

Alternative concepts of God

Advanced BA course
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God, naively conceived, is a benevolent gentleman with gray hair, living in the clouds. On a slightly less naive, but fairly prevalent, conception, God is a person (a self-conscious being with free will) who is not part of the physical world but has great influence over it. The course looks at alternative theologies that are distinctively different from the traditional one. Among other things, we'll consider the view that God is the cosmos as a whole (Spinozism), the theory that God is the unconscious source of all being, emanating the rest of reality from itself (Neoplatonism), and the contention that the major religions are human depictions of an underlying reality whose true nature is incomprehensible (John Hick's theological Kantianism). Looking at both ancient and modern sources, we'll investigate whether traditional monotheism has coherent alternatives, and whether those alternatives, assuming they exist, can undercut contemporary arguments for atheism, in particular, the argument from evil.

Requirements: attendance (80%), two response papers (at least 300 words each) with replies to objections (at least 300 words each).

Weekly schedule:

- 1 Introduction
- 2 God as the cosmic Will
Schopenhauer: *The World as Will and Representation* §26, §54.
- 3 God as the ineffable source of reality
Plotinus: *Enneades* V/2, VI/8.
- 4 The Form of the Good and Aristotle's Prime Mover
Plato: *Republic* 507b – 509b
Aristotle: *Metaphysics* Λ (1069–1076)
- 5 The Stoic God
Diogenes Laertius: The life of Zenon
- 6 Spinoza's substance
Spinoza: *Ethics*, part 1.
- 7 The Absolute in German Idealism
Fichte: Closer definition of the meaning of the divine idea.
- 8 Naturalistic pantheism
Brian Leftow: Naturalistic pantheism. In A. Buckareff and Y. Nagasawa (eds), *Alternative Concepts of God*.
- 9 The morally indifferent creator
Tim Mulgan: *Purpose in the Universe*, ch.9.

- 10 Theological Kantianism
John Hick: *An Interpretation of Religion*, ch.14
- 11 Trinitarianism
J. P. Moreland and W. L. Craig: *The Trinity*.