

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
University Honors Program
One University Drive
Orange, CA 92866

COURSE SYLLABUS

Spring 2019

Office: DeMille 163

Email: cpeters@chapman.edu

Office Hours: TTH 2:30– 4:30 P.M. and by appointment

Course Number: HON 216-01

Course Title: Twilight of the Gods

Credits: 3

Classroom: DeMille 146

Time: TTH 1:00– 2:15 P.M.

Prerequisites: Formal acceptance in the University Honors Program

Course Description

This course examines the history of thought on agnosticism, atheism, and skepticism by studying a comprehensive selection of writings from some of the most celebrated thinkers in the West, past and present.

Restrictions: Students formally admitted into the University Honors Program or permission of course instructor and Director of Honors.

Learning Outcomes

1. GE 7VI Learning Outcome: *Articulates how values and ethics inform human understanding, structures, and behavior.*
2. Honors Program and Course Learning Outcomes
 - a. To provide a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives.
 - This course introduces basic reasons for questioning beliefs about the existence of ultimate reality.
 - b. To help students develop the ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and the encouragement of active learning with fellow students, faculty, and tests (broadly understood).
 - This course explores some possible ontological, cosmological, anthropological, and ethical consequences of questioning beliefs about ultimate reality.
 - c. To help students intentionally apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding as they engage advances in knowledge and deal with dramatic challenges shaping the world.
 - d. To help students develop effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of written and oral exposition and analysis.
 - Through this course students are to articulate, before the seat of reason, their own reasoned positions (theistic, atheistic, or agnostic) on the question of ultimate reality and other attendant beliefs.

Course Content

Classical statements of disbelief and uncertainty on the existence of ultimate reality will be critically studied. These statements, which come from writers in various disciplines, will be considered in light of questions such as, ‘Does the universe have a beginning?’, ‘What is the meaning of life and death’, ‘What is the basis of morality?’, ‘Is ultimate reality necessarily an illusion?’, etc.

Required Texts

1. Hitchens, Christopher, ed. *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2007.
2. Quinn, Daniel. *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit*. New York, N.Y.: A Bantam/Turner Book, 1992.
3. Romero, Oscar. *The Scandal of Redemption*. Walden, New York: Plough Publishing House, 2018.

Suggested Texts

1. Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006.
2. Suggested DVD’s for viewing: (a) A Brief History of Disbelief; (b)The Atheism Tapes; (c) The Four Horsemen
2. Joshi, S. T., ed. *Atheism: A Reader*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2000.
3. Joshi, S. T., ed. *The Agnostic Reader*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2007.

Instructional Strategies

1. The class will include both lectures and discussions. The main purpose of lectures will be as aids for discussion. Lectures will be used to establish the historical context and theoretical framework of our readings so as to enhance in-class conversations. (Learning Outcomes 1 and 3)
2. Students are expected to arrive at their own conclusions about the issues, to be able to give reasons for those conclusions, and to sympathetically understand why others might disagree. (Learning Outcome 4)
3. Students are expected to further develop the art of conversation. Conversation requires active listening – that is, openness to what others have to say, asking questions, risking opinions, and the willingness to engage in the back-and-forth of open-ended dialogue. Such conversations are essential for understanding and civility in a pluralistic world. (Learning Outcomes 2 and 4)

Course Requirements

1. *Class Attendance:* Class attendance is required. You are expected to attend all class meetings and to have assignments prepared when they are due. More than three absences will result in zero points for class participation. Each absence beyond that will result in a 5% deduction from your possible semester grade.
2. *Class Participation:* Participation does not mean mere presence in the classroom. Instead, it means active listening – that is, the willingness to engage in the back-and-forth of open-ended and reasoned conversations by being open to what others have to say, risking our opinions, asking questions, and surfacing disagreements. Such “active listening” is essential to being a community of scholars.
3. *Laptops and Other Communication Devices:* Please note that laptops and other communication devices can only be used during review and presentation days. On all other days their use ***is not*** allowed during class.

