

RELG495: Methods and Research Seminar

Section 001 (CRN21969/21970), 3 hours

Winthrop University

Spring, 2013

MW 3:30-4:45, KINA312

Final Exam: 3 p.m. Fri., 4/26

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Course Description

This course is an advanced research seminar for students who have already developed a solid background in their philosophy studies, in particular, majors in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies. The course emphasizes a detailed examination of selected topics and issues in philosophy and religious studies. The course will include an assessment of the core skills and knowledge from the major, and will improve reading, research, and writing skills as students develop individual research projects.

Intensive Writing course; Senior Capstone course.

Prerequisites: PHIL 101 and PHIL 301 or 302 and RELG 101 and RELG 300 and 6 additional hours in PHIL or RELG.

More specifically, we will begin with some discussion of issues relating to God and things divine. The student will develop his/her own research project as derived from discussion of issues encountered. Research, the development of findings, and the presentation of both will occur in several stages over the course of the semester, culminating in an essay of substance and oral presentation and defense of that work.

Expected Outcomes

PHIL/RELG495 is the Departmental senior capstone seminar. Students must pass this seminar in order to graduate with a PHIL or RELG degree. The goals of this course are, as stated above, to complete student mastery of fundamental skills appropriate to the major. More specifically, here follow the primary outcomes to be demonstrated by students completing the course, along with the means of their assessment:

- Graduating majors will have superior ability successfully to analyze complex intellectual problems.
 - The student will report confidence in his/her capacity for analysis.
 - The student will demonstrate logical rigor in his/her final research essay.
 - The student will demonstrate the capacity for analysis and evaluation of philosophical and religious texts.
- Graduating majors will be capable of scholarly research, and of effective written and oral presentation of same.
 - The student will report confidence in his/her ability for scholarly research.

- The student will demonstrate the capacity for scholarly research.
- The student will demonstrate the capacity for oral presentation of his/her research.
- The student will demonstrate the capacity for written presentation of his/her research.
- Graduating majors understand the fundamental concepts of philosophy and religious studies and are familiar with major representatives of key positions on central issues.
 - The student will compose a satisfactory essay on the historical dimensions of a significant philosophical or religious issue.
 - The student will compose a satisfactory essay on the contemporary dimensions of a significant philosophical or religious issue.
 - The student will compose a satisfactory comprehensive essay on a significant philosophical or religious issue.

Course Goals

Department Program Goal: To prepare students for a fulfilling life by equipping them with the impetus, skills, and knowledge to ask the most fundamental questions of human existence.*

- As such, the Department embodies the University's commitment to the liberal arts tradition. The Department embraces this tradition by inducing its students and faculty to examine the values, attitudes, beliefs, and habits that define the nature and quality of life. In order to engage this tradition of inquiry, the Department seeks to develop students' abilities in reasoning, analysis, criticism, argumentation, self-reflection, and self-expression. The Department also expects its students to attain a working knowledge of the fundamental issues in philosophical and religious thought.
- Moreover, through asking such fundamental questions, the Department intends to nurture collective and individual growth of the University's community of learners through enlightenment and transformation. The Department thereby seeks to inculcate the values of justice, integrity, responsibility, respect, civility, tolerance, openness, and self-criticism that constitute the best of ethical systems. Thus, the Department intends to enable its students to participate and contribute knowledgeably and effectively as citizens to our democratic society and to lead rewarding, productive, and enriched lives.

In addition, this course is intended to satisfy the following Touchstone education goals.

- Competency 1: Winthrop graduates think critically and solve problems. We address this competency by the critical nature of this discipline: much of our focus is on evaluating the truth and logic of a position.
- Competency 2: Winthrop graduates are personally and socially responsible. We address this competency by enhancing the student's powers of analysis and critical evaluation, thereby enhancing the student's capacity for self-scrutiny and by direct examination of principles of value.
- Competency 3: Winthrop graduates understand the interconnected nature of the world and the time in which they live. We address this competency in virtue of the universal nature of this discipline: to study the basic structures of human awareness and action is to demonstrate the unity of humans in all times and places.
- Competency 4: Winthrop graduates communicate effectively. We address this competency by developing specific tools for the clear statement and communication of abstract ideas.

* See <http://www2.winthrop.edu/philrelg/goals.htm> for the complete Department Mission Statement.

