

PHL 320 GOD AND PERSONS: PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS
SPRING 2006, Section A MWF 9:30-10:20, HC 308

Dr. John W. Carlson

Office Hours: HC 106, MTuWThF 10:30-12:30,
and by arrangement.

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Course Content and Objectives

This course introduces the student speculative philosophy in what has been termed the “perennial” (or, by the late Pope John Paul II, the “enduringly valid”) tradition. Speculative philosophy treats issues about the way things ultimately are—with special reference to being, the human person, and God. As noted in the text’s Preface, in earlier decades the issues in question typically were covered in two or even three separate, semester-long courses. The objective of our course is to treat the essential elements of the perennial philosophy in a one-semester format.

Students will be asked to master specific philosophical terms and positions (especially ones developed by historically important thinkers such as Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas). More importantly, students will be asked to engage in critical reflection on the perennial tradition as it seeks to renew itself and demonstrate its relevance for contemporary women and men.

Text and Other Materials

John W. Carlson, *Understanding Our Being* (2006) – to be distributed in three stages in class.

Handouts from other authors, including ones who challenge the perennial tradition, also will be distributed. News reports, websites, and other items of interest will be distributed or mentioned as well.

Written Work and Grading

Students will be asked to turn in, in paper or electronic form, “journals” every other Friday (a total of seven submissions, four before and three after Spring Break). In these journals students will respond critically to “Questions for Reflection” listed in the

text. Each journal submission will count 10% toward the final grade. Journals turned in late will be penalized at a rate of 2 points per calendar day.

There will be a comprehensive final exam, which will involve short essay questions taken from a longer list that is assembled and distributed throughout the semester. This exam, scheduled for Monday, May 1, at 10 a.m., will count 30% toward the final grade.

Numerical averages will be converted to letter grades as follows:

- A 93 – 100
- B+ 89 – 92
- B 85 – 88
- C+ 80 – 84
- C 75 – 79
- D 70 – 74
- F 69 and below

Attendance and Academic Integrity Policies

Generally speaking, attendance and participation in class sessions are required. Each student will be allowed two unexcused absences. (Excused absences include University sponsored travel, as well as documented emergencies and health issues.) Beginning with the third unexcused absence, each such absence will entail a deduction of one point from the student's final average.

I do not anticipate the need to cancel any class, beyond those specified in the University's academic calendar, or those dictated by University officials in the case of hazardous weather conditions. Should a need to cancel class arise, I shall endeavor to notify all class members in advance by e-mail.

As indicated in various official publications, academic integrity is a "given" at Creighton University. Any violation of academic integrity will entail a grade of "0" on the work (journal submission or exam) in question. However, my genuine hope is that you will find our issues so interesting and compelling that you will not even be tempted to such violations.

In short, I look forward to a mutually engaging, and intellectually challenging, search for "understanding our being"!