch 8.
 - Class lecture material.
 - *CD* ch 10. “Is it Reasonable to Believe That Only One Religion is True?” pp. 243- 266.

After reading the material noted above, you will write a 900-word paper where you will:

- Summarize the objection in your own words as it is described by the author in *CD* (250 words).
 - Defend your belief or unbelief in the God of Christianity by responding to the objection (650 words). In this section of your paper, I’m not looking for you to provide a summary of what various authors have said. Rather, I expect you to draw on their material and synthesize it (where it has influenced you [as above]) into your own evaluation of the objections.
- For success in this assignment, students will follow these guidelines:
 - Follow the MCS-Horizon Format Guide.
 - Complete the appropriate lesson in Populi.
 - Don’t include a paragraph of introduction or conclusion. Instead, save the space for more substantial content. No bibliography is required.
 - Draw on and reference via footnotes *CD*, *PR*, and the lesson material. Keep your quotations very brief, focusing more on writing in your own voice and acknowledging the source of your ideas.
 - Review the rubric for this assignment.
 - Related learning outcome(s): #2, 3.
 - Assignment length:** 900 words each.
 - Due date:** November 22, 29, December 6.

4. *Belief in God Paper* – 35%

Using philosophical resources, write a 1300-word paper explaining your level of confidence for believing in God. For this paper you are expected to draw on and cite:

- Class lecture material.
- PR* ch 2-4 and 8.
- CD* ch 1-5 as it impacts your rationale for believing in God.

In your paper:

- Explain how confident you are regarding the existence of God considering what you have studied in this course.
 - Discuss each of the four classical philosophical ideas/arguments for God highlighting those you found convincing (and why) and what you didn’t find convincing (and why) to support your belief in God.
- For success in this assignment, students will follow these guidelines:
 - Follow the MCS-Horizon Format Guide.

- Complete the appropriate lesson in Populi.
- No bibliography is required. You are welcome to draw on your other course readings as you wish.
- Keep your quotations brief. Draw on and reference via footnotes both your class lecture material and the readings (especially those referred to above).
- Review the rubric for this assignment.
- Related learning outcome(s): #4.
- **Assignment length:** 1300 words.
- **Due date:** December 13.

Video-on-Demand (VOD) Student Requirements

As indicated on the course schedule, this class is being offered by VOD. Students taking the course through VOD are required to indicate this during their course registration. While VOD recordings are available for any student who may be absent from class, non-VOD students are expected to attend class live following the class attendance policy.

- For this course, VOD students have different assignment due dates than in-class students.
 - Weekly Quizzes are the same as in-class students.
 - Postmodernism Learning Summary – Nov. 19
 - Response to Objections
 - Evil – Nov 26
 - Science – Dec 3
 - Pluralism – Dec 6
 - Belief in God Paper – Dec 13
- By Saturday at 11:59 pm each week, VOD students are required to watch and engage with all lecture content and in-class activities from that week's classes.
- By Saturday at 11:59 pm each week, VOD students will submit a report on the class discussion board (2–3-minute audio or a 2-3 minute video) that
 - 1) affirms you have watched the required recording for Monday to Thursday's classes,
 - 2) summarizes one thing you learned that week that will help you reach the course learning outcomes, and
 - 3) explain at least one question you had after watching the class recording.
- VOD students have the opportunity to meet with the instructor as a cohort on zoom for 15-20 minutes biweekly, at a time set cooperatively (or as needed).
- In order to pass the course, VOD students must submit all of their VOD weekly submissions. These submissions are marked are pass/fail based on whether or not they demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the lecture content and in-class activities.

Estimate of Time Investment (individual time investments may vary)

Assignment	Time	Due Date	Assignment Weighting
Classroom time Reading (included in assignments)	30 hrs	N/A	N/A

1. Reading Quizzes		See chart	10%
1. Postmodernism Assignment	5 hrs	Nov. 15	10%
2. Response to Objections	45 hrs		
a) Evil		Nov. 22	15%
b) Science		Nov 29	15%
c) Pluralism		Dec. 6	15%
3. Belief in God Paper	20 hrs	Dec. 13	35%
Total =		100 hrs	100%

All assignments are due at 11:59PM SK time, unless otherwise indicated.

