# PHIL 266
# Introduction to Philosophy of Religion
# Section EC – Fall 2026

**This syllabus is subject to change and any changes will be posted in the Announcements section of your eConcordia portal.**

**Disclaimer: In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.**

## About the Course

**Instructor: Nabeel Hamid**

**Communication with your instructor and TAs**

Philosophy 266 is a large course. Students will all be assigned to a group for which a TA is responsible. Your TAs can respond to questions about the course format, the readings, the assignments, and grades. When possible, you should first contact your TA.

Your Concordia email is the official channel for all university communications, as required by the university's Policy on Concordia email accounts for students and employees. Please use your Concordia email for all communication related to this course and check it regularly so you don't miss important information. Learn more about how to access your Concordia email.

As a student, you are expected to follow the email policy and to use your Concordia email in a respectful and responsible manner. The policy helps ensure that communication across the university is secure, reliable, and consistent.

**TA Contact Information:** Once assigned, your TA's name and contact information will appear on the contacts page of the course website.

**Course Description**

This course is an introduction to central topics in the philosophy of religion. Through this course, we will seek to understand what religion is by examining key questions concerning sacrality, the existence of the divine, the nature of religious experience, the relation of religion to morality, the problem of evil, the meaning of prayer and worship, and theories of life after death. We will approach these topics through a cross-cultural lens, combining sources from a range of historical traditions and with contemporary philosophical commentary. The goal of the course is

to arrive at a deeper understanding of the nature and significance of religion and spirituality in human affairs.

**Learning Objectives**

1. To gain an understanding of key issues in the philosophy of religion.
2. To practice the skills of close reading and analysis of philosophical texts.

**Course Materials**

There is no textbook for the course. All readings are available in electronic form through the Concordia library. Lectures, videos, and podcasts are available on the eConcordia course website.

# Assignments and Expectations

1. Readings and lectures
    - Careful reading of the required texts is your most important task in this course. The lectures presuppose that you have done the assigned reading. You should expect to spend 4-6 hours per week on the required readings and lectures. Readings and lectures are complementary; each is essential for understanding the other, and you need to study both in order to succeed in the course.
2. Three quizzes: 20% + 20% + 20% (= 60%).
    - Quizzes are accessed on the eConcordia course website.
    - You will have 60 minutes to finish the quiz once you start.
    - The quizzes will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions.
        - The first quiz (20%) will cover material from Lessons 2-4: **Friday, Oct. 2**.
        - The second quiz (20%) will cover material from Lessons 5-7: **Friday, Oct 30**
        - The third quiz (20%) will cover material from Lessons 8-10: **Friday, Nov 20**.
    - Quizzes will be available from 9am to midnight on the day of the quiz. The timer starts when you open the quiz.
3. Final exam: 40%
    - The final exam will be in-person.
    - You will have 120 minutes to finish the exam.
    - The exam will consist of short essay questions.
    - It will be cumulative.
    - The date and time will be determined by the exams office.

## Statement Regarding Grades and Grade Distribution

1. The Undergraduate Calendar 16.3 specifies that As, Bs, and Cs are for “outstanding,” “very good” and “satisfactory” work, respectively. The Philosophy Department interprets this to mean that: Cs are awarded for work that is adequate, yet in some way fails to completely meet all expectations and requirements; Bs are awarded for work that fully meets all expectations and requirements; As are reserved for outstanding work that exceeds expectations and requirements by, e.g., demonstrating outstanding rigour, clarity, or insight.

2. In 200 & 300 level courses with over 30 students, it is normally expected that: the grade average will be in the C+ to B- range; there will be no more than 25% As. 'INC' will be provided as a course grade only in medical and compassionate circumstances.