4. *Reading Assignments:* You are asked to study carefully all required readings by the day on which they appear on the projected course schedule. It is important to note that you are asked not merely to read all assigned materials but to study them. Such study may require several readings of the material.
5. *Class Time:* Class meetings will be, for the most part, a mixture of lecture and discussion. All class meetings will allow time for your questions.
6. *Notecards* – 10% of semester grade:
 - In order to aid class discussion of materials read for class, you are required to place a notecard in the appropriate folder on Blackboard by 11:59 p.m. the Saturday night before the discussion of upcoming week’s assigned materials.
 - On the notecard, you are to do two things: (1) in the first part, you are to write at least important questions which you have about the assigned reading materials for the upcoming week; and, (2) in the second part, you are to write a short response to the prior week’s classes – for example, you may write about something important you learned, about a critical reaction to something said in class, or about an issue that you would like the class to revisit.
 - A “Turnitin Assignment” folder exists for each day that cards are due. Please be sure to write you name on the cards as well as the date. Cards are to be place in the assigned “Turnitin” folder by 11:59 p.m. on the Saturday night before the week’s classes in which there are readings. **Late cards are not accepted.**
7. *Exams:* There will be three in-class exams during the semester. Review questions will be distributed at least one week prior to each exam.
8. *Final Paper:*
 - a. You are to write a thorough and well-reasoned paper (7-10 pages long) entitled “This I Believe” in which you will take a position on religion. You are to address this paper to the thinkers we read during the semester.
 - b. This paper is to be both academic (i.e., addressed to scholars in the disciplines found at any university) and personal.
 - c. By 11:59 p.m. on May 3, 2016 you are to place a digital copy of your paper in the Blackboard “Turnitin Assignment” folder for this course.
 - During the final week of classes (May 4-10) an optional social will be organized during which students will present and discuss their papers.

Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy

Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university.

Chapman University Students with Disabilities Policy

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services. If you will need to utilize your approved accommodations in this class, please follow the proper notification procedure for informing your professor(s). This notification process must occur more than a week before any accommodation can be utilized. Please contact Disability Services at (714) 516-4520 or (www.chapman.edu/students/student-health-services/disability-services) if you have questions regarding this procedure, or for information and to make an appointment to discuss and/or request potential accommodations based on documentation of your disability. Once formal approval of your need for an accommodation has been granted, you are encouraged to talk with your professor(s) about your accommodation

options. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Chapman University Diversity Policy

Chapman University is committed to fostering learning and working environments that encourage and embrace diversity, multiple perspectives, and the free exchange of ideas as important measures to advance educational and social benefits. Our commitment and affirmation are rooted in our traditions of peace and social justice and our mission of producing ethical and responsible global citizens. The term diversity implies a respect for all and an understanding of individual differences in age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

Methods of Evaluation

1. Evaluation and grading will be based on the following:

<u>Requirements</u>	<u>Percentage of Grade</u>
First Exam	20%
Second Exam	20%
Third Exam	30%
Class Participation	5%
Class Presentation	5%
Notecards	10%
Final Paper	10%

2. Grades will be assigned as follows:

A = 100-96; A- = 95-91; B+ = 90-88; B = 87-85; B- = 84-81;
C+ = 80-78; C = 77-75; C- = 74-71; D+ = 70-68; D = 67-65; D- = 64-61; F = below 60

Projected Schedule of Topics and Assignments

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics and Assignments</u>
January 29	Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Class members introduce themselves▪ Review syllabus: objectives/expectations of the course▪ General introduction to the course▪ View Alain de Botton: Religion for Atheists
January 31	Lucretius, Khayyam, and Hobbes <p>Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., <i>The Portable Atheist</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pages 1-6 – Lucretius: from <i>De Rerum Natura</i>▪ Pages 7-11 – Omar Khayyam: from <i>Rubaiyat</i>▪ Pages 12-20 – Thomas Hobbes: from <i>Leviathan</i>
February 5	Spinoza, Hume, Boswell <p>Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., <i>The Portable Atheist</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pages 20-25 – Benedict de Spinoza: from <i>Theological-Political Treatise</i>▪ Pages 27-45 – David Hume: from <i>The Natural History of Religion</i>▪ Pages 46-49 – James Boswell: <i>An Account of My Last Interview with David Hume, Esq.</i>

- February 7** **Shelly, Mill, Marx**
 Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*
- Pages 50-56 – Percy Bysshe Shelley: *A Refutation of Deism*
 - Pages 57-63 – John Stuart Mill: from *Autobiography*
 - Pages 64-74 – Karl Marx: from *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*
- February 12** **Eliot, Darwin**
 Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*
- Pages 75-92 – George Eliot: *Evangelical Teaching*
 - Pages 93-96 – Charles Darwin: from *Autobiography*
- February 14** **Stephen, France**
 Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*
- Pages 97-111 – Leslie Stephen: *An Agnostic’s Apology*
 - Pages 112-115 – Anatole France: *Miracle*
- February 19** **Twain, Conrad, Hardy, Goldman, Lovecraft**
 Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*
- Pages 116-118 – Mark Twain: “Thoughts of God” from *Fables of Man*
 - Pages 119-122 – Mark Twain: “Bible Teaching and Religious Practice” from *Europe and Elsewhere* and *A Pen Warmed Up In Hell*
 - Pages 123-125 – Joseph Conrad: *Author’s Note to The Shadow Line*
 - Pages 126-128 – Thomas Hardy: *God’s Funeral*
 - Pages 129-133 – Emma Goldman: *The Philosophy of Atheism*
 - Pages 134-137 – H. P. Lovecraft: *A Letter on Religion*
- February 21** **Van Doren, Mencken, Freud**
 Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*
- Pages 138-142 – Carl Van Doren: *Why I Am an Unbeliever*
 - Pages 143-146 – H. L. Mencken: *Memorial Service*
 - Pages 147-154 – Sigmund Freud: from *The Future of an Illusion*
- February 26** **Review**
- February 28** **First Exam**
- March 5** **Einstein, Orwell, Betjeman, Cohen**
 Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*
- Pages 155-165 – Albert Einstein: *Selected Writings on Religion*
 - Pages 166-167 – George Orwell: from *A Clergyman’s Daughter*
 - Pages 168-169 – John Betjeman: *In Westminster Abbey*
 - Pages 170-177 – Chapman Cohen: *Monism and Religion*
 - Pages 178-180 – Chapman Cohen: *An Old Story*
- March 7** **Russell, Larkin**
 Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*
- Pages 181-206 – Bertrand Russell: *An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish*

- Pages 207-208 – Philip Larkin: *Aubade*
- Pages 209-210 – Philip Larkin: *Church Going*

March 12

Gardner, Sagan

Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*

- Pages 211-217 – Martine Gardner: *The Wandering Jew and the Second Coming*
- Pages 218-225 – Carl Sagan: *The Demon-Haunted World*
- Pages 226-238 – Carl Sagan: *The God Hypothesis*

March 14

Updike, Mackie

Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*

- Pages 223-245 – John Updike: from *Roger's Version*
- Pages 246-266 – J. L. Mackie: from *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God*

March 19-21

Spring Break

March 26

Shermer, Ayer, Dennett, Templeton

Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*

- Pages 267-269 – Michael Shermer: *Genesis Revisited: A Scientific Creation Story*
- Pages 270-276 – A. J. Ayer: *That Undiscovered Country*
- Pages 277-281 – Daniel C. Dennett: *Thank Goodness!*
- Pages 282-284 – Charles Templeton: “A Personal Word” from *A Farewell to God*
- Pages 285-286 – Charles Templeton: *Questions to Ask Yourself*

March 28

Dawkins

Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*

- Pages 287-304 – Richard Dawkins: “Why There Almost Certainly Is No God” from *The God Delusion*
- Pages 305-306 – Richard Dawkins: “Gerin Oil” from *The God Delusion*
- Pages 307-310 – Richard Dawkins: “Atheists for Jesus” from *The God Delusion*

April 2

Review

April 4

Second Exam

April 9

Stenger, Dennett

Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*

- Pages 311-327 – Victor Stenger: “Cosmic Evidence” from *God: The Failed Hypothesis*
- Pages 328-332 – Daniel C. Dennett: “A Working Definition of Religion” from *Breaking Which Spell?*

- April 11** **Anderson, Jillette**
 Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*
- Pages 333-348 – Elizabeth Anderson: *If God Is Dead, Is Everything Permitted?*
 - Pages 349-350 – Penn Jillette: *There Is No God*
- April 16** **McEwan, Weinberg**
 Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*
- Pages 351-365 – Ian McEwan: *End of the World Blues*
 - Pages 366-379 – Steven Weinberg: “What About God” from *Dreams of a Final Theory*
- April 18** **Rushdie, Grayling, Ali**
 Read: Christopher Hitchens, ed., *The Portable Atheist*
- Pages 380-383 – Salman Rushdie: “Imagine There’s No Heaven”: A Letter to the Sixth Billionth World Citizen
 - Pages 473-476 – A. C. Grayling: “Can an Atheist Be a Fundamentalist?” from *Against All Gods*
 - Pages 477-480 – Ayaan Hirsi Ali: *How (and Why) I Became an Infidel*
- April 23** **The story we are enacting explains how things came to be this way**
 Read: Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*
- Pages 3-91
- April 25** **The law that governs the community of life**
 Read: Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*
- Pages 95-148
- April 30** **An alternative story for takers to enact**
 Read: Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*
- Pages 151-263
- May 1** ***The Scandal of Redemption***
- Read: Pages vii–37
- May 7** ***The Scandal of Redemption***
- Read: Pages 38-77
- May 9** ***The Scandal of Redemption***
- Read: 78-132
- May 16** **Final Exam (10:45-1:15)**
- May 19** Digital copy of your paper “This I Believe” is to be placed in the folder for this paper on Blackboard by 11:59 p.m.

Prepared by Carmichael Peters, August 2012
Revised by Carmichael Peters, January 2019