**Dr. Adam Wells**

**Wiley 004**

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**ETLA 100: Transitions I (Faith and Atheism)**

**Course Description:**

Why is there evil in the world if God is good? What evidence do we have for God’s existence? Does faith require evidence? Is God a psychological projection? Is religion simply a tool used to promote socioeconomic oppression? Does religion promote an inauthentic existence? This course critically examines various atheistic critiques of religion with the aim of encouraging intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. Reading assignments will be drawn from the fields of philosophy, psychology, economics and theology.

**Course Goals**:

In this class students will:

* Become acquainted with some of the most profound atheistic arguments and theistic responses to those arguments.
* Learn basic study skills through daily homework assignments. (all proficiencies)
* Actively discuss the issues raised in class. (Oral Communication)
* Learn the basics of library research through an annotated Bibliography. (Information Technology)
* Research religious life on campus. (Quantitative Literacy)
* Demonstrate their ability to make logical arguments in a clear written format. (Critical Thinking and Written Communication)
* Learn and practice basic presentation skills. (Oral Communication)
* Reflect on their first semester of college, and set learning goals for their futures.

**Required Texts:**

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*.

David Hume, *Dialogues and Natural History of Religion.*

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

Denys Turner, *Faith Seeking*.

Selected online readings.

**Course Requirements:**

**Class Participation 5%**

**Homework Assignments 5%**

**Annotated Bibliography 15%**

**HuffPO Argument Assignment 15%**

**Religious Life Project 15%**

**Presentations 10% (5% x 2)**

**Lifelong Learning Plan 5%**

**Midterm 15%**

**Final 15%**

**Active in-class participation (5%):** Informed participation is expected. You should be physically and mentally present and engaged in every class! Your learning process will be helped immensely by participating actively in the course, so don’t be afraid to ask questions, or engage your peers (and me) in discussion. Participation will be assessed on a daily basis. Non-participation (e.g., sleeping, eating your lunch, staring off in the distance for extended periods of time, disruptive behavior and so forth) will negatively (and severely) impact your course grade.

Daily Homework Assignments (5%): About once per week a short assignment will be due. Sometimes these will be graded check plus (A), check (B) or check minus (C), other times they may be graded out of 100. They are all weighted equally.

**Annotated Bibliography (15%)**: To prove your growing understanding of the E&H library system, and the idea of college level research, you will create an annotated bibliography. This assignment will be due by 5pm on 10/11. Details will be distributed in class.

**HuffPo Assignment (15%)**: Each student will create an account on the Huffington Post. You will reply to an article or commenter with a substantial paragraph arguing for or against the author’s/ commenter’s position. You will then reply twice to those who comment on your response. This assignment will be due by 5pm on 10/18. More details in class.

**Religious Life Project (20 %)**: In order to demonstrate Quantitative Literacy, you will take part in a project to assess religious life on campus. More details in class.

**Oral Presentations (10%):** For this assignment you will deliver a 3-5 minute presentation in front of your peers. In your first presentations (11/1 and 11/8) you will present the your HuffPo assignment. You second presentation will be a group presentation in which you present your work on the Religious Life Project.

**Lifelong Learning Plan (5%):** For this assignment you will write a short paper which reflects on your first semester of college, and your plans for the future. This assignment will be due by 5pm on 12/6. More details will be distributed in class.

**Midterm (15%):** Take home exam due 10/22 by 5pm.

**Final Exam (15%):** Take home exam. Due date TBA.

**Financial Avenue Learning Modules**: More info in class

**Note: Nearly all of your assignments will be submitted on Moodle. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE SUBMITTED ON TIME. No extensions will be granted for computer errors.**

**General Grading Rubric:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Letter Grade** | **Lower Numerical Cutoff** | **Description** |
| A | 94 | Exceptional work that shows creativity and careful analysis of material. A-level work is sophisticated, well written, and free from errors in grammar and spelling. |
| A- | 90 | Shows exceptional mastery of concepts, and goes well beyond requirements. |
| B+ | 87 | Work in the B-range is above average. B level work may be excellent work with several small errors or flaws. It is solid work, and shows significant command of concepts. |
| B | 84 |  |
| B- | 80 |  |
| C+ | 77 | Work in the C-range is average and satisfactory. It fulfills the criteria of the assignment, but does not display the same level of analysis, comprehension, and/or creativity as B and A-level work |
| C | 74 |  |
| C- | 70 |  |
| D | 60 | Work in the D-range is substandard. It may have major flaws, or show little mastery of major or minor concepts. |
| F | 0 | Work in the F-range shows no mastery of relevant material. F-level work fails to complete requirements or is otherwise unacceptable. |

\*\*Letter grades are equivalent to a numerical score 1 point above the lower numerical cutoff. For example, an A paper is equivalent to a numerical score of 95

**Attendance Policy**:

During your college years, by responsible class attendance you can establish a reputation for reliability that will help your professors to write good reference letters for jobs or programs of graduate study. I value faithful attendance highly, as an indication of your commitment to the course goals.

