

Comparative Worldviews

Course code: PHI/REL 141

Term and year: Spring 2021

Day and time: Wednesdays, 11:30 – 14:15

Instructor: Ted Turnau, Ph.D.

Instructor contact: Ted.Turnau@aauni.edu

Consultation hours: Wednesdays, 14:15-14:45 or by appointment.

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Introductory
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisite	
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	GCC/HSC Required/Optional

1. Course Description

Everyone has a perspective on truth, reality, on right and wrong, their own “world and life view.” In this class, we shall be examining what worldviews are and how they work, as well as exploring the major worldviews that have shaped the West from Christian Theism to Existentialism. This class is designed to give the student a chance to reflect on deep issues such as what it means to be human, what the meaning of life is, and how do we know right and wrong, without necessarily having any experience in philosophy.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- define various terms associated with the worldviews studied
- articulate the core beliefs of the various worldviews we study
- compare, contrast, and evaluate them.

3. Reading Material

Required Materials (all available on the course website)

Readings for Christian Theism

- Berry, Wendell. “Christianity and the Survival of Creation,” from *Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community: Eight Essays*. New York and San Francisco: Pantheon Books, 1993.
- Keller, Timothy. *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. New York: Dutton Press, 2008, chapters 11 and 12.
- Tinder, Glenn. “Can We Be Good without God?” *The Atlantic Monthly*, 264, no. 6 (Dec. 1989): 69-85.

Readings for Enlightenment Deism

- Descartes, Rene. Meditations 1 and 2 from *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1631), trans. Elizabeth Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, 144-57.

- Jefferson, Thomas. Excerpts from *The Letters of Thomas Jefferson*, <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/thomas-jefferson/letters-of-thomas-jefferson/>.
- _____. Selection from *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* (1820) ("The Jefferson Bible"), <https://www.angelfire.com/co/JeffersonBible/>.
- Kant, Immanuel. "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" (1784) <https://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/CVSP/Documents/Fall%202017-2018/Fall%202017-2018/Kant--What%20is%20Enlightenment.pdf>
- Voltaire. Selections from *A Treatise on Toleration* (1763). <https://www.northampton.edu/Documents/Subsites/HaroldWeiss/ModernPhilosophy/Voltaire.pdf>

Readings for Romanticism

- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. Excerpts from *The Sorrows of the Young Werther*. Trans. R. D. Boyland. <http://www.grtbooks.com/exitfram.asp?idx=3&yr=-5000&aa=AA&at=AA&ref=goethe&URL=http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext01/sywer11.txt>

Readings for Atheistic Naturalism

- Behe, Michael. "The Challenge of Irreducible Complexity." *Natural History*, April 2002, 74. https://www.evcforum.net/RefLib/NaturalHistory_200204_Behe.html.
- Darwin, Charles. "Conclusion," chapter in *The Origin of Species* (1859). Abridged and ed. Charlotte and William Irvine. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1957.
- Freud, Sigmund. Selections from *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), chapters 4, 7-8; *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), chapters 2, 6; and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), part III, section 2, chapter 2. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/questionofgod/ownwords/index.html>
- Miller, Kenneth. "The Flaw in the Mousetrap." *Natural History*, April 2002, 75. https://www.evcforum.net/RefLib/NaturalHistory_200204_Miller.html.

Readings for Nihilism

- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "The Madman," from *The Gay Science* (1882, 1887), par. 125. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York, Vintage, 1974, 181-82.
- _____. Selection from *The Will to Power* (1883, unfinished). From Lawrence Cahoon, ed. *From Modernism to Postmodernism*. London: Blackwell, 1996.
- _____. Selections from *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887), sections 24-28. From Lawrence Cahoon, ed. *From Modernism to Postmodernism*. London: Blackwell, 1996.
- _____. Selections from "Morality as Anti-Nature," from *The Twilight of the Idols* (1893). <https://www.commonlit.org/texts/morality-as-anti-nature>.

Readings for Theistic Existentialism

- Kierkegaard, Soren. "Problema 2." Chap. in *Fear and Trembling*. Ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Reading for Atheistic Existentialism

- Sartre, Jean-Paul. "No Exit" (1946). From *No Exit and Three Other Plays*. New York: Vintage International, 1989.

Recommended Materials

- Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 6th ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020.

4. Teaching methodology

Lectures, in-class discussion.

