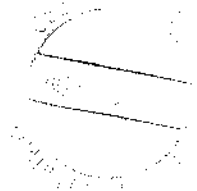




SACRAMENTO
STATE

Course Change Proposal Form A



Academic Group (College): Arts and Letters	Academic Organization (Department): Philosophy	Date: 9-28-06
Type of Course Proposal: New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Change <input type="checkbox"/> Deletion <input type="checkbox"/>	Department Chair: Pyne	Submitted by: Matt McCormick
Does this course fulfill a requirement for single-subject or multiple subject credential students? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	For Catalog Copy: Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> CCE: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Semester Effective: Fall <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spring <input type="checkbox"/> , 2007

This course replaces experimental course Subject Area (prefix) and Catalog Number (course number):

This Catalog Number (course number) is being replaced: 1

Change from: Subject Area (prefix) & Catalog No. (course no.): 192 A	Title: ARGUMENTS, OBJECTIONS, & RESPONSES	Units: 3
Change to: Subject Area (prefix) & Catalog No. (course no.):	Title:	Units:

JUSTIFICATION:
Philosophical debates concerning atheism are a vital segment of the philosophy of religion. The topics of science, morality, evil, miracles, historical evidence for theism, the nature of the divine, and the relationship of evidence to belief all intersect within the topic. Study in advanced topics within the philosophy of religion will benefit our majors by developing their analysis skills, their writing skills, their argumentation, and their familiarity with the philosophical literature.

NEW COURSE DESCRIPTION: (Not to exceed 80 words, and language should conform to catalog copy. See <http://www.csus.edu/acaf/univmanual/crspsl.htm> - Guidelines for Catalog Course Description)

Seminar: Atheism: Arguments, Objections, and Responses. Examines the arguments, concepts, objections and responses surrounding philosophical atheism. Addresses atheism in the context of at least four of the following: evil, miracles, historical evidence for theism, faith, divine hiddenness, theodicies, divine attributes, science, morality, agnosticism, and naturalized accounts of belief.

Note:
Prerequisite: 6 units in philosophy or instructor permission. Philosophy of Religion (Phil 131) strongly encouraged. 3 units.

Corequisite:

CAN (California Articulation Number):

Graded: Letter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Credit/No Credit <input type="checkbox"/>	Instructor Approval Required? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Course Classification (e.g., lecture, lab, seminar, discussion): Seminar 05	Title for SIS+/CMS (not more than 30 characters)

Cross Listed? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If yes, do they meet together and fulfill the same requirement, and what is the other course.
--	---

How Many Times Can This Course be Taken for Credit? once

Can the course be taken for Credit more than once during the same term? Yes No

FOR NEW COURSE PROPOSALS OR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES ONLY:

Description of the Expected Learning Outcomes: Describe outcomes using the following format: "Students will be able to: 1), 2), etc."
See the example at <http://www.csus.edu/acaf/example.htm>

Student Outcome Goals: Students will be able to:

- 1) think critically, objectively, and carefully about atheistic and religious claims and issues.
- 2) become familiar with the major issues and arguments within the philosophical literature on atheism.
- 3) employ advanced skills for philosophical analysis.
- 4) exercise advanced writing skills, textual analysis skills, and oral discussion/debate skills.

****Attach a list of the required/recommended course readings and activities [Note: it is understood that these are updated and modified as needed by the instructor(s).] This attachment should be forwarded only to your Dean's office, not Academic Affairs.**

Assessment Strategies: A description of the assessment strategies (e.g., portfolios, examinations, performances, pre-and post-tests, conferences with students, student papers) which will be used by the instructor to determine the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes noted above:

These goals will be met and assessed with reading assignments, tests, vocabulary assessment, quizzes, paper assignments, class discussions, lectures, and philosophical research.

For whom is this course being developed?

Majors in the Dept Majors of other Depts ___ Minors in the Dept ___ General Education ___ Other ___

Is this course required in a degree program (major, minor, graduate degree, certificate)? Yes ___ No

If yes, identify program(s):


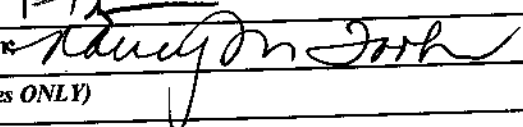
Does the proposed change or addition cause a significant increase in the use of College or University resources (lab room, computer facilities, faculty, etc.)? Yes ___ No

If yes, attach a description of resources needed and verify that resources are available.