You are allowed TWO excused absences. You may request that an absence be excused for an appropriate reason such as sickness, a medical appointment, athletic competition, dangerous driving conditions, etc. An excused absence is based on an email request from you (not on a note from a nurse, a list from a coach, or your telling me why you missed class). Before or right after any absence, please email me, giving the date and the reason that you missed class, if you want me to consider excusing the absence. If you do not email me before or soon after your absence, I will assume that it is unexcused. Unexcused absences will reduce your course average by 2 points for each such absence.

Note: I do not give make-up quizzes or exams. If you miss an in-class assignment or exam, you will receive a zero.

**Computer and Cell Phone Policy:**

A successful class requires the active participation of everyone involved. Cell phones are distracting and disruptive; they are detrimental to both individual learners and the class as a whole. Consequently, the use of cell phones in class is strictly forbidden. Turn them off before class begins—off, not vibrate! I will give you one warning per semester, after which I will deduct one point from your final grade for every violation of this policy. If I see your cell phone during an exam or quiz, you will automatically receive a ZERO on that exam or quiz.

The use of laptops in class is prohibited unless you receive an accommodation from the Powell Resource Center.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Week 1 (8/28-8/30)

1. Introduction
2. **Moodle:** Richard Dawkins, “Why There Almost Certainly Is No God.”

Week 2 (9/2- 9/6)

1. **Moodle:** Terry Eagleton, “Lunging, Flailing, Mispunching.”
2. **Moodle:** Gary Gutting, “Did Zeus Exist?”
3. Friday: What makes a good philosophical argument?(Readings TBA)

Week 3 (9/9-9/13)

1. **Hume**, pp. 11-24.
2. **Hume,** pp. 29-53.
3. Friday: Explaining the HuffPo assignment

Week 4 (9/16-9/20)

1. **Hume**, pp. 54-71.
2. **Hume**, pp. 72-89.
3. Friday: TBA (Tentatively, Study Abroad presentation by Dr. Gaia)

Week 5 (9/23-27)

1. **Hume**, pp. 91-104.
2. **Hume**, pp. 105-130.
3. Friday: TBA

Week 6 (9/30-10/4)

1. **Moodle:** Timothy Williamson, “What is Naturalism?”

Alex Rosenberg, “Why I am a Naturalist.”

Timothy Williamson, “On Ducking Challenges to Naturalism.”

1. OCT 2: Library Instruction (Meet in Library, Room TBA)
2. OCT 4: Library Instruction (Meet in Library, Room TBA)

Week 7 (10/7-10/11)

1. **Moodle**: Charles Lewis, “Divine Goodness and Worship Worthiness.”
2. **Freud**, pp. 10-36.
3. **Freud**, pp. 37-52.
4. **Annotated Bibliography Due 10/11**

Week 8 (10/14-10/18)

1. **Moodle:** Karl Marx, selections.
2. **Moodle:** Karl Marx, selections
3. **HuffPo Assignment Due 10/18**
4. Friday: TBA (Tentatively discuss Religious Life Project)

Week 9 (10/21-22)

1. No Class. **Midterm due TUESDAY by 5pm**
2. **FALL BREAK**

Week 10 (10/28-11/1)

1. **Moodle:** C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, “Bulverism.”
2. **Moodle:** Denys Turner, “Religion: Illusions and liberation,” *Cambridge Companion to Marx*.
3. Friday: CT Presentations

Week 11 (11/4-11/8)

1. Monday: CT Presentations
2. **Nietzsche**, pp. 1-33

Week 12 (11/11-11/15)

1. **Nietzsche**, pp. 35-66
2. Friday: How to design an effective survey (Readings TBA)

Week 13 (11/18-11/22)

1. **Nietzsche**, pp. 83-118)
2. Friday: Religious Life project planning.

Week 14 (11/25-26)

1. **Moodle:** Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, selections
2. **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Week 15 (12/2-12/6)

1. **Moodle**: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, selections
2. **Turner**, pp. 3-22
3. Friday: Religious Life project planning
4. **Lifelong learning plan due 12/6**

Week 16 (12/9-12/11)

1. **Turner**, pp. 23-47
2. Religious Life project presentations

**FINAL EXAM: TBA**