*Numerical Equivalents*

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|---|---|---|
| A-<br>80-84%<br>3.7 GP | A<br>85-89%<br>4.0 GP | A+<br>90-100%<br>4.3 GP |
| B-<br>70-72%<br>2.7 GP | B<br>73-76%<br>3.0 GP | B+<br>77-79%<br>3.3 GP |
| C-<br>60-62%<br>1.7 GP | C<br>63-66%<br>2.0 GP | C+<br>67-69%<br>2.3 GP |
| D-<br>50-52%<br>0.7 GP | D<br>53-56%<br>1.0 GP | D+<br>57-59%<br>1.3 GP |

## Academic Integrity

Your academic Code of Conduct makes it very clear that plagiarism, as well as any other form of academic dishonesty, is entirely unacceptable. The Code defines plagiarism as "the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement" (CU Undergraduate Calendar; the Code goes on to state other offences). This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. "Presentation" is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. If you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. If you cite your own work without the correct citation, this too is plagiarism.

## Statement Concerning Use of AI Tools

The use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, is prohibited for all assignments in this course. Their use in any capacity in this course will constitute a violation of Concordia's Academic Code of Conduct.

While it may appear to you that generative AI has produced a polished-looking essay—it is well-organized, it uses perfect grammar, it uses key terms, it references the right authors—your professors are looking to spot something original or personal that demonstrates your own attempt to grapple with new ideas and evaluate competing arguments. This bit of originality might be a distinctive approach to a question, or a novel way of expressing an idea, or even an interesting or insightful misinterpretation of a text. Although you probably don't know exactly *how* to produce that distinctive or novel quality in your writing, you are far more likely to produce it if you write your own essays than if you ask AI to do so.

One of the main purposes of essay-style writing is to work out your own thoughts about a topic. The labour required to generate your own thoughts based on your reading, to articulate these thoughts in writing, and to refine your written text, will by itself lead you to a better understanding of the text and your own ideas. Don't worry too much about making the odd grammatical mistake or typo. What we care about is getting a sense that you are grappling with the ideas presented in readings and lectures. That is something that you can indicate through your own original work.

## Pronouns

All course participants have the right to request which names and pronouns instructors use to refer to them. If you want to be called by a name other than what is listed on the class list, please feel free to pass along the information to your TA and instructor. If they mistakenly use the wrong pronoun when referring to you, please advise them as soon as possible.

## Sexual Violence

Concordia's Policy Regarding Sexual Violence defines sexual violence as "any violence, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This includes, but is not limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism, degrading sexual imagery, distribution of sexual images or video of a community member without their consent, and cyber harassment or cyber stalking of a sexual nature or related to a person's sexual orientation, gender identity and/or presentation." The Policy further defines sexual assault and harassment.

- The Philosophy Department condemns sexual violence. The Department encourages all students to report sexual violence to the Department Chair, the Dean, or to the Office of Rights and Responsibilities.
- Concordia's Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) is an important resource on campus for students needing support, accompaniment, resources or information about sexual violence. SARC may convene a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) to support a survivor/victim reporting sexual violence. See the Policy for further details.
- Other resources include the Centre for Gender Advocacy and the CSU Advocacy Centre.
- The Philosophy Department welcomes Concordia's Consensual Romantic Or Sexual Relationships Guidelines, which "strongly discourage[] all instructors from commencing or continuing any consensual romantic or sexual relationship with a student."

## Accessibility

Your instructor is available to discuss appropriate accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Please contact your instructor as soon as possible if you require any accommodations. You should register with the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities in order to benefit from their services.

## Territorial Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

## Course Website

Your eConcordia account will be valid until the end of the term for which you are registered.

**For the duration of the course, your account will allow you to access the online materials from the eConcordia course website, which includes videos, notes, most graded course, and additional resources.**

## Note for International Students

International students are encouraged to discuss their study plans with a Financial Aid advisor before registering in an online course offered by eConcordia.

