

1000-F26; Religion in Crisis: The Philosophy of Religion After the Death of God - Class A S

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Spring Semester 2026

Course Content:

In this course, we will explore the possibility of religious conviction in a secularized world. Questions like these are central: In a world in which religious narratives and doctrines strike the contemporary mind as unbelievable as history or scientific explanation, upon what might the modern, educated person base her religious convictions? Are religious sensibilities ultimately expressions of a deep sense of morality? Is the religious attitude better described as a feeling or intuition for the infinite behind the finite world? Is personal religious conviction based on experience of the divine? Is contemporary faith an intellectually indefensible but nonetheless hopeful subjective decision to adopt religious traditions and doctrines?

This course will concentrate on the the evolution of philosophy of religion during the nineteenth with particular attention on the thought of Copenhagen's most famous philosophical mind, Søren Kierkegaard. Most of the authors we read argue that the philosophy of religion should avoid the temptation to justify religion solely in terms of rationality and that it ought to take into account the experiential aspects of religious life, as well. Our goal in this class is to gain a critical

appreciation of this kind of religious philosophy. We will study a handful of highly influential texts by Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, as well as Søren Kierkegaard.

Learning objectives

To be able to:

- Read and understand the texts on the course syllabus.
- Account for the major themes and key concepts in the philosophy of religion of Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel and Kierkegaard.
- Consider differences and similarities between the philosophies of religion presented in the course.
- Reflect on how the themes and concepts of the course can be of relevance for our understanding of the role of religion in contemporary society.

Course Instructor:

Mads Peter Karlsen, PhD, Associate Professor of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion, University of Copenhagen. Email: mpk@teol.ku.dk

Class Meetings:

Tuesdays 10:15-12:30, room 7C.1.05 (NB. First day of class will be January 27).

Language of instruction and discussion:

English. (Final papers, however, may also be written in Danish, Swedish, or Norwegian).

Streaming:

We plan on physical participation this semester, but the course will also be livestreamed, though the requirements for the research paper are changed significantly if you follow the course online.

Zoom link: <https://ucph-ku.zoom.us/j/4288458378?pwd=VktBT0JTLzB5czNoZkpoYTc5aUM5QT09> ↗ (<https://ucph-ku.zoom.us/j/4288458378?pwd=VktBT0JTLzB5czNoZkpoYTc5aUM5QT09>)

Expectations of the students:

The students are expected to have prepared themselves carefully for each class, that is, to have done the required reading and to think about issues, problems, and questions to be discussed in class. Moreover, the students are expected to engage in the discussions as well as the group work.

Requirements for DIS-students:

For undergraduate students (bachelor students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). The syllabus volume and content are determined by the teacher, and two papers are to be submitted to the teacher of each 4-5 pages, as well as a final major assignment, which has a size of 19,200-24,000 characters.

Requirements for KU-students (both Danish students and Exchange students):

For undergraduate students (bachelor students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). A final major assignment, which has a size of 24.000-28.800 characters. The assignments is assessed by the teacher and a grade is given in accordance with the 7-point grading scale. If participation takes place via streaming for more than 25% of the sessions, the following is required to pass the course: A final assignment assignment that has a scope of 36,000-48,000 characters.

For graduate students (kandidat/master students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). A final paper of 36.000-48-000 characters. The assignment is assessed by the teacher, and a grade is given in accordance with the 7-point grading scale. If participation takes place via streaming for more than 25% of the sessions, the following is required to pass the course: An assignment of 60,000-72,000 characters.

Course Evaluation for DIS students:

https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS COURSE REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddcwrap=1 Final paper: 45%

First short paper: 20%

https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS COURSE REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddcwrap=1

Second short paper: 20%

Attendance and participation: 15%

Course Evaluation for KU-students (both Danish students and Exchange students):

Final paper: 100%

GAI (Generativ Artificial Intelligence) Policy:

UCPH permits the use of GAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence) in written assignments. You are required to follow the UCPH rules for the use of GAI and include an GAI declaration with the final paper. You can find the GAI rules, the template for the GAI declaration, and guidelines for completing the template [here \(https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/90460/modules/541143\)](https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/90460/modules/541143). If you do not include an GAI declaration with the final paper, you will fail the class.

Plagiarism Policy:


In accordance with UCPH rules for academic ethics, there will be a no tolerance policy towards cheating and plagiarism. The submission of any paper which is not your own work will result in an automatic fail and may have severe consequences for your future studies

Recording Policy:

Recording of the classes is prohibited without the consent of all parties (i.e. all students and teacher) involved.

Readings:

Completion of reading assignments as scheduled is required and is a prerequisite for participating in class discussions.

For students who read Danish: Kierkegaards samlede værker, *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter (SKS)*, is available online at www.sks.dk  (<http://www.sks.dk>). I have provided references to *SKS* for the Kierkegaard readings (e.g., Danish: *SKS* 4, 148-151) in this reading plan. (Note: To see page breaks, place a checkmark in the middle box, next to *SKS*, on the top left-hand side of the screen).

Course texts:

Books to be purchased:

Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Cambridge, 1998. ISBN: 978-1-316-60402-1.

Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, Cambridge, 1996. ISBN: 978-0-521-47975-2.

Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Penguin, 1985. ISBN: 978-0-140-44449-0.

Primary texts on Absalon (under [Moduls](#) (<https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/90460/modules/541102>)):

Immanuel Kant, selected texts from, *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason*.

G.W.F. Hegel, "Reason and Religious Truth: Hegel's Forward to Hinrichs' Die Religion im inneren Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft (1822)"

G.W.F. Hegel, "Christianity" and "Reformation" from *Philosophy of History*.

Background material (optional and additional reading)

Allen W. Wood, *Kant and Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2020. (<https://doi-org.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/10.1017/9781108381512> ↗ (<https://doi-org.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/10.1017/9781108381512>))

Jon Stewart, *An introduction to Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2022. (<https://doi-org.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/10.1093/oso/9780192842930.001.0001> ↗ (<https://doi-org.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/10.1093/oso/9780192842930.001.0001>))

John Lippitt, *The Routledge Guidebook to Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling*, London: Routledge 2015. (<https://doi-org.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/10.4324/9781315673691> ↗ (<https://doi-org.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/10.4324/9781315673691>))

Skjul alle

Vis fremgang

↗ Eksporter fagindhold

✔ Offentliggør alle ▾

+ Modul



▾ SESSION 1: What Does the "The Death of God" Mean?



Required reading



Merold Westphal, The Emergence of Modern Philosophy of Religion (in A Companion to Philosophy of Religion - 2010 - Taliaferro).pdf



Friedrich Nietzsche The Gays Science §125 & §343.pdf



Reading Questions 1



Optional reading



What is Philosophy of Religion - Pattison.pdf



Power Point



Session 1 (RC) FS 2026.pptx



▾ SESSION 2: Kant: On arguments for and postulate of the existence of God



Required reading




 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, "the-ideal-of-pure-reason", Cambridge University Press 2013 (p. 563-569)



 The Ontological Argument - The_Kant_Dictionary.pdf



 Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, "dialectic_of_pure_practical_reason", Cambridge University Press 2015 (p. 100-107)



 Reading Questions 2



Optional reading



 Allen W. Wood, Rational theology moral faith and religion. - Wood.pdf



Additional reading



 Philosophy of religion after the death of God - Jaeschke.pdf



Power Point



 Session 2 (RC) FS 2026.pptx



▼ SESSION 3: Kant: Religion and Moral Duty, part 1



First short paper (hand out)



Required reading



Kant, "Preface" and "The Victory of the Good Principle over the Evil Principle, and the Founding of a Kingdom of God on Earth" ("Division One") in Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason. p. 39-48 + 125-152



Reading Questions 3



Optional reading



Allen W. Wood, Ethical Community and the Church



Additional reading



Allen W. Wood - kant-and-religion-roundtable.pdf



Power Point



Session 3 (RC) FS 2026.pptx



▼ SESSION 4: Kant: Religion and Moral Duty, part 2.



Required reading



Kant, "The Victory of the Good Principle over the Evil Principle, and the Founding of a Kingdom of God on Earth" ("Division Two") in Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason. p. 152-172



 **Reading Questions 4**



Optional reading



 **Allen W. Wood, Ethical Community and the Church**



Power Point



 **Session 4 (RC) FS 2026.pptx**



 **▼ SESSION 5: Schleiermacher: Religious Intuition and Feeling, part 1**



Required reading



Friedrich Schleiermacher, "First Speech" in On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers.



 **Reading Questions 5**



Optional reading



Richard Crouter, Introduction, p. xi-xxxix (in Schleiermacher On Religion)



Additional reading



 Theodore Vial, On Schleiermacher in Routledge Handbook on philosophy of religion.pdf



Power Point



 Session 5 (RC) FS 2026.pptx



 **SESSION 6: Schleiermacher: Religious Intuition and Feeling, part 2**



Second short paper (Hand out)



Required reading



Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Second Speech" and "Fourth Speech" in On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers.



 Reading Questions 6



Optional reading



 Anschauung and Intuition again - Vial.pdf



 Individuality and sociability in Schleiermachers concept of church - Grab.pdf



Power Point





Session 6 (RC) FS 2026.pptx



▼ SESSION 7: Hegel: Philosophy of Religion



Required reading



Hegel, Lectures on Philosophy of History (Christianity Reformation).pdf



Optional reading



Jon Stewart, Hegel's Philosophical Interpretation of Christianity



Power Point



Session 7 (RC) FS 2026.pptx



▼ SESSION 8: Hegel: Faith and Reason



Required reading



Hegel, Reason and Religious Truth Forword to Hinrichs Die Religion im inneren Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft.pdf



Merold Westphal, Introduction (to Hegel's Foreword - included in the Hegel file)



Optional reading



 Hegels Criticism of Schleiermacher in the Forword - Merklinger.pdf



Additional reading



 Hegel, Philosophy of Religion (intro).pdf



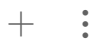
Power Point



 Session 8 (RC) FS 2026.pptx



▼ SESSION 9: Kierkegaard: Faith and Madness



Required reading



Søren Kierkegaard, "Preface," "Attunement," and "Speech in Praise of Abraham," in Fear and Trembling (Penguin English edition, pp. 41-56 (Danish edition: SKS 4, s. 99-120)



 John Lippitt, Introduction, Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Kierkegaard and Fear and Trembling (pp. 1-17)





Genesis, chapter 22



Reading Questions 9



Optional reading



John Lippitt, Chapter 2, Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Kierkegaard and Fear and Trembling



Power Point



Session 9 (RC) FS 2026.pptx



Second short paper (hand out)



▼ Session 10: Kierkegaard: Faith



Required Reading



Søren Kierkegaard, "Preamble from the Heart," in Fear and Trembling (Penguin English edition, pp. 57-82 (Danish: SKS 4, s. 121-147)



Reading Questions 10



Optional reading



 John Lippitt, Chapter 3, Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Kierkegaard and Fear and Trembling ✓  ⋮

Power Point ✓ ⋮

 Session 10 (RC) FS 2026.pptx ✓  ⋮

⋮
▼ SESSION 11: Kierkegaard: Faith and Ethics ✓ ▼
+ ⋮

Required reading ✓ ⋮

Søren Kierkegaard, "Problemata 1-2," in Fear and Trembling (Penguin English edition, pp. 83-108 (Danish: SKS 4, s. 148-171) ✓ ⋮












 Reading Questions 11 ✓  ⋮








Optional reading ✓ ⋮












 John Lippitt, Chapter 4, Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Kierkegaard and Fear and Trembling ✓  ⋮

Power Point ✓ ⋮

 Session 11 (RC) FS 2026.pptx ✓  ⋮

 ▼ Background Material	 + 
 Optional and Additional Readings	  
 The Place of God in Post-Kantian Philosophy - Mulhall (in Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy).pdf	  

 ▼ Final paper	 + 
 Final paper 14. maj 0 point	  

 ▼ Electronic Ressources about Absalon and CUL	 + 
 Absalon help for students - see your Study Page at KUnet  (https://intranet.ku.dk/)	 
 Books and journals for your study from Copenhagen University Library  (http://kub.kb.dk/c.php?g=514341&p=3514066&preview=8882aa68f366075fe92c490f6da2733c)	 

 ▼ GAI Rules and Declaration	 + 
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Links

