

Duquesne University
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Spring 2020

Honors Seminar: Faith & Reason

HONR 201-01

MWF 10:00-10:50

Fisher Hall 706

Mr. Daniel Cook

303-B College Hall, cookd4@duq.edu

Office hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 1:00 - 2:00 pm, or by appointment.

Course description: We might assume that faith begins where reason ends, that the proper use of reason demands we let go of faith, that faith and reason are fundamentally compatible with each other, or even that reason itself demands some kind of faith. In this writing intensive course, we will seek to understand the relationship between faith and reason by engaging seriously with various philosophical perspectives on the matter. We will begin thinking about the differences between faith and reason by reading Plato's *Euthyphro* and Descartes' *Meditations*. Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* will present us with an existential dilemma where religious morality seems to contradict rational morality. Carl Dreyer's film *Ordet* will help us to consider what is at stake in this contradiction. Bataille's *Theory of Religion* will articulate religion as a human response to the irreducible generosity of the universe we find ourselves in. By reading Simone Weil's poetic writings we will ask whether the love demanded by faith sharply distinguishes it from reason. We will finish the course with Alain Badiou's book on St. Paul, which offers an atheistic account of the role fidelity plays in our social and political lives.

Course objectives: This course aims to teach students how to read and enjoy works of philosophy, how to take seriously perspectives other than their own, and how to feel confident expressing philosophical positions and their own positions well both in speech and in writing. It aims to provide students with a basic understanding of philosophy and of the philosophical positions of some of the most important thinkers in the history of philosophy.

Learning outcomes: Students will be able to locate and understand key points in difficult philosophical texts, to produce concise but accurate interpretative essays, to communicate complex ideas clearly, effectively, and confidently, and they will be able to charitably and effectively argue both for and against various philosophical positions.

Course texts:

Plato, *Five Dialogues*, translated by G. M. A. Grube

René Descartes, *Meditations*, translated by Donald A. Cress

Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling / Repetition*, translated by Howard Hong & Edna Hong

Alain Badiou, *St. Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, translated by Ray Brassier

Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, translated by Robert Hurley (Zone Books)

+ Additional readings distributed on Blackboard.