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ATHEISM (RELS 3000-001)
TR 2:00-3:15 in Denny 202
Fall 2012



- [News forum](#)
- [Daja's list and other things](#)
- [Extra credit opportunity](#)
- [Glossary of Atheism/Unbelief/Freethought/Humanism](#)

COURSE BASICS

- [Course disclaimer and description of the academic study of religion](#)
- [Course description and goals](#)
- [Expectations and grading](#)
- [Attendance and participation](#)
- [Office hours](#)
- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Disability Services](#)

ASSIGNMENTS

- [Readings and Reading Response Assignments](#)
- [Six Reading Habits](#)
- [Guide to reading primary sources](#)
- [Discussion leaders and devil's advocates](#)
- [Book review assignment](#)
- [Book review guidelines](#)
- [End-of-semester debate](#)
- [DEBATE TOPICS AND SIDES](#)
- [Schedule and rules for debates](#)
- [Position paper guidelines](#)

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION BOARDS

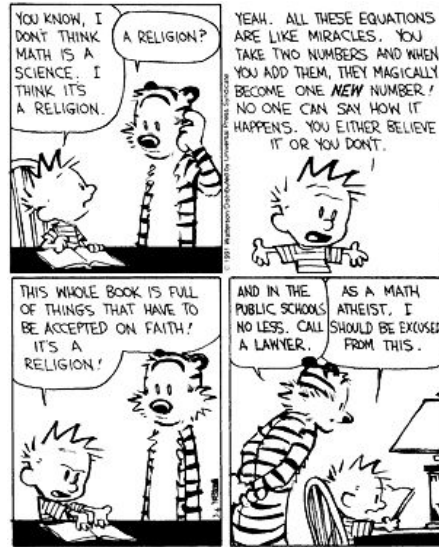
- [Semester-long discussion: Atheism is a religion like . . .](#)
- [Semester-long discussion: Atheism is a religion because . . .](#)

[Attendance](#)

1

Tuesday, August 21 and Thursday, August 23
INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE



**BACKGROUND READING**

Thursday, August 23: Walters, Introduction, pp. 1-9, and Hitchens, Introduction, pp. xiii-xxvi.

[Short video: How not to conduct class discussions](#)

[Short video: Why we need better religion journalists](#)

[Questions to think about](#)

RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS

[Response Assignment: DUE DATE EXTENDED TO Thursday, August 30 - Walters, Introduction, pp. 1-9. \(due before class\)](#)

[Response Assignment: Thursday, August 23 - Hitchens, Introduction, pp. xiii-xxvi \(due before class\)](#)

[Tuesday, August 21 - In Class: Do I Believe in God and Why?](#)

[Answers to "ism" definition match-ups](#)

2

Tuesday, August 28 and Thursday, August 30
WHAT IS ATHEISM?

a·the·ism

[ey-thee-iz-uhm]

無
神
論

a lack of belief
in the existence of
God or gods

**That is the entire
meaning of atheism.**



Atheism is not a religion, it is not a belief system.
Atheism is nothing sinister, and nothing to fear.
When it comes to Zeus, we are all atheists.

BetterThanFaith.com Never Stop Thinking


READINGS:**Tuesday, August 28th:**


- o Walters, pp. 9-22
- o Carl Van Doren, "Why I Am An Unbeliever," pp. 138-142
- o Emma Goldman, "The Philosophy of Atheism," pp. 129-33


Thursday, August 30th:


- o Walters, pp. 23-31 (Mary presents)

- o Video and podcast (links below)


 [Questions to think about](#)


 [Required video: "Lack of Belief in Gods" \(10 minutes\)](#)


 [Required podcast: Anthony Grayling on Atheism](#)


 [Recommended video: James J. O'Donnell on "What is a god?"](#)


RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS


 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, August 28 - Walters, pp. 9-22 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, August 28 - Carl Van Doren, "Why I Am An Unbeliever," pp. 138-142 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, August 28 - Emma Goldman, "The Philosophy of Atheism," pp. 129-33 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Thursday, August 30 - Walters, pp. 23-31 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Thursday, August 30 - Required video: "Lack of Belief in Gods" \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Thursday, August 30 - Required podcast: Anthony Grayling on Atheism \(due before class\)](#)

3

Tuesday, September 4 and Thursday, September 6: THE ATHEIST WORLDVIEW






READINGS


Tuesday, September 4th:


- o Walters, pp. 32-46
- o H.P. Lovecraft, "A Letter on Religion," pp. 134-137 (Gabi presents)
- o Penn Jillette, "There is No God," pp. 349-50 (Paige presents; Mary is devil's advocate)


Thursday, September 6th: Class cancelled for DNC (readings moved to next week)

- o  [Highly recommended series: Atheism: A Rough History of Disbelief \(link to first in three-part series\)](#)
- o  [Recommended video: Varieties of Nonbelief](#)
- o  [Questions to think about](#)

RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 4 - Walters, pp. 32-46 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 4 - H.P. Lovecraft, "A Letter on Religion," pp. 134-137 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 4 - Penn Jillette, "There is No God," pp. 349-50 \(due before class\)](#)

4

Tuesday, September 11 and Thursday, September 13 REFUTING THEISTIC PROOFS

**WE ARE ALL ATHEISTS
ABOUT MOST GODS.
SOME OF US JUST GO ONE GOD FURTHER.**

**THERE'S PROBABLY NO GOD.
NOW STOP WORRYING AND ENJOY YOUR LIFE.**

www.HUGBO.ORG.UZ
www.BANANAS.ORG.UZ
www.KAZAN.ORG.UZ


READINGS


Tuesday, September 11th:


- o Walters, pp. and 46-52 and 53-60
- o Anatole France, "Miracle," pp. 112-15 (Loren presents)
- o Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Refutation of Deism," pp. 50-56 (Honey presents; Ray is devil's advocate)
- o Michael Shermer, "Genesis Revisited: A Scientific Creation Story," pp. 267-69


Thursday, September 13th:

- o Walters, pp. 61-73
- o Carl Sagan, "The God Hypothesis," pp. 226-38 (Julia presents; Hannah is devil's advocate)
- o Victor Stenger, "Cosmic Evidence," pp. 311-27 (Trent presents; Paige is devil's advocate)


 [Required video: Banana as the Atheist's Nightmare](#)


 [Required Video: Peanut Butter: The Atheist's Nightmare](#)


 [Recommended short video: A Sign for Atheists!](#)


 [Questions to think about](#)


RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS


 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 11 - Walters, pp. 46-52 \(due before class\)](#)


 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 11 - Walters, pp. 53-60 \(due before class\)](#)


 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 11 - Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Refutation of Deism," pp. 50-56 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 11th - Michael Shermer, "Genesis Revisited: A Scientific Creation Story," pp. 267-69 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 11 - Anatole France, "Miracle," pp. 112-15 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Thursday, September 13 - Walters, pp. 61-73 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Thursday, September 13 - Victor Stenger, "Cosmic Evidence," pp. 311-27 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Thursday, September 13 - Carl Sagan, "The God Hypothesis," pp. 226-38 \(due before class\)](#)

5

Tuesday, September 18 and Thursday, September 20
WHY GOD CAN'T EXIST



READINGS

Tuesday, September 18th:

- o Walters, pp. 74-85
- o Antony Flew, The Parable of the Invisible Gardener (link below) (Colin presents; Julia is devil's advocate)

- o H.L. Mencken, "Memorial Service," pp. 143-46 (Jonathan presents; Chavis is devil's advocate)


Thursday, September 20th:


- o Walters, pp. 85-94
- o Richard Dawkins, "Why There Almost Certainly Is No God," pp. 287-304 (Daja presents; Loren is devil's advocate)
- o Charles Templeton, "Questions to Ask Yourself," pp. 285-86 (Ashley presents; Patrick is devil's advocate)


 [Required video: The Best Optical Illusion in the World](#)


 [Antony Flew. Parable of the Gardener](#)


RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS


 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 18 - Walters, pp. 74-85 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 18 - Video: Antony Flew, The Parable of the Invisible Gardener \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 18 - H.L. Mencken, "Memorial Service," pp. 143-46 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Thursday, September 20 - Walters, pp. 85-94 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Thursday, September 20 - Richard Dawkins, "Why There Almost Certainly Is No God," pp. 287-304 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Thursday, September 20 - Charles Templeton, "Questions to Ask Yourself," pp. 285-86 \(due before class\)](#)

6

Tuesday, September 25 and Thursday, September 27**CAMPUS TALK**

with

Ed Buckner, former President of [American Atheists](#),
and Jay Lucas, Baptist Preacher


"An Avowed Atheist and a Baptist Preacher Talk About Whether the U.S. Is
-- Or Should Be --
A Christian Nation"


Thursday, September 27th at 7:00 p.m. in McKnight Hall
ATTENDANCE REQUIRED

Dr. Buckner will be joining us in class on Thursday and will be meeting with students interested in reviving the Secular Student Alliance on campus just after class (3:30 in Macy 204A).


READINGS**Tuesday, September 25th**


- o [Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists](#) (David presents; J.D. is devil's advocate)
- o Did the American Revolution Produce a Christian Nation? (link below)


 [Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists](#)

 [Did the American Revolution Produce Christian Nation?](#)

Thursday, September 27th:


 [Dr. Buckner's class handout](#)


 [Take the Freedom of Religion Quiz](#)


 [Questions to think about](#)

RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 25 - Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 25 - Did the American Revolution Produce Christian Nation? Response to Hatch's argument. \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, September 25 - Did the American Revolution Produce Christian Nation? Response to Butler's argument. \(due before class\)](#)

 [REQUIRED Response Assignment: Thursday, September 27 - Buckner talk \(due before class on Tuesday October 2\)](#)

7

Tuesday, October 2 and Thursday, October 4**THE NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION**

**READINGS****Tuesday, October 2nd:**

- Walters, pp. 95-104
- David Hume, "The Natural History of Religion," pp.26-31 (Alex presents; Brandon is devil's advocate)
- Ludwig Feuerbach, "Lectures on the Essence of Religion: Lecture XXX" (link below) (Ray presents; Alex is devil's advocate)

Thursday, October 4th:

- Walters, pp. 105-116
- Feuerbach (continued)
- Sigmund Freud, "Future of An Illusion," pp. 147-54 (Brandon presents; Ashley is devil's advocate)

[Feuerbach's Lecture XXX On the Essence of Religion](#)

[Recommended video: Hitchens and Blair Debate: Is Religion a Force for Good in the World? \(view outside of class\)](#)

RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS

[Response Assignment: Tuesday, October 2 - Walters, pp. 95-104 \(due before class\)](#)

[Response Assignment: Tuesday, October 2 - David Hume, "The Natural History of Religion," pp.26-31 \(due before class\)](#)

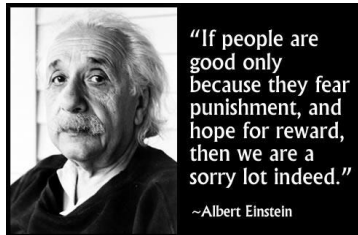
[Response Assignment: Tuesday, October 2 - Ludwig Feuerbach, "Lectures on the Essence of Religion: Lecture XXX" \(due before class\)](#)

[Response Assignment: Thursday, October 4 - Walters, pp. 105-116 \(due before class\)](#)

[Response Assignment: Thursday, October 4 - Sigmund Freud, "Future of An Illusion," pp. 147-54 \(due before class\)](#)

8

**Thursday, October 11 (no class Tuesday, October 9)
A GODLESS MORALITY**

**READINGS****Thursday, October 11th:**

- Walters, pp. 117-137 (NOTE: this is longer than most daily reading assignments. Please plan accordingly!)
- Elizabeth Anderson, "If God is Dead, Is Everything Permitted?" pp. 333-48 (Christina presents; Parkker is devil's advocate)

[Required podcast: Richard Norman on Humanism](#)

[Recommended video \(possibly particularly offensive content\): George Carlin on the Ten Commandments](#)

[Questions to think about](#)

RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS

[Response Assignment: Thursday, October 11 - Walters, pp. 117-137 \(due before class\)](#)

[Response Assignment: Thursday, October 11 - Elizabeth Anderson, "If God is Dead, Is Everything Permitted?" pp. 333-48 \(due before class\)](#)

[Response Assignment: Thursday, October 11 - Required podcast: Richard Norman on Humanism file \(due before class\)](#)

9

Tuesday, October 16 and Thursday, October 18

SISYPHUS' QUESTION



READINGS

Tuesday, October 16th

- Walters, pp. 138-144
- Manifestos (links below) "Atheist Manifesto" by Harris (Dylan presents; David is devil's advocate) and "[Humanist Manifesto](#)" (Patrick presents; Daja is devil's advocate)

Thursday, October 18th

- Walters, pp. 144-56
- Ayaan Hirsi Ali, "How (And Why) I Became an Infidel," pp. 477-80 (Christina R. presents; Christina W. is devil's advocate)

[Atheist Manifesto](#), by Sam Harris

[Humanist Manifesto](#)

[Required podcast: A School of Life for Atheists](#)

[Recommended podcast: The High Price of Being a Black Atheist](#)

RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS

- [Response Assignment: Tuesday, October 16 - Walters, pp. 138-144 \(due before class\)](#)
- [Response Assignment: Tuesday, October 16 - Atheist Manifesto, by Sam Harris \(due before class\)](#)
- [Response Assignment: Tuesday, October 16 - Humanist Manifesto \(due before class\)](#)
- [Response Assignment: Thursday, October 18 - Walters, pp. 144-56 \(due before class\)](#)
- [Response Assignment: Thursday, October 18 - Ayaan Hirsi Ali, "How \(And Why\) I Became an Infidel," pp. 477-80 \(due before class\)](#)
- [Response Assignment: Thursday, October 18 - Podcast: A School of Life for Atheists \(due before class\)](#)

10

Tuesday, October 23 and Thursday, October 25

READINGS:

Tuesday, October 23rd reading:

- Sam Harris, "In the Shadow of God," pp. 454-72 (Sarah presents; Jonathan is devil's advocate)

Thursday, October 25th: Atheism tapes (in class viewing)

[*** Please read this article for class on Tuesday ***](#)

RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT

[Response Assignment: Tuesday, October 23rd - Sam Harris, "In the Shadow of God," pp. 454-72 \(due before class\)](#)

[Response Assignment: due SATURDAY, October 27th \(by midnight\) - "The Atheism Tapes" \(viewed in class\)](#)

11 Tuesday, October 30 and Thursday, November 1

PRIMARY SOURCE READINGS


Tuesday, October 30th: On demons


- Carl Sagan, "The Demon-Haunted World," pp. 218-25 (Parkker presents; Walker is devil's advocate)

Thursday, November 1st: On death

- A.J. Ayer, "That Undiscovered Country," pp. 270-76 (J.D. presents; Hannah is devil's advocate)

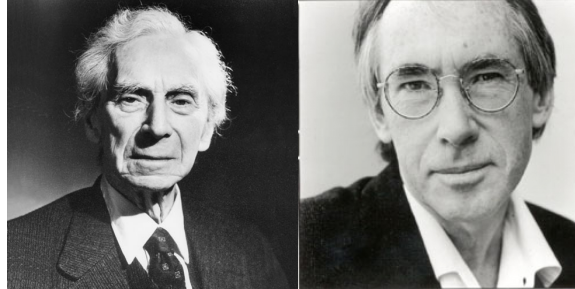
RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, October 30 - Carl Sagan, "The Demon-Haunted World," pp. 218-25 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Thursday, November 1 - A.J. Ayer, "That Undiscovered Country," pp. 