PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

1 year Master Track for Exploring a Discipline

- **Requirements**: BA in any academic discipline. If the student does *not* have a background in Philosophy or Theology, the student and coordinator will jointly compose a list of literature that the student will study in order to make up for any deficiencies
- **Language**: All classes are in English
- **Coordinator**: Dr. Rik Peels (Philosophy)
- **Credits**: 60.0 ECTS
- **Purpose**: To equip the student with sufficient knowledge and tools to explore important academic and societally relevant issues at the intersection of philosophy and religion, such as various challenges in contemporary hermeneutics, philosophy of religion, apologetics, and analytic theology. By the end of this year, the student will have an MA in theology and has the opportunity to continue his or her studies in the second year of a Research Master in Theology or a Research Master in Philosophy.

**Overview**:

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<td>Arguing for and against God’s Existence, 6.0 ECTS</td>
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**MA Seminar, 6.0 ECTS, level 400**

*Professors*: dr. S. Stoppels (Theology); dr. E.C.T. de Jongh (Theology); dr. E. van Staalduine-Sulman (Theology); prof. dr. P.B.A. Smit (Theology); prof. dr. F. Enns (Theology); prof. dr. M. Moyaert (Theology); dr. M. Klaver (Theology)

**Course contents**

The master seminar is the concluding module of the 1 year master and the last module of the research master’s second year. The module offers a context in which the student shows and reflects upon his or her academic and professional qualities in dealing with complex challenges the student is confronted with during internship and thesis research. The student should be able to: (1) identify and present complex
methodological, ethical, hermeneutical, and practical challenges, related to the intended profession; (2) develop a methodological, analytical, creative, and problem-solving approach to these challenges; (3) reflect critically on one’s own qualities as an academic professional / academic researcher in handling these challenges.

Teaching methods
Regularly small-group seminars, led by the subprogram’s coordinator, where students discuss actual challenges of the intended profession, formulated by the coordinator and/or the student, on the basis of his or her experiences during the internship. In the first semester the seminars will serve primarily to prepare for internship and thesis as well as ensuring communication between coordinator and students. In the second semester students will be expected to hand in descriptions and evaluations of actual cases, derived from internship experiences and research practices. These cases are discussed by fellow students and the coordinator. Students in the Spiritual Care stream will also be engaged in group supervision. In addition, guest lectures are offered on topics relevant for the future professional practice.

Literature
Literature will be announced by the subprogram’s coordinator.

Assessment
Grading will be based on a portfolio. Each subprogram will have its own portfolio. Students will be informed about the portfolio during the first meeting.

Research Skills, 6.0 ECTS, level 400

Professors: dr. E. van Staalduine-Sulman (Theology)

Course contents
This course is meant to let the student reflect on how to conduct research and what is necessary to make this research project a success. In order to reach this greater goal the student must be able to:

• know and apply The Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Practices;
• reflect on his/her own favourite learning style;
• find adequate literature for his/her own research project;
• recognize the difference between rhetorical and scientific argumentation;
• evaluate and write at different levels;
• evaluate literature that discusses his/her research topic;
• apply methodological literature;
• write a coherent, well-defined and methodologically correct research proposal;
• integrate feedback from two different professors.

Teaching methods
All students of Research Skills must attend:
1. all plenary lectures on argumentation.
2. one series of tutorials, which are appropriate to the chosen subject for the research proposal. In these series methodological issues will be dealt with, but
most of all the students will present their thesis proposals and receive feedback and suggestions to improve it.

Students who plan to do interviews must attend:
   3. one plenary session on interviewing. This session will take the place of one article/book chapter on methodology.

Literature

- Guidelines: *English Guidelines for Writing a Thesis ThRS*

Assessment

- Promotion or Position Paper (10%)
- Library searching (5%)
- Two reviews of the book by Van Eemeren et al. (15%)
- Analysis of three self-chosen scientific articles (15%)
- Review of two *methodological* chapters from Routledge Handbook (10%)
- Definitive research proposal (40%)

**Hermeneutics, 6.0 ECTS, level 400**

*Professors: dr. A. Zwiep (Theology) and prof.dr. M. Moyaert (Theology)*

**Course contents**

- Defining the Issues and Exploring the Field
- The Discovery of Historical Consciousness: Dilthey and Gadamer
- The Discovery of the Reader: Reception Aesthetics and Reader-Response Criticism: Iser, Jauss, Fish, Eco
- The Discovery of the Text as World: Structuralism (Rise and Fall) and Narrative Hermeneutics: Ricoeur
- The Discovery of the World as Text: Post-structuralism and Deconstruction: Barthes, Foucault, Derrida
- Deconstruction and Holy Writ: Caputo
- The Discovery of Gender: Feminist Hermeneutics
- The Discovery of Culture: Intercultural hermeneutics
- The Discovery of Power: Postcolonial Hermeneutics
Teaching methods
Lectures, reading assignments, literature study, intervision and work groups, research paper

Literature

Assessment
Write an academic paper (of approx. 3500 words) focused on the professional, ecclesial, or scholarly community about the relevance of [Gadamer or Ricoeur or Derrida or postcolonial/feminist hermeneutics] for the use and interpretation of a passage from the Bible, the Qur'an, or a philosophical text.