Assessment Rubrics

Assignment rubrics can be found on Populi. Click on the name of the assignment to access each rubric.

Class & Reading Schedule

PR = *Philosophy of Religion* by Evans and Manis

CD = *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion* edited by Peterson and VanArragon

PM = Links (posted on Populi) to blogs and videos about Postmodernism

Week	Topics	Reading/Viewing (prior to class discussion)	Assignments
Nov 12-14	Introduction Postmodernism	PR – chapters 1-2 PM – all	16 – Postmodernism Learnings Summary
Nov 18-21	Relationship of Faith and Reason The Problem of Evil	PR – chapter 7, 8 CD – chapter 6	22 – Response to Objections - Evil
Nov 25-28	Science and Faith Religious Pluralism	PR – chapter 3 & 6 CD – chapter 8 & 10	29 – Response to Objections – Science
Dec 2-5	The Existence of God	PR – chapters 5 CD – chapter 15 (rec)	6 – Response to Objections - Pluralism
Dec 9-12	Religious Experience Summary	PR – chapter 4 CD – chapter 4 (rec)	13 - Belief in God Paper
Dec 16-20	Revision Week		

* **rec** = Recommended, not mandatory

- *On the final day of class, 15 minutes at the beginning of class for students to fill out course evaluations (excluding modules).*
- First submissions of assignments will not be accepted after December 13.
- Usually, assignments will be resubmitted prior to revision week, ideally within two weeks of their original due date. However, if there are extenuating circumstances the last day for resubmission of each assignment is
 - Monday, Dec 16 – Postmodernism and Response to Objections – Evil
 - Tuesday, Dec 17 – Response to Objections – Science, Pluralism
 - Wednesday, Dec. 18 – Belief in God Paper

- Thursday and Friday are reserved for any revisions the instructor requests during revision week.
- No resubmission of assignments will be accepted after December 20.

Academic Policies

General Assignment Guidelines

Please see the MCS-Horizon [Format Guide](#) for assignment submission, grammar, and formatting guidelines.

Late Assignments and Extensions

Students are expected to submit work by the assigned due dates, as part of their development of the Leadership and Administration competency. To submit extension requests, students must submit the *Assignment Extension Request Form* on Populi and *before the due date*. Professors may grant extensions in the case of extenuating circumstances, such as significant illness or a family emergency. Furthermore, no extensions will be granted beyond the final day of a term or semester unless approval is granted by the Associate Academic Dean (MCS) or Assistant Academic Dean (Horizon).

Late submissions will be tracked across each student's program. If a student incurs multiple instances of late submissions, it will result in academic discipline, such as required tutoring, academic probation, failure of the course, or failure to qualify for graduation. Similar to standard human resource employment practices, students will receive warnings and conditions with increasing severity of academic discipline. If one assignment is submitted more than five days late, the student will fail the course.

Assignment Completion

Professors usually will not accept assignments that have not been completed according to the instructions given in the syllabus. If a professor informs a student that a submitted assignment is incomplete, the student will be given the opportunity to complete and resubmit the assignment quickly. If this is not possible, the assignment will be regarded as submitted late.

Assignment Revisions

Students can generally submit up to two revisions for each assignment, although a professor may accept more revisions if the professor determines the student is addressing all of the professor's instructions and making significant progress toward achieving competency.

MCS-Horizon College Assessment of Student Work

The goal of courses is to help students develop their competency, not earn letter grades. Assignments are the means by which instructors evaluate development of competency by assessing learning outcomes as outlined in the syllabus and each assignment rubric. Once a student's assignment has met all competency requirements, the professor will assign a grade for that assignment. Likewise, a final course grade is not calculated until the end of the course. Students pass a course (with a B- or higher) only after they have demonstrated that they have *met or exceeded all competency requirements* for that course and, therefore, only after they have passed all assignments.

MCS-Horizon CBE Scale		Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point	U of S Equivalency
E	Exceeding expectations	Student demonstrated exceptional achievement of the learning outcomes.	A+	4.0	90-100
			A	4.0	85-89
			A-	3.7	80-84
M	Meeting expectations	Student demonstrated good achievement of the learning outcomes.	B+	3.3	77-79
			B	3.0	73-76
			B-	2.7	70-72

If the student does not meet all competency requirements in a course and, therefore, does not pass all the assignments in a course, the course will not be sufficient to fulfill their program requirements at MCS-Horizon. Nevertheless, for transferability purposes, the student will receive a letter grade of C+ or below according to the scale below.