Indicate which department or programs will be affected by the proposed course (if any). none

The Department Chair's signature below indicates that affected programs have been sent a copy of this proposal form.

Approvals: If proposed change, new course or deletion is approved, sign and date below. If not approved, forward without signing to the next reviewing authority, and attach an explanatory memorandum to the original copy.

Signatures:	Date
Department Chair: 	10/11/06
College Dean or Associate Dean: 	11-1-06
CPSP (for school personnel courses ONLY)	
Associate Vice President and Dean for Academic Programs	

Distribution: Academic Affairs (original), Department Chair and College Dean. Dean's office to send original after approval to Academic Affairs, at mail zip 6016. An electronic copy must also be sent.

Atheism: Arguments, Objections, and Responses
Philosophy 192 A
Prof. Matt McCormick
Fall 2007

Office Hours:

Office:

Office phone:

email: mccormick@csus.edu

Webpage: www.csus.edu/indiv/m/mccormickm

Writing Guidelines: <http://www.csus.edu/phil/reg/writing.htm>

Philosophy Department Office: Mendocino 3032, 278-6424

Catalog Description: Seminar: Atheism: Arguments, Objections, and Responses. Examines the arguments, concepts, objections and responses surrounding philosophical atheism. Addresses atheism in the context of at least four of the following: evil, miracles, historical evidence for theism, faith, divine hiddenness, theodicies, divine attributes, science, morality, agnosticism, and naturalized accounts of belief.

Prerequisite: 6 units in philosophy or instructor permission. Philosophy of Religion (Phil 131) strongly encouraged. 3 units.

Required Text: A collection of papers, and book excerpts. See weekly plan below for schedule and references. All readings will be online, on reserve, or handed out in class.

An important but sometimes neglected thread in the philosophy of religion has been arguments in favor of atheism. Many people, philosophers included, believe that such arguments are in principle flawed—the motivation for such an argument are often criticized, and it is argued that since proving a negative claim is so difficult, at most we should be agnostics. Furthermore, atheists, by recent polling data, are some of the most disliked people in American culture, despite the fact that atheists make up such a tiny fraction of the population. In the history of philosophy of religion, a series of arguments and criticisms of theistic arguments have been given that provide a philosophical center for this position. Given that so many people are religious, and that religion plays such a central role in the social, political, economic, and personal decisions they make, it is vital that we better understand a debate that attempts to dislodge theism's place in our belief structure. Furthermore, recent legal cases on topics such as religious language in the Pledge of Allegiance, intelligent design, and teaching evolution in schools have made it clear that this topic is of vital importance to American mainstream culture.

Several other topics are relevant to this debate. Many people see the scientific enterprise as inherently atheistic. The methods, goals, and results of scientific investigation will in the end result in atheism. It is also thought that miracles and a body of historical evidence render theism reasonable and atheism unreasonable. The problem of evil—why would an all powerful, all knowing, and loving God permit evil?—has been the cornerstone of arguments for atheism. A range of atheistic arguments have been developed along these lines raising questions about the possible purposes of evil, freedom, divine hiddenness, and soul-building.

In this course we will consider a range of important philosophical contributions on the topic of atheism. It will also consider a number of responses and criticisms from the theistic camp, and then the range of responses open to the atheist. We will consider the tension between science and religion. We will address questions such as: Does science motivate atheism? Is religious faith compatible with science? Can science give us positive evidence for the non-existence of God? This course will also consider the debate over atheism that has centered on the question of miracles and historical evidence.

The goals of the course:

- 1) to better understand the concepts, themes, arguments, and problems surrounding atheistic reasoning.
- 2) to better understand the challenges that philosophers have presented to theism.
- 3) to better understand the nature of religious belief and its relationship to reason and argument

Student Outcome Goals: This course has several major goals for students.

- 1) To develop the ability to think critically, objectively, and carefully about atheistic and religious claims and issues.
- 2) To familiarize students with the major issues and arguments within the philosophical literature on atheism.
- 3) To develop a number of advanced skills for philosophical analysis.
- 4) To develop students' writing skills, textual analysis skills, and oral discussion/debate skills.

