TIME AND LOCATION:
July 21- August 14 ~ MTWRF 1400-1550, 250C SCH (CRN 47294)

OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACT INFORMATION:
R 1200-1350 and by appointment; 246 Susan Campbell Hall (warneka@uoregon.edu)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course focuses on prevailing descriptions and explanations of “religious experience” and asks about the ways in which philosophical inquiry might be able to address that experience. We will set aside the conventional preoccupation with the essence and existence of God—what and whether God is—in order to ask about the persistent and undeniable fact of religiosity in human life. The fact that humans have always been oriented, in some way, toward a divine presence or a sacred space, however variable and manifold, is the starting point of our discussion. But how is this fact to be interpreted? Do we discover abiding features belonging to all sacred or religious experience, across different cultures and traditions, or is the very notion of the religious “as such” already misguided? Is the search for the “essential” character of religious experience already mistaken? To what extent and in what way can it be said that human life necessarily entails a certain kind an experience that is to be called religious? Or is the very idea of religious experience possible only on the basis of a prejudiced humanistic perspective belonging to the Western philosophical tradition.

In the first week we read essays by William James and Hans-Georg Gadamer. We begin with the opposition between faith and knowledge as it arises historically and consider how this opposition depends upon a conception of knowledge that is unique to modern science and technology. Do prevailing attempts to account for religious experience inevitably rely upon limited conceptions of faith and knowledge? Do we neglect the role of myth in religious traditions when we begin with this understanding of faith and knowledge? In this context both Gadamer and James point to the difficulty of accounting for the experiences of mystics and the traditions of mysticism.

Next we consider the phenomenon of faith as an existential choice or decision and how this relates to philosophical inquiry. Our starting point is Kant’s controversial claim that faith must be understood according to the demands of a moral practice that exceeds what we are able to know. Here we look at both F. W. J. Schelling’s rejection of Kant’s claim and Soren Kierkegaard’s unique account of faith. From here we are led to ask how contemporary philosophical inquiry has become critical of the theological prejudice that has defined the Western philosophical tradition, especially as this is articulated by Martin Heidegger.

In the third and fourth week we address possible criticisms of religious meaning by positioning religious practices within broader social and cultural contexts. Here we will consider the economic character of sacrifice, as well as the similarities between religious experiences and other, supposedly more “profane” experiences. If the “sacred” presupposes an opposition to what is “profane” or abject, how does this opposition come to be established. How does this opposition sustain itself when religion interpreted, for example, in Marxist and psychoanalytic traditions? Readings include George Bataille, Jacques Derrida and Slavoj Žižek.

The course is reading intensive and our discussions will be oriented toward an understanding of the text being dealt with each day. I do not plan on lecturing extensively, except as a way to prompt discussion. Readings for each day will be available either in the course packet or as .pdf files on Blackboard. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the material for that day. Please come to class prepared with at least three questions from the reading. As the course proceeds, I may find it helpful to post additional readings on Blackboard. These readings may be recommended or required. It is important that you make use of the materials posted on Blackboard. There will a break during class each day.
**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1) A number of our readings are available on Blackboard.
2) Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*
3) Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute*

The required texts that are not on Blackboard can be purchased at Black Sun Books on Hilyard street (2467 Hilyard St).

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

In addition to participation in classroom discussion, students must write two short papers, 1-2 pages long. The topics will be assigned. There will also be a take-home mid-term exam and a final exam. See the schedule below for dates.

**BREAK DOWN OF GRADE:**

| Participation | 30% |
| Papers        | 30% |
| Exams         | 40% |

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

On each day we have an assigned reading. This will be the text for discussion. Please come to class prepared to discuss this material. On each day I have also listed readings that I am recommending for your continued exploration of the topic. I will have these readings posted on Blackboard in Course Documents in the folder “Further Reading.”

