

REL 4461 TOPICS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

W. V. QUINE'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

FALL 2023

INSTRUCTOR: DANIEL ALVAREZ

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we study W. V. Quine's philosophy of religion. In the last 60 years Quine (d. 2000) has emerged as arguably the most important Analytic philosopher of the 20th century. Although working within the context of Logical Positivism, one of the most anti-metaphysical philosophical traditions, since 1951 practically until his death, Quine began to articulate one of the most potent and revolutionary defenses of metaphysics that threatens, on my interpretation, to dissolve the boundary between science and speculative metaphysics, thus opening the door to the blurring of the boundary between religion and science, naturalism and non-naturalism.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class Presentation (2-page, 12 pt. font) delivered orally based on the assigned reading for the week.
2. Two short essays on topics distributed by instructor (2-3 pages each) on some aspect of Quine's philosophy, particularly on its implications for the philosophy of religion or metaphysics.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

1. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1936¹/1946²)
2. W. V. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (1953¹, 1961²) [FLPV]

Other reading material from Quine will be posted on Canvas.

RECOMMENDED ARTICLES

Recommended (or required) readings from Quine, and recommended articles and from authors critical of Quine's views, will be uploaded to Canvas.

For the research paper you must use at least three (3) articles from academic journals. The best place to search for articles is JSTOR.COM, which makes available the full text of the most important publications in the field of religion and philosophy. You can access and download the full texts from home logging in to JSTOR with you FIU Panther log in information. The recommended books listed above can be found in our library, although with the current Covid-19 crisis it might not be possible to physically visit or check out the book.

COURSE STRUCTURE

WEEK 1

The Logical Positivist Framework:

Required: A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1936), Chapter 1: "The Elimination of Metaphysics" (1936);

Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through the Logical Analysis of Language" (1932) [on Canvas]

WEEK 2

Required: Ayer, Chapter 6: "Critique of Ethics and Theology"

WEEK 3

Required: Quine, "On What There Is" (1948), in *From a Logical Point of View* (FLPV)

WEEK 4

Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1951): Analyticity (FLPV)

WEEK 5

Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism": Verification Theory and Reductionism I (FLPV)

WEEK 6

Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism": Verification Theory and Reductionism II (FLPV)

WEEK 7

Quine, "Posits and Reality" (1955) and "The Scope and Language of Science" (1957) [on Canvas]

WEEK 8

Quine, "Speaking of Objects" (1958) [on Canvas]

WEEK 9

Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized" (1969) I [on Canvas]

WEEK 10

Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized" II [on Canvas]

WEEK 11

Quine, "Whither Physical Objects" (1976); "Facts of the Matter" (1977) [both on Canvas]

WEEK 12

Quine, "Things and their Place in Theories" (1981) [on Canvas]

WEEK 13

Quine, "Two Dogmas Revisited" (1991) [on Canvas]

WEEK 14

Quine, "Naturalism, or Living Within One's Means" (1995) [on Canvas]

WEEK 15

Concluding Discussion