These goals will be met and assessed with reading assignments, tests, vocabulary assessment, quizzes, paper assignments, class discussions, lectures, and philosophical research.

Assignments: In this course you will write 6 short (2-5 pages) papers—three brief argument summaries and three critical analyses. All papers will be assessed according to the criteria described in the assignment and the Philosophy Department writing guidelines posted at: www.csus.edu/phil/req/writing.htm. There will also be a final exam. It will include terms, author identification, and a number of essay questions (passed out in advance) that address the various topics and authors from the course. There will also be a final paper. (8-12 pages) This paper will require some careful analysis and argumentation concerning one of the concepts, theses, or arguments considered in the course. Outside research will be accepted but not required.

Late Assignments: Each student may take one extension on a due paper or question set (but not on the final exam) until the next class period. This is the only extension you will have, so use it wisely. You do not need to inform me when you choose to take your extension. All other late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per day (not per class period.) Assignments turned in after class on the day they are due will be counted late.

Missed Assignments: Be forewarned: A missed assignment will be entered as a 0 in the grade spreadsheet, and that has a substantial negative impact on your course grade. Even an F (55 points) has a less damaging effect on your grade.

Makeup Policy: There will be no extra credit or make up assignments for any missed work. The midterm or final exams will not be rescheduled for anyone—plan accordingly.

Course Grade: Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Short papers: 6 @ 10% of total grade each
Final exam: 15%
Final Paper: 15%
Attend. and Participation 10% of total grade

To calculate your grade during the semester:

1. Take all short paper scores and multiply by .1.
2. Multiply your final exam and final paper scores by .15.
3. Estimate your class attendance and participation grade: 10 = best, 0=worst.
4. Estimate scores for any assignments yet to be completed and multiply by the appropriate %.
5. Add all of those results. A=100-90, B=89-80, C=79-70, D=69-60, F=59-50.

Grading Guidelines: A detailed explanation of the standards employed in this course to grade assignments and the requirements for different grades can be found at:

<http://www.csus.edu/phil/req/grading.htm>

Attendance: Class attendance is mandatory. Anyone with 5 or more unexcused absences will receive a 0 for class attendance and participation. Everyone is expected to come to class prepared, having read the assigned materials, and ready to participate in the class discussions. Everyone who meets these requirements will receive a full 10% for their class participation grade. Failure to meet these requirements will result in a proportional reduction of that grade.

If there are emergencies that force you to miss class, they may be excused in some rare cases. You must notify me that you will be missing class before it occurs. And I will require evidence in order to excuse the absence(s).

Being Tardy: I take roll at the beginning of class and, if necessary, after the break; students who are late will be counted absent and will miss assignments, important information, and as a result, will do poorly in the course. Three tardies count as an absence. Students who leave at the break will receive half an absence.

Cheating: No cheating of any sort will be tolerated in this course. All sources in papers must be cited and given appropriate credit. The author of any information from the Internet must be given credit; using such information without indicating the source is stealing someone else's hard work and is immoral. Students are allowed to discuss lectures and even assignments with each other, but they must do their own work. Be cautious of sharing your notes and ideas with someone who did not attend class and did not take notes; that person has much more to gain than you do.

Here is the university policy on academic honesty:

The attempt by a student to cheat on an exam or other academic assignment or to engage in plagiarism is a violation of a fundamental principle of academic honesty and integrity and will not be tolerated in the University. Formal procedures exist for dealing with these cases and penalties will be imposed on students who are found guilty of academic dishonesty. In the event of expulsion, suspension or probation, a notation is made on the student's transcript. Suspension and probation notations remain on the transcript for the life of the suspension/probation. For information, contact the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

All students will be responsible for reading and following the university honesty, plagiarism, and cheating policies. They are posted on the web at:

<http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umannual/UMA00150.htm>

Intellectual Property Right Policy. The development of websites and businesses that buy students' notes and papers and resell them to other students willing to cheat has made this policy necessary:

I do not give my permission for any materials presented in my course, including but not limited to lectures, lecture notes, assignments, tests, and handouts, to be sold without my explicit written permission. Those materials also may not be given, or otherwise transferred by anyone who is not currently enrolled in my course to anyone who is currently enrolled in my course. Nor can they be given or otherwise transferred to anyone who is currently enrolled in my course to anyone who is not. They may not be used for any commercial purposes without my explicit written permission. Their use is to be educational and confined to use in my class. Anyone who violates these policies is in conflict with university intellectual copyright policy and will be subject to legal action.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and require accommodation or assistance with assignments, tests, attendance, note taking, etc., please see the instructor early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made to ensure your full participation in class. Also, you are encouraged to contact the Services for Students with Disabilities (Lassen Hall) for additional information regarding services that might be available to you.