Faith and Reason, 6.0 ECTS, level 400
Professors: prof.dr. R. van Woudenberg (Philosophy), dr.ir. Jeroen de Ridder (Philosophy), prof.dr. D.M. Grube (Theology)

Course contents
Are faith and reason diametrically opposed, as contemporary commentators like Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett would have us believe? Or are they different, complementary, or perhaps even mutually supportive? In this course, we will explore some systematic perspectives on the relation between faith and reason. We will do so by closely reading selections from three ‘contemporary classics’ in analytic philosophy of religion and epistemology, to wit William Alston’s Perceiving God (Cornell UP, 1991), Alvin Plantinga’s Warranted Christian Belief (Oxford University Press, 2000), and Richard Swinburne’s Revelation (2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2007). Together, these three texts provide a solid introduction to religious epistemology and particularly what has come to be known as ‘reformed epistemology’. Since these works provide the starting point for many later discussions about religious epistemology, studying them carefully will put students in a good position to find their own way in later debates.

Teachings methods
Classes – three hours per week – will be taught as a mix between traditional lectures and interactive discussions, with presentations and active participation by students.

Assessment
• Three short assignments to test comprehension of the assigned readings (50%)
• Final paper of approximately 2,500 words in which students evaluate and interact with (a relevant selection of) the assigned readings (50%)

**Arguing for and Against God’s Existence, 6.0 ECTS, level 400**

*Professors: Dr.ir. E. Rutten (Philosophy)*

**Course contents**

Ever since Plato, philosophers have developed arguments for and against the existence of God. Well-known examples include Aristotle’s argument for the existence of an unmoved mover, Anselm’s argument for the existence of a being than which none greater can be imagined, Leibniz’s argument for the existence of a necessary being that is the cause of all contingents, and the argument against God’s existence from evil. With the rise of positivism in the second part of the nineteenth century and the decline of metaphysics that went with it, the interest in arguments for and against God’s existence faded away. However, the last decennia of the twentieth century witnessed a resurgence of metaphysics. This resulted in a revival of interest in these arguments. In this course, we study both traditional and contemporary arguments for and against God’s existence. Arguments for God's existence that are discussed include cosmological, teleological, ontological, moral, aesthetic, and modal-epistemic arguments. Arguments against God’s existence to be discussed include the argument from evil, the argument from God’s hiddenness, and the argument from allegedly incompatible divine attributes. We will also investigate the meaning and function of arguments for God’s existence. Are these arguments to be considered as proofs? Are they necessary for rational belief in God? How do they fit into a theistic worldview?

**Teachings methods**

There will be one three-hour session per week, where traditional lecture will be combined with interactive discussion.

**Assessment**

• One final, written exam (100%)

**The Nature and Character of God, 6.0 ECTS, level 400**

*Professors: Dr. R. Peels (Philosophy)*

**Course contents**

Systematic theology and philosophy of religion have spent a good deal of time and energy on the attributes of God that we find classical perfect-being theology: omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, omnibenevolence, necessity, immutability, eternity, aseitas. However, the various holy Scriptures and traditions of the three Abrahamic religions ascribe further properties to God and often deem these characteristic for God’s character and relationship with humans. Among them are God’s joy, sorrow, repentance, jealousy, anger, patience, and maybe even humor. Can we make sense of these character traits of God upon more systematic reflection? How do they relate to each other? Are they mere anthropomorphisms or do they truly say
something about God? How do they relate to the attributes of classical perfect-being theology? And what does paying attention to these properties mean for systematic theology, interreligious dialogue, and apologetics?

**Teachings methods**
There will be one three-hour session per week, where traditional lecture will be combined with interactive discussion.

**Assessment**
• Final paper of approximately 2,500 words in which students discuss one attribute of God and interact with a portion the relevant readings (50%)
• A final, written exam (50%)

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**Internship, 12.0 ECTS, level 500**

*Coordinator:* prof. dr. P.B.A. Smit (Theology)

**Thesis, 12.0 ECTS, level 500**

*Professors:* dr. S. Stoppels (Theology); dr. E.C.T. de Jongh (Theology); dr. E. van Staaldhuine-Sulman (Theology); prof. dr. P.B.A. Smit (Theology); prof. dr. F. Enns (Theology); prof. dr. M. Moyaert (Theology); dr. M. Klaver (Theology); prof.dr. S. Paas (Theology); prof.dr. D.-M. Grube (Theology); prof.dr. R. van Woudenberg (Philosophy); dr.ir. J. de Ridder (Philosophy); Dr.ir. E. Rutten (Philosophy). Dr. Rik Peels (Philosophy)