BTM	Beginning to meet expectations	Student was beginning to meet learning outcomes.	C+	2.3	67-69
			C	2.0	63-66
			C-	1.7	60-62
NYM	Not yet meeting expectations	Student made insufficient progress toward meeting learning outcomes.	D+	1.3	57-59
			D	1.0	53-56
			D-	0.7	50-52
			F	0.0	0-49

Academic Integrity

Students learn best when practicing academic integrity. A lack of integrity is displayed in acts such as deception, abuse of confidentiality, cheating, inappropriate collaboration, or plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents the words or ideas of another person or an artificial intelligence (AI) tool in such a way as to give others the impression that it is their own words or ideas. In academic writing, there should be no doubt which words or ideas are the student's and which are drawn from other sources or AI. Students are expected to submit their own original work and give due recognition to sources from which all substantial phrases, sentences or even ideas are drawn. Note also that you may not submit work done in one course to satisfy the requirements of another course (unless both instructors agree beforehand to accept such work). See [here](#) for examples of plagiarism and further guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Accessible Learning Services Information

MCS-Horizon aims to provide an accessible learning environment for all our students. If you would benefit from learning accommodations due to temporary or ongoing physical or mental health conditions or learning disabilities, please contact us as soon as possible to schedule a conversation. In all cases we ask that you provide current documentation of the disability or condition you wish to disclose. MCS-Horizon takes appropriate care to ensure confidentiality about any such disclosures. For more information, contact Wendy Holmes, MCS's Director of

Academic Success (wendy.holmes@mcs.edu), or Richelle Bekkattla, Horizon's Library Technician and Academic Accommodations Coordinator (library@horizon.edu).

Class Attendance

Students should attend all classes in order to facilitate competency development. Students are expected to be present through the delivery method that they registered for, either on campus or through livestreaming with their camera on. A student must be present for the full duration of a class period in order to be registered as present for the class. In the case of illness or other unforeseen circumstances, students may miss one day of a module course or three days of class in a term or semester course without academic penalty. Students who are absent for more than the number of classes stated above will automatically fail the course. Students wishing to be exempted from this policy due to extenuating circumstances may make an academic appeal, where they will need to document and verify those circumstances. Students who miss a class are responsible to get missed notes or handouts from another student, rather than from the professor.

Livestreaming Etiquette

Students taking the course through livestreaming are required to indicate this during their course registration. While livestreaming access is available for on-campus students who are unable to attend class due to illness, on-campus students are expected to attend class in person following the class attendance policy.

If attending class online via livestream, in order to be marked present for class, you must keep your camera on and stay present and attentive throughout the class session, extending the gift of engagement. Access your class with a computer (preferably) or tablet, not a cell phone. Arrive to class on time, and dress as you would if you were attending class on campus. Join the class from a quiet space with minimal background noise and mute your microphone until you wish to speak to the class.

Use of Technology

MCS-Horizon encourages the use of electronic devices in the classroom to enhance learning. Careful consideration must be given to privacy issues, copyrighted materials, and the general care and concern for others. Please respect the following classroom policies:

- Please use online access for course learning only. This is a matter of respect for the instructor's teaching, your own learning, and fellow students who may be distracted by other uses.
- Students should secure permission from the instructor to record any teaching material. This includes PowerPoint slides, white board illustrations, notes, and any form of audio or video.
- Student feedback is a valuable input for course improvements. Please resolve any classroom grievance about the instructor or course with the instructor personally, through the Horizon College and Seminary grievance procedures, or the Populi-based course evaluations. It is inappropriate to air classroom grievances on a social media platform.
- When instructors use recording mechanisms in the classroom, recorded materials will be used for the sole purpose of instruction and cannot be released to any social media outlet without the written consent of the students whose images have been recorded.

- In general, it is not acceptable to share photographs or videos of students in the classroom setting without permission from those whose images appear in such media.

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**Note: Most of these books contain bibliographies that can lead you to works on specific topics.*