5. Course Schedule (dates are approximate)

Date	Class Agenda
Session 1 Feb. 10 th	Topic: "What is a worldview?" Description: Go over syllabus and defining our topic. Reading due: None. Assignments/deadlines: Do the 10 Diagnostic Points for you own worldview (keep it for later reference).
Session 2 Feb. 17 th	Topic: "Christian Theism: God at the Center of the Universe" Description: An outline of the Christian worldview emerging from the Protestant Reformation in the 16 th -17 th centuries. Reading due: Keller, chapters 11 and 12. Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaires.
Session 3 Feb. 24 th	Topic: Christian Theism, continued. Description: An exploration of the cultural impact of Christian Theism in the West. Reading due: Glenn Tinder: "Can We Be Good Without God?"; Wendell Berry, "Christianity and the Survival of Creation." Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaires, 10 Diagnostic Points for Christian Theism.
Session 4 March 3 rd	Topic: "Enlightenment Deism: Autonomous Reasonable Man at the Center of the Universe" Description: An exploration of the Enlightenment Deist worldview of the 18 th century. Reading due: Descartes, selection from <i>Meditations</i> ; Kant: "What Is Enlightenment?"; Voltaire, "Treatise on Tolerance"; Jefferson, selection from letters and from <i>The Jefferson Bible</i> Assignments/deadlines: 10 Diagnostic Points for Enlightenment Deism. Reading questionnaires.
Session 5 March 10 th	Topic: "Romanticism: The Quest for Freedom and Wholeness in the Universe" Description: An exploration of the "Counter-Enlightenment" of the 18 th and 19 th centuries. Reading due: Goethe, selections from <i>The Sorrows of Young Werther</i> .

	Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire. Romanticism 10 Diagnostic Points.
Session 6 March 17 th	Topic: Finish "Romanticism." Description: An exploration of the "Counter-Enlightenment" of the 18 th and 19 th centuries. Reading due: None. Assignments/deadlines: 10 Diagnostic Points for Romanticism.
Session 7 March 24 th	Topic: "Atheistic Naturalism: Matter and Motion Rule the Universe" Description: An exploration of Atheistic Naturalism of the 19 th and 20 th centuries. Reading due: Darwin: Selection from <i>Origin of Species</i> (last chapter) and Behe and Miller. Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire.
Session 8 March 31 st	Topic: Atheistic Naturalism cont. Description: See above. Reading: Freud: excerpts from <i>The Future of an Illusion</i> and <i>Civilization and Its Discontents</i> . Assignments/deadlines: 10 Diagnostic Points. MIDTERM ESSAY 1 units 1-4 will be assigned, due in 48 hours.
April 7 th	Midterm Break.
Session 9 April 14 th	Topic: "Nihilism: The Empty, Centerless Universe" Description: An exploration of the nihilism that emerged especially from the philosophy of Nietzsche. Reading due: Nietzsche: "The Madman" (from <i>Thus Spake Zarathustra</i>), "Morality as Anti-Nature," excerpt from <i>Genealogy of Morals</i> , and "Will to Power." Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaires.
Session 10 April 21 st	Topic: Nihilism continued. Description: see above. Reading due: None. Assignments/deadlines: 10 Diagnostic Points for Nihilism.
Session 11 April 28 th	Topic: "My Choices Give Meaning to the Empty Universe" Description: An exploration of Theistic Existentialism (if time) and Atheistic Existentialism (focusing on Jean-Paul Sartre). Reading due: (if time) Søren Kierkegaard, "Problema II" from <i>Fear and Trembling</i> . Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire.
Session 12 May 5 th	Topic: Existentialism cont. Description: See above. Reading due: Jean-Paul Sartre: "No Exit." Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire.
Session 13 May 12 th	Topic: Existentialism cont. Description: See above. Reading: None. Assignments/deadlines: 10 Diagnostic Points. MIDTERM ESSAY 2 covering units 5-7 will be assigned, due in 48 hours. EARLY FINAL ESSAYS DUE.
Session 14 May 19 th	Topic: "Evaluating worldviews." Description: Introducing concepts helpful for evaluating competing worldviews. Review of terms. Reading due: None.

	Assignments/deadlines: FINAL ESSAY assigned (see "Assignments" below). You will have 4 days to return it to me via NEO (unless you turned it early). You will also have 4 days to turn in an extra-credit essay.
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6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (average hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class Participation	42 hours	0%		
Readings, homework questionnaires, summary sheets	4 hours/ week	25%	Before we study a worldview, I will assign short readings from that worldview perspective from the course reader. You are to read it and answer the reading questions from a homework sheet I will give you. Please complete your homework <i>before</i> class so that you will be able to participate fully in discussions. I will not grade the homework questionnaires on correctness, but only on completion (in other words, it is impossible to get a bad grade for your homework unless you simply don't do it). Together, all of the homework sheets will be worth about 10% of your final grade.	1, 2.
2 Mid-term Essays	10 hours each	40% (20 points each)	There will be 2 midterm essays where you will be asked to evaluate, compare, or apply some part of the worldviews covered. HOWEVER, I reserve the right to change this to an in-class short essay term-identification we have covered if we get to go back to the classroom.	1, 2.
Paper	28 hours	35%	Choose two worldviews. Then write a 1000-1500 word essay (double-spaced, typed, Word readable). Use an outline of 3 parts: I. Describe each of worldview briefly (bonus points if you can find a good illustration from popular culture to flesh out your description). II. What are the	1, 2, 3.