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK ONE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>M    7.21 H. G. Gadamer</td>
<td>&quot;Kant and the Question of God&quot; from <em>Hermeneutics, Religion and Ethics</em>, 9-17</td>
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<td>FURTHER READING:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(1) Kant’s <em>Critique of Pure Reason</em>, 485-570 (B595-B732)</td>
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<td>(2) Kant, <em>Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason</em>, 65-73</td>
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<td>(3) Wood, &quot;Rational Theology&quot; in <em>The Cambridge Companion to Kant</em></td>
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<td>FURTHER READING:</td>
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<td>(1) Gadamer, &quot;Myth in the Age of Science&quot; in <em>Hermeneutics, Religion and Ethics</em>, 91-102</td>
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<td>W    7.23 W. James</td>
<td>&quot;The Religion of Healthy-Mindedness&quot; in <em>Varieties of Religious Experience</em>, 78-126</td>
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<td>FURTHER READING:</td>
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<td>(1) W. James, &quot;The Will to Believe&quot; in <em>The Will To Believe</em>, 1-31</td>
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<td>TH   7.24 W. James</td>
<td>&quot;Mysticism&quot; in <em>Varieties of Religious Experience</em>, 379-421</td>
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<td>FURTHER READING:</td>
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<td>(1) Suzuki, &quot;The Buddhist Conception of Reality,&quot; <em>The Buddha Eye</em></td>
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<td>(2) Nishitani, &quot;Science and Zen&quot; <em>The Buddha Eye</em></td>
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<td>(3) W. James, Conclusions and Postscript to <em>Varieties of Religious</em></td>
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SYLLABUS – PHIL320, PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION  
SUMMER 2014, WARNEK

Experience

F  7.25  Paper #1 assigned
F. W. J. Schelling  Philosophy and Religion, 3-16
FURTHER READING:
(1) Warnek, "Prolegomena to Monstrous Philosophy"
in Comparative and Continental Philosophy

WEEK TWO
M  7.28  Paper #1 due
S. Kierkegaard  The Sickness Unto Death, 5-42
FURTHER READING:
(1) A. J. Grunthaler, "Kierkegaard's Concept of Despair"
(2) C. Bellinger, "Summary of Kierkegaard's Sickness Unto
Death"

T  7.29  S. Kierkegaard
The Sickness Unto Death, 42-74
FURTHER READING:
(1) S. Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling
(2) K. Jaspers, "The Unconditional Imperative"

W  7.30  M. Heidegger
"The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics"
in Identity and Difference, 42-74
FURTHER READING:
(1) Vedder, "Ontotheology and the question of god\(s)\"
in Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts

TH  7.31  M. Heidegger
"The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics"
(continued)
FURTHER READING:
(1) Davis, "Heidegger on Christianity and divinity: a
chronological
compendium" in Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts
(2) Warnek, "The History of Being" in Martin Heidegger: Key
Concepts

F  8.1  Take-home exam assigned
G. Bataille  Erotism: Death and Sensuality, 7-25
FURTHER READING:
(1) Bataille, "The Notion of Expenditure" in Visions of Excess

WEEK THREE
M  8.4  Exam due
G. Bataille  Erotism: Death and Sensuality, 29-62
FURTHER READING:
(1) Bataille, "Sacrifices" in Visions of Excess
**T 8.5 G. Bataille**

*Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, 63-93

FURTHER READING:
(1) R. Gasché, selections from *Georges Bataille: Phenomenology and Phantasmatology*

**W 8.6 J. Derrida**

*The Gift of Death*, "Secrets of European Responsibility" and "Beyond: Giving for the Taking, Teaching and Learning to Give, Death"

FURTHER READING:
(1) Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the History of Philosophy*, selections

**TH 8.7 J. Derrida**

*The Gift of Death*, "Whom to Give to (Knowing Not to Know)"

FURTHER READING:
(1) R. Gasché, "European Memories: Jan Patočka and Jacques Derrida on Responsibility" in *Critical Inquiry*

**F 8.8 Paper #2 assigned J. Derrida**

*The Gift of Death*, "Tout Autre Est Tout Autre"

FURTHER READING:
(1) R. Gasché, "God, for example" in *Inventions of Difference*

**WEEK FOUR**

**M 8.11 Paper #2 due S. Žižek**

*The Fragile Absolute: or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* vii-xxx; 1-48

FURTHER READING:
(2) Recommended YouTube video with Žižek: "Why Only an Atheist Can Be a True Christian" (8 parts)
YouTube link to part 1 of 8

**T 8.12 S. Žižek**

*The Fragile Absolute*, 49-98

FURTHER READING:
(1) B. Bosteels, "Žižek and Christianity: Or the Critique of Religion after Marx and Freud" in *Žižek Now: Current Perspectives in Žižek Studies*

**W 8.13 S. Žižek**

*The Fragile Absolute*, 99-150

FURTHER READING:
(1) T. P. Brockelman, "Following Atheism: on a Debate in Psychoanalytic Theory" in *International Journal of Žižek Studies*

**TH 8.14**

FINAL EXAM ~ 3:15-5:15 (PLEASE NOTE THE TIME)
BIBLIOGRAPHY (And suggestions for further reading):


