Course description: Atheism is as old as religion. As religion and its place in society have evolved throughout history, so have the standing of, and philosophical justification for, non-belief. This course will examine the intellectual and cultural history of atheism in Western thought from antiquity to the present. We will be concerned with the evolution of arguments for a non-religious worldview, as well as the attitude of society toward atheism and atheists.

Course requirements: 8-page research paper (40%), midterm (20%), final (40%).

Grading policy: Extensions granted with 48 hours notice.

Week 1: January 6 and 8: Christians and Pagans in the Ancient World
Jan. 6: Introduction: Some notes on God and the ancient world.
Jan. 8: Democritus, Protagoras: Fragments
           Anon., The Dissoi Logoi
           Lucretius, On the Nature of Things, chapters 1, 2, 3, 5
           Porphyry against the Christians

Week 2: January 13 and 15: Faith and Reason in the Middle Ages
R. Bacon,
Tertullian, "Apology for the Christians"
St. Augustine, from Confession
Gibbon, from Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire
Martyrdom of St. Perpetua
R. Bacon, from Compendium Studii Philosophiae
Aquinas, from Summa Theologica

Week 3: January 20 and 22 The Clockwork Universe
Selections from Copernicus, Calvin, Kepler, Bruno, Galileo
Galileo, "Considerations on the Copernican Opinion"
Polkinghorne, "Galileo and Darwin"
Newton, "The Argument for a Deity"
Buckley, from At the Origins of Modern Atheism
Week 4: January 27 and 29: Enlightenment I
Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*
Spinoza, from *The Ethics*
Leibniz, *The Monadology*
Voltaire, *Candide* and from *Philosophical Dictionary*

Week 5: February 3 and 5: Enlightenment II
Hume, *Of Miracles*
Baron d’Holbach, from *Good Sense*
De La Mettrie, *Man A Machine*
Paine, "On the Religion of Deism"
Kant, *Introduction to the Metaphysics of Morals*

Tuesday, February 10: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 6: February 12: The Argument from Design
Paley, from *Natural Theology*
Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

Week 7: February 17 and 19: Darwin and Feuerbach
Darwin, from *The Origin of Species* and *Autobiography*
Huxley, "Agnosticism"
Dawkins, "The Improbability of God"
Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*
Feb. 19: Class on Feuerbach led by Father Michael Buckley

Feb. 20. Lecture by Father Michael Buckley: Atheism and Contemplation
Franke Institute, 3 pm

Papers due on MONDAY February 23 by 4:00 pm

Week 8: February 24 and 26: Unmasking Religion
Marx, *Communist Manifesto* and *Theses on Feuerbach*
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, from *The Gay Science & The Antichrist*
Freud, *Future of an Illusion*

Week 9: March 2 and 4: 20th Century Explorations: Advocacy to Existentialism
Goldman, "The Philosophy of Atheism"
O’Hair, "Atheism"
Russell, "Why I am Not a Christian" and *Science and Religion*
Dawkins, "Know-nothings, know-alls, and no-contacts"
Camus, *The Plague*
Week 10: March 9: The Pointless Universe?
    Hawking, from *A Brief History of Time*
    Weinberg, from *Dreams of a Final Theory*
    Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, chapters 1 & 2

**Reading period and Final exams**

**Required Texts available at Seminary Coop**
(in addition to course packet)


* Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett).


* Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* (Focus).