Course Schedule: Here is an outline of the authors and topics in the assigned text that we will be discussing. Topics and reading assignments are subject to change.

Week 1: Introduction

Proving the Negative

Reading: Harris: Chapter 1, *The End of Faith* on reserve.

Scriven, excerpts from *Primary Philosophy* on reserve.

Week 2: The Problem of Evil:

Failed Theodicies:

Soul Making, Freedom, Natural Evil, Moral Evil

Readings:

Van Inwagen, Peter "The Problem of Evil, the Problem of Air, and the Problem of Silence." <http://www.jstor.org/view/15208583/di982792/98p00985/0>

Daniel Howard-Snyder. "God, Evil, and Suffering." *Reason for the Hope Within* ed. Michael Murray (Eerdmans, 1999).

<http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~howardd/god,evil,andsuffering.pdf>

Week 3: The Problem of Evil continued.

Readings:

Daniel Howard-Snyder, Bergman, and Rowe: "An Exchange on the Problem of Evil" on reserve.

Smith, Quentin. "An Atheological Argument From Evil Natural Laws."

[http://www.qsmithwmu.com/an_atheological_argument_from_evil_natural_laws_\(1991\).htm](http://www.qsmithwmu.com/an_atheological_argument_from_evil_natural_laws_(1991).htm)

Schellenberg. JL "Stalemate and Strategy: Rethinking the Evidential Problem of Evil" on reserve.

Draper, Paul. "Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists"

<http://www.jstor.org/view/00294624/di982882/98p0141u/0?frame=noframe&userID=82567e67@csus.edu/01cce4403700501ca665d&dpi=3&config=jstor>

Marilyn McCord Adams. "The Problem of Hell: A Problem of Evil for Christians" on reserve.

Week 4: Problem of Evil concluded.

Week 5: Deductive proofs:

Incompatible Attributes: Omnipotence, Omniscience, Freedom, and Love

Readings: Excerpts from *The Impossibility of God*. Eds. Martin and Monier

Week 6: Naturalized Accounts of Belief: the sources of religiousness

Mystical Experiences: Patricia Churchland, excerpt from *Brain-Wise*. On reserve.

Naturalizing Religion: Daniel Dennett, from *Breaking the Spell*. Lecture at the University of Edinburgh: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/explore/av/natureofknowledge/>

Week 7: Probabilistic Reasoning

Readings: excerpts from *The Improbability of God*.

Week 8: Miracles: The Case Against and the Historical Evidence

Readings: Hume: "on Miracles"

<http://www.soci.niu.edu/~phildept/Dye/HumeOfMiracles.html>

Swinburne, "For the Possibility of Miracles." On reserve.

Week 9: Hiddenness: Why is God Hiding?

Readings:

Excerpts from *Divine Hiddenness: New Essays*. Daniel Howard-Snyder, Paul Moser, eds. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Week 10: Challenges to Faith: Is Faith an Acceptable Route to Belief?

Readings: Dawkins, Richard. "Is Science a Religion?" *Humanist* Jan/Feb. 1997.

<http://www.thehumanist.org/humanist/articles/dawkins.html>

Week 11: Challenges to Faith continued.

Readings: *Souls and the Afterlife*: McCormick, "Against the Immortality of the Soul" On the web at: <http://www.csus.edu/indiv/m/mccormickm/NoSoulsWeb.htm>

"Is Science Killing the Soul?" A debate between Richard Dawkins and Steven Pinker.

<http://www.edge.org/documents/archive/edge53.html>

Week 12: Atheism, Meaningless Lives and Immorality

The problem of mysteries and the unknown.

Readings: Drange, Theodore. "The Argument from Non-Belief."

http://infidels.org/library/modern/theodore_drange/aeanb.html

"Why Be Moral?" http://infidels.org/library/modern/theodore_drange/whymoral.html

Week 13: Agnosticism, Evidence, and Rationality

Readings: TBA

Summation and Review