# Important Information

| Topic | Link |
|---|---|
| Academic Integrity | Academic Integrity |
| Educational Technology Guidelines | Concordia Educational Technology Guidelines for Faculty and Students (the "Guidelines") |
| Access Centre for Students with Disabilities | ACSD |
| Concordia Library Citation & Style Guides | How to cite... |
| Course Communication Tools | Communication |
| eConcordia Policies | Policies |
| Final Exams Information | Final Exams |
| Helpdesk/Support | FAQ |
| Refunds | Refunds |
| Technical Requirements | Technical Requirements |
| Tips for Studying Online | Studying Tips |
| Tips on how to reach online learning goals (learning modules) | How to Succeed @ eConcordia |
| How to install and use Zoom | Zoom Information |

# PHIL 266 - Introduction to Philosophy of Religion
# Agenda - Fall 2026

**All assignments are due by 11:59 P.M. on the due date listed unless otherwise indicated.**

| Week 1: September 7 - September 13 | |
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| | Review the Course Outline and Agenda |
| | Navigate the Course Website and review the Getting Started section |
| | **Lesson 1 - What is religion? What is philosophy of religion?** |
| | **Readings:**<br>1. Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1962), "Introduction"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9F3C<br><br>2. Dalai Lama (2001), "Buddhism and Other Religions"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9F2A<br><br>3. Interview with Jacob Olupona (2015),<br>https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2015/10/the-spirituality-of-africa/ |
| **September 07** | **Labour Day, university closed** |
| **September 08** | **Classes begin** |
| **Week 2: September 14 - September 20** | |
| | **Lesson 2 - Characterizing the divine** |
| | 1. Shankara (8th-9th cent. CE), "Everything Has Its Self in Brahman"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D0B<br><br>2. Nagarjuna (2nd-3rd cent. CE), "An Analysis of Nirvana"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D0C<br><br>3. Zhou Dunyi (11th cent. CE), "Non-Polar and Yet Supreme Polarity!"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D0D<br><br>4. Maimonides (1190), "Negative Theology"<br><br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D14 |

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| | 5. St. Thomas Aquinas (13th cent.), "God is Omnipotent"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9F2B<br><br>6. Boethius (523 CE), "God is Timeless"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D12 |
| **Week 3: September 21 - September 27** | |
| | **Lesson 3 - Arguments for the existence of God: ontological and cosmological** |
| | **Readings:**<br>1. St. Anselm (1077-8), "The Classical Ontological Argument"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D45<br><br>2. Gaunilo (11th cent. CE), "Critique of Anselm's Argument"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D46<br><br>3. ibn Sina/Avicenna (ca. 1020), "Proof of the Necessarily Existent"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9CFF |
| **September 21** | **Deadline to add fall-term courses** |
| **September 21** | **Deadline for withdrawal with tuition refund (DNE) from fall-term courses** |
| **Week 4: September 28 - October 4** | |
| | **Lesson 4 - Arguments for the existence of God: design and fine-tuning** |
| | **Readings:**<br>1. William Paley (1802), "The Analogical Teleological Argument"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D43<br><br>2. David Hume (1779), "Critique of the Analogical Teleological Argument"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D62<br><br>3. Cory Juhl (2006), "Fine-tuning Is Not Surprising"<br><br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9F3D |
| **October 2** | **Quiz 1 (covering Lessons 2 - 4)** |
| **Week 5: October 5 - October 11** | |
| | **Lesson 5 - Religion and morality** |

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| | **Readings:**<br>1. Fyodor Dostoevsky (1880), “The Grand Inquisitor”<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9F3B<br><br>2. Immanuel Kant (1788), “The Existence of God as a Postulate of Pure Practical Reason”<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D1E<br><br>3. Mengzi (4th-3rd cent. BCE), 2A.6-7, 6A.6-11<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D02 |
| **October 10** | **Reading week begins** |
| **Mid-term break: October 12 - October 16** | |
| **October 12** | **Thanksgiving Day, university closed** |
| **October 16** | **Reading week ends** |
| **Week 6: October 19 - October 25** | |
| | **Lesson 6 - The problem of evil** |
| | **Readings:**<br>1. “God’s Message is Garbled” (Kamba/Kenya)<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9F23<br><br>2. Manichean creation story<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9F3E<br><br>3. St. Augustine (ca. 420 CE), “Evil as a Privation of the Good”<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D0A<br><br>4. David Hume (1779), “The Argument from Evil”<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D09<br><br>5. Leibniz (1710), “Best of all Possible Worlds Theodicy”<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D1C<br><br>6. Dostoevsky (1880), “Rebellion”<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9F3A |
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| **October 23** | Last day to submit required documentation to register with the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities and request exam accommodations for the fall 2026 final examination period |
| **Week 7: October 26 - November 1** | |