This course also helps to satisfy your *Humanities and Arts* general education requirement. Your Humanities and Arts courses involve applying critical skills to the humanities and arts in order to understand and appreciate our diverse intellectual, institutional, and moral nature. That is precisely what we shall do in this course, by critical examination of philosophical theories. In addition, this course helps to satisfy the general education goals of effective English language communication and critical thinking by requiring you to construct both oral and written critical evaluations of important philosophical theories. In addition, this course satisfies your university *Intensive Writing* criterion.

Required Texts

Robinson, T., ed. *God* 2nd Ed. Hackett Publishing Co., 2002
 William Strunk and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style* 3e or 4e (Macmillan, 1989, 1999)
 Muriel Harris, *Prentice Hall Reference Guide* 6e (Pearson Education, 2006 – or later)

Course Requirements

In Brief

- Attending and Preparing for Class
- Writing and Research Exercises
- Frequent Oral Presentations
- One Shorter Essay (5-10pp or more)
- A Full Research Paper (15-30pp or more)

Grading (see assignments for further break-down; 90-100% is an A, etc.; no +/-)

Preliminary Exercises	15%
History Essay	
Draft One	15%
Revision	10%
Research Essay	
Draft One	10%
Final Draft	25%
Commentary	10%
Oral Presentation	15%

Other Matters

- Assessment: The Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies uses this, the senior capstone course for the degree program, to assess student learning in the program. This procedure includes an exit survey and interview.
- Disabilities: Students with medical or other recognized disability must contact Gena Smith, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities, at 323-2233, as soon as possible. Once you have your professor notification letter, please notify me immediately (and prior to the first test or assignment) so that I am aware of your accommodations. If your accommodations affect every assignment, please remind me prior to each one.
- Athletics and other University sponsored activities: I am happy to support your school-sponsored event. If you must miss class such activities, you must provide appropriate

- documentation prior to each instance. It will be your responsibility to ensure that you meet course requirements on or before the date/s of your absence/s.
- Attendance: required as per above; see the university catalog for university policy.
 - Student code of conduct: As noted in the Student Conduct Code: “Responsibility for good conduct rests with students as adult individuals.” The policy on student academic misconduct is outlined in the “Student Conduct Code Academic Misconduct Policy” in the online *Student Handbook* (<http://www2.winthrop.edu/studentaffairs/handbook/StudentHandbook.pdf>).
 - Plagiarism: It is your responsibility to understand the University’s policy on plagiarism. See www.winthrop.edu/english/plagiarism.htm. If you are found guilty of plagiarism in this course, you will receive *an F for the course* **and** *I will report you to the Dean of Students for academic misconduct*. If you are unsure of whether your use of borrowed information counts as plagiarism, consult with me, your English instructor, or the staff in the writing center.

Schedule

(Subject to Change; students are responsible for in-class announcements of changes)

Week	Monday	Wednesday
1/7	Course Introduction Reading Note-Taking Bibliographies	Reading Selection, Sign-Up Summaries Oral Presentations
1/14	Readings, Discussion	Readings, Discussion
1/21	x	Readings, Discussion Research Essays
1/28	Readings, Discussion Research Proposals, Issues	Meet in Dacus 018 Research
2/4	Meetings with Instructor	Proposals Due Annotated Bibliographies Due Writing Instruction: Outlines
2/11	Meetings with Instructor	Oral Proposal Presentations
2/18	Oral Findings Presentations, Bibliography Updates	Oral Findings Presentations, Bibliography Updates Writing Instruction: Drafting
2/25	Essay finishing	History Essays Due
3/4	Contemporary Discussion Essay Revision	Meetings with Instructor
3/11	Spring Break	
3/18	Oral Findings Presentations, Bibliography Updates	Oral Findings Presentations, Bibliography Updates
3/25	Revised History Essays Due	Oral Findings Presentations, Bibliography Updates
4/1	Meetings with Instructor	Rough Drafts Due

4/8	Essay Commentary	Meetings with Instructor
4/15	Essay finishing	Meetings with Instructor
4/22	Full Research Essays Due	x

Monday, April 22: Final Essay Due

Thursday, April 25, 8am: Commentaries due to authors

3 p.m. Fri., 4/26: Final Oral Presentation (open to all faculty and students)