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  
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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 kinds 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. We will begin thinking about the difference between faith and reason by reading Plato’s *Euthyphro* and Descartes’ *Meditations*. Søren Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling* will present 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 ask whether the love involved in 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 faith plays in our 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 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 (Hackett Publishing Co.)  
Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling / Repetition*, translated by Howard Hong & Edna Hong  
Alain Badiou, *St. Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, translated by Ray Brassier  
+ Additional readings distributed on Blackboard.