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| | **Lesson 7- Evil and divine goodness** |
| | **Readings:**<br>1. Marilyn McCord Adams (1989), “Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D1D<br><br>2. Shankara (8th-9th cent. CE), “Brahman, Creation, and Evil” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D03 |
| **October 30** | **Quiz 2 (covering Lessons 5-7)** |
| **Week 8: November 2 - November 8** | |
| | **Lesson 8 - The limits of reason in religion** |
| | **Readings:**<br>1. Zhuangzi (ca. 4th cent. BCE), “Wandering Round and About”; and “On Equalizing Things” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D01<br><br>2. al-Ghazali (early 12th cent. CE), “Scepticism and the Denial of all Knowledge” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9CFA<br><br>3. Kierkegaard (1846), “Truth Is Subjectivity” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D16 |
| **Week 9: November 9 - November 15** | |
| | **Lesson 9 - Religious experience** |
| | **Readings:**<br>1. St. Teresa (1565), “Religious Experiences” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D17<br><br>2. al-Ghazali (early 12th cent. CE), “Divine Intoxication” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D08<br><br>3. Ehei Dogen (13th cent. CE), “Manifesting Suchness” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D07<br><br>4. William James (1902), “Religious Experiences as Feelings Forming the Root of Religion” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D19<br><br>5. Hakuun Yasutani Roshi (1989), “Religious Experience Brings about Awakening” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D1A |

| Week 10: November 16 - November 22 | |
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| | **Lesson 10 - Prayer and worship** |
| | **Readings:**<br>1. Origen (3rd cent. CE), "The Content of Prayer"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9CFB<br><br>2. Bhagavad Gita, "Chapter 12" (Yoga of Devotion)<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D10<br><br>3. "Nyikang and the Sun" (Shilluk/Sudan)<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9F24<br><br>4. Joshua Cockayne (2020), "Personal and Non-personal Worship"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D13<br><br>5. Eleonore Stump (1979), "Petitionary Prayer" https://www-jstor-org.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/stable/20009745 |
| **November 16** | **Deadline for academic withdrawal (DISC) from fall-term courses** |
| **November 20** | **Quiz 3 (covering Lessons 8-10)** |
| **Week 11: November 23 - November 29** | |
| | **Lesson 11 - Life after death** |
| | **Readings:**<br>1. Plato (4th cent. BCE), "The Immortality of the Soul"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D0E<br><br>2. Epicurus (4th-3rd cent. BCE), "Letter to Menoeceus"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D28<br><br>3. Donald MacKay (1987), "Brain Science and the Soul"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D04<br><br>4. Questions of King Milinda (2nd cent. BCE-1st cent. CE), "What is Reborn is Neither the Same Nor Another"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D05<br><br>5. Ramanuja (11th-12th cent. CE), "The Conscious Subject Persists in the State of Release"<br>http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D06 |

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| | 6. Sri Aurobindo (1912), “A Hindu View of Rebirth” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D1B |
| **Week 12: November 30 - December 7** | |
| | **Lesson 12 - Religious diversity** |
| | **Readings:**<br>1. Kwasi Wiredu (2011), “An African Religions Perspective” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D1F<br><br>2. Paul Griffiths (1990), “The Universality and Uniqueness of Religious Doctrines” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D15<br><br>3. John Hick (2000), “Religious Pluralism and Salvation” http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF9D29 |
| **November 30** | **Last day for instructor-scheduled tests or examinations** |
| **December 07** | **Last day of classes, fall term** |
| **Examinations Period: December 9 - December 22** | |
| | **Final Exam – In Person (Cumalative)** |
| | **Final Exam date and time is posted on your Student Hub** |