

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Iowa State University

For Curriculum Committee use		
Semester(s) this course was previously offered:	Proposal Number:	S11-20

COURSE PROPOSAL

Please complete this form with the understanding that you may revise the course description and topics before the catalog is finalized. To see a catalog from last semester, go to the OLLI at ISU Web site: www.isualum.org/olliatisu

If you are completing this form using Microsoft Word, note that it is done in tables form. To see (or to hide) the gridlines, click the Table menu and click Show Gridlines (or Hide Gridlines).

1. **Course title:** Great Questions: Skeptics and Believers

2. **General field of interest** (e.g., Science, Music): Philosophy, Psychology

3. **Curriculum Committee contact person:** Rizzo

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

4. **Instructor or coordinator:** Rizzo

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Brief background of instructor (all or part of this will be used in the catalog):

Frank Rizzo is professor emeritus at ISU; he held faculty positions at the Universities of Illinois, Washington, and Kentucky. He has won 10 awards for outstanding teaching and two international medals for his research in applied mathematics. Frank has facilitated several recent OLLI courses, in philosophy and psychology.

5. **Course description** that can be used to advertise the course in the catalog (you may revise this later if you wish).

GREAT QUESTIONS: Skeptics and Believers

We know that some ideas and religious beliefs about the origins, nature, and purpose of life and of the universe, with God as the source of it all, can provide meaning, comfort, community, and expectations for a better life, even an afterlife, for many people. Unfortunately, we know too that different “articles of faith” can lead to unreasonable dogmas and exclusive incompatible claims, some of which are not benign, around which people tend to organize themselves, leading often to hostility and deadly conflict. Witness the historical record and, sadly, even the current daily news. Our objective for this course in Great Questions is to provide, if we can, some understanding and insight into the problems inherent in the diverse and strongly-held beliefs about religion, the nature of God, and God's very existence.

In particular, we will examine changes in ideas and opinions, about religions and concepts of God, expressed, over the last 400 years, by a variety of thinkers, especially western philosophers: Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Hume and Kant; and we'll consider the more recent biting criticism, of religious-faith claims, made by the “new atheists” Dawkins, Dennett, and Harris.

Our guide in all of this is Professor Tyler Roberts, from Grinnell College, here in Iowa. He studied

philosophy in Freiburg, Germany, has taught at Boston College, and at Harvard University, from which he received his M.T.S. and Th.D degrees. He brings extraordinary depth and clarity to the issues above. I have a number of lectures on video, 30 min. each, by Professor Roberts, with permission from the Teaching Company www.TEACH12.com to share them with this class. Typically, we'll have a short break after one of the videos, followed by lively but civil discussion. Please bring your thoughts and your respect, for ideas sincerely-held, by others in the class.

6. **Specific topics** to be covered in the number of classes proposed:

Changes in Religious Thought and Concepts of God, over the last 400 years.

This paragraph should be on page 2. If you needed more space than was provided on page 1, this paragraph will have moved to page 3. To move it back to page 2, click before the first word of this paragraph and press Backspace to remove the page break.

7. Preferred

class size: 15 or less 16-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 55 or more

8. Preferred session

(include year) : Sept.-Nov. Jan.-Feb. March-May X

9. Preferred number of weeks and sessions:

4 weeks 6 weeks 8 weeks
 Once a week Twice a week

10. Check preferred class time. Put N/A where you are not available.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Comments
9:00-10:30					Let's Discuss Preferred Time
11:00-12:30					
1:00-2:30					
3:00-4:30					

11. Recommended textbook (if any): _____

Where to obtain: _____
 Cost of textbook: _____
 Students will pay: Instructor OLLI at ISU when registering

12. Copying:

If a large quantity of printed materials is proposed, materials may be offered as a packet to be handed out at the beginning of the semester. Cost of printing, if substantial, may be added to cost of course.

Estimated number of pages to be copied for each session: Six Pages

13. Requested equipment

Please check choices. (A more detailed form will be provided for your use before classes begin.)

DVD player LCD projector 35mm slide projector
 VHS player Elmo (opaque) projector Lapel microphone
 CD player Overhead transparency projector Laser pointer

14. Please list any potential guest presenters and city in which they live:

15. Is travel reimbursement requested? Yes No