

## MOMENTS IN ATHEISM (BIG PROBLEMS 24600)

<http://pancake.uchicago.edu/~carroll/moments04/>

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Winter Quarter 2004  
TuTh 1:20–2:50  
Room: Judd 126

**Course description:** Atheism is as old as religion. As religion and its place in society have evolved throughout history, so have the standing of, and philosophical justification for, non-belief. This course will examine the intellectual and cultural history of atheism in Western thought from antiquity to the present. We will be concerned with the evolution of arguments for a non-religious worldview, as well as the attitude of society toward atheism and atheists.

**Course requirements:** 8–page research paper (40%), midterm (20%), final (40%).

**Grading policy:** Extensions granted with 48 hours notice.

### **Week 1: January 6 and 8: Christians and Pagans in the Ancient World**

Jan. 6: Introduction: Some notes on God and the ancient world.

Jan. 8: Democritus, Protagoras: Fragments

Anon., *The Dissoi Logoi*

Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, chapters 1,2,3,5

Porphyry against the Christians

### **Week 2: January 13 and 15: Faith and Reason in the Middle Ages**

R. Bacon,

Tertullian, "Apology for the Christians"

St. Augustine, from *Confession*

Gibbon, from *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

*Martyrdom of St. Perpetua*

R. Bacon, from *Compendium Studii Philosophiae*

Aquinas, from *Summa Theologica*

### **Week 3: January 20 and 22 The Clockwork Universe**

Selections from Copernicus, Calvin, Kepler, Bruno, Galileo

Galileo, "Considerations on the Copernican Opinion"

Polkinghorne, "Galileo and Darwin"

Newton, "The Argument for a Deity"

Buckley, from *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*

**Week 4: January 27 and 29: Enlightenment I**

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*  
Spinoza, from *The Ethics*  
Leibniz, *The Monadology*  
Voltaire, *Candide* and from *Philosophical Dictionary*

**Week 5: February 3 and 5: Enlightenment II**

Hume, *Of Miracles*  
Baron d'Holbach, from *Good Sense*  
De La Mettrie, *Man A Machine*  
Paine, "On the Religion of Deism"  
Kant, *Introduction to the Metaphysics of Morals*

**Tuesday, February 10: MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 6: February 12: The Argument from Design**

Paley, from *Natural Theology*  
Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

**Week 7: February 17 and 19: Darwin and Feuerbach**

Darwin, from *The Origin of Species* and *Autobiography*  
Huxley, "Agnosticism"  
Dawkins, "The Improbability of God"  
Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*  
Feb. 19: Class on Feuerbach led by Father Michael Buckley

**Feb. 20. Lecture by Father Michael Buckley: Atheism and Contemplation**

Franke Institute, 3 pm

**Papers due on MONDAY February 23 by 4:00 pm**

**Week 8: February 24 and 26: Unmasking Religion**

Marx, *Communist Manifesto* and *Theses on Feuerbach*  
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, from *The Gay Science* & *The Antichrist*  
Freud, *Future of an Illusion*

**Week 9: March 2 and 4: 20th Century Explorations: Advocacy to Existentialism**

Goldman, "The Philosophy of Atheism"  
O'Hair, "Atheism"  
Russell, "Why I am Not a Christian" and *Science and Religion*  
Dawkins, "Know-nothings, know-alls, and no-contests"  
Camus, *The Plague*

**Week 10: March 9: The Pointless Universe?**

Hawking, from *A Brief History of Time*

Weinberg, from *Dreams of a Final Theory*

Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, chapters 1 & 2

**Reading period and Final exams**

**Required Texts available at Seminary Coop  
(in addition to course packet)**

- \* **Thomas Aquinas, A Summa of the Summa: The Essential Philosophical Passages of the Summa Theologica**, ed. Peter Kreeft (Ignatius Press).
- \* **Albert Camus, The Plauge** (Vintage).
- \* **Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy** (Hackett).
- \* **Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity** (Prometheus).
- \* **Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion** (W.W. Norton).
- \* **David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion** (Penguin Classics, 1990).  
Also online at Project Gutenberg.
- \* **Immanuel Kant, Basic Writings** (Modern Library).
- \* **Gottfried Leibniz, The Monadology** (Pittsburgh).
- \* **Lucretius, On the Nature of Things** (Focus).
- \* **Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals** (Vintage).
- \* **Richard Rorty, Contingency, Irony, Solidarity** (Cambridge).
- \* **Bertrand Russell, Why I am Not a Christian** (Touchstone).
- \* **Voltaire, Candide** (Penguin).