



Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

Comparing Theologies and Philosophies of Religion

Course Code	G_BATRSCC203
Credits	6
Period	P4
Course Level	200
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Religion and Theology
Course Coordinator	prof. dr. G. van den Brink
Examiner	prof. dr. G. van den Brink
Teaching Staff	prof. dr. G. van den Brink
Teaching method(s)	Lecture

Course Objective

After finishing this course, the student has gained:

- historical knowledge: the student has become familiar with mainlines from the history of theological and philosophical thinking on "the big questions".
- dialogical knowledge: the student has acquired elementary knowledge of important issues of dialogue, both within and between (mainly Western) monotheistic and (mainly Eastern) non-monotheistic religious traditions.
- philosophical insight: the student has learned to reflect on key questions in the philosophy or religion from a variety of angles (e.g. the existence of God, the problem of evil, the relationship between science and religion, religious pluralism, etc.).
- systematic-theological skills: the student has learned to navigate the paradigmatic differences between various belief systems (including secular/atheistic ones) and assess them in light of trans-paradigmatic notions of rationality.
- hermeneutical skills: the student has learned to understand the role of their own theological and philosophical assumptions and has learned to relate these in meaningful ways to those of others across religious boundaries.

Course Content

This course familiarizes students with the various approaches within (systematic) theologies and (analytical) philosophies of religion. Whereas due recognition of the role played in religions of non-cognitive factors (rituals etc.), its main focus will be on religious beliefs and experiences as well as on religions as comprehensive forms of life. It offers basic access and in-depth insight into various approaches to the "big questions" (or issues of ultimate concern): where do we come from, what is our human role on earth, do we have a soul and what would that mean, what eschatological future (if any) can we envisage, what is the meaning of it all, is it possible to make a rational choice between the various religious belief systems, what is the good life, or a "life worth living", according to various religious traditions? Et cetera.

After a brief introduction, special attention will be given, among other topics, to religious realism versus religious non-realism (across religious traditions), the nature and epistemic value of religious experience, the relation between faith and reason, arguments for and against theism, how to envisage divine action, the problem of evil, the (im?)possibility of miracles, life after death, religious diversity and religious ethics. Without extensively going into the details of particular religious traditions, a variety of theological and philosophical perspectives will be brought to bear on these issues, and the students will be challenged to navigate their own course between those in thoughtful ways.

Additional Information Teaching Methods

Lectures and seminars

Method of Assessment

Oral presentations during the course (20%) and a written final exam (80%); sufficient attendance (min. 80%) and

active participation in the classes are *conditiones sine qua non*.

Literature

Michael L. Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*, 5th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Additional Information Target Audience

Students from all or none religious traditions (seminaries, faculties etc.) are welcome to follow this course.

Explanation Canvas

All specific information will be provided on Canvas.

Recommended background knowledge

Preferably the course "World religions" in period 1 of the TRS-program has been successfully finished.