			strengths and weaknesses of each worldview? III. Which do you find more attractive, and why (and you <i>do</i> have to make a choice)? Argue for your choice, dig into your own perspective and motivations, and persuade. I am not interested in your research at this point, but rather how you are processing the information you learned in class, how you are comparing worldviews, how you have learned to analyze differing worldviews. This paper is worth 35% of your grade. If you turn in the paper a week early, I will go over it with you, and you can make improvements if you like, and hand it in again.	
Extra Credit		2%	For those who would like to do an extra-credit assignment, you may do a 2-3 page (double-spaced) paper in which I would like you to reflect on your own thinking on worldview, which, if any, you believe comes closest to the truth, and why. What do you think about reality and worldview? How has this class helped clarify issues, or how has it confused them? This paper is to be more personal than the first, but feel free to draw upon sources from class and from your first paper.	1, 2, 3.
TOTAL	150	100%		

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

7. Detailed description of the assignments

1. Homework: Complete readings, reading questionnaire, and on completion of a unit, the 10 Diagnostic Points.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Reading Questionnaires	Each of these
10 Diagnostic Points (as review for each unit).	is assessed on
	completion only,
	not correctness.
	Complete on
	time=100%.

	Incomplete or late = 0% (or some fraction of 100%).
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2. Take-home midterm essays: Since we cannot have in-class midterms this semester, these will be take-home, open book, open notes, open internet assignments. The writing prompt will include some comparison between covered worldviews focusing on application/interpretation. In other words, what does something *mean* from the perspective of this worldview? How well can you demonstrate knowledge of the worldview. The essay should be 750-1000 words long. Any essay over 1100 words will be penalized, as will late submissions.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Accuracy in representing worldview	40%
Cogency of application	40%
Clarity of written expression	20%

3. Term Paper: Choose two worldviews. Then write a paper of 3 parts: I. Describe each of worldview briefly (bonus points if you can find a good illustration from popular culture to flesh out your description). II. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each worldview? III. Which do you find more attractive, and why (and you *do* have to make a choice)? Argue for your choice, dig into your own perspective and motivations, and persuade. I am not interested in your research at this point, but rather how you are processing the information you learned in class, how you are comparing worldviews, how you have learned to analyze differing worldviews. This paper is worth 30% of your grade. If you turn in the paper a week early, I will go over it with you, and you can make improvements if you like, and hand it in again.

Assessed area	Percentage
Preparation	40%
Cogency of arguments	40%
Clarity of written expression	20%

8. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU’s academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

Electronic communication and submission

The university and instructors shall only use students’ university email address for communication, with additional communication via NEO LMS or Microsoft Teams. Students sending e-mail to an instructor shall clearly state the course code and the topic in the subject heading, for example, “COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question”. All electronic submissions are through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take-home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

Attendance

Attendance, i.e., presence in class in real-time, is expected and encouraged. However, the requirement that students miss not more than 35% of real-time classes is temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *However*, if you do miss class, you **MUST** post three questions or comments on the "Forums" part of the NEO class website within 48 hours if you wish to be marked "present."

Absence excuse and make-up options

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he can submit to the Dean of Students an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence. These must be submitted within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

Late work: No late homework will be accepted – please follow the deadlines. For essays, I will deduct from the grade as I see fit; the later, the more severe the penalty.

Electronic devices

Electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

Further, cameras must remain on during class unless there are connectivity issues.

Eating is not allowed during classes.

Cheating and disruptive behavior

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the class and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misconduct, the exam or assignment will be failed and the student will be expelled from the exam or class.

Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center

Plagiarism is "the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work." (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin's White Paper 'The Plagiarism Spectrum' (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another's work, word-for-word, as one's own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.

3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one's own previous work without citation; To self-plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The "Aggregator" includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text's original wording and/or structure.

At minimum, plagiarism from types 1 through 8 will result in a failing grade for the assignment and shall be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: <http://atc.simplybook.me/scheduler/manage/event/1/>.

Please also see "What Is Plagiarism?" posted in the first lesson folder on the class website. **If you are unsure whether you have committed plagiarism, please see me *before* you hand in the paper. I would love to give you guidance and advice. I'm all sorts of forgiving before the deadline. I'm all sorts of *not* forgiving (read: fire and sulfur raining down from the sky on your immortal soul) after you hand it in. Be smart and avoid plagiarism like the plague. Please.**

Course accessibility and inclusion

Students with disabilities are asked to contact the Dean of Students as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive. Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

9. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95-100	Excellent performance. The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90-94	
B+	87-89	Good performance. The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Fair performance. The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	65-69	Poor. The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60-64	
F	0-59	Fail. The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by: Ted Turnau
Date: 6th January, 2021

Approved by: Andrew Giarelli
Date: Jan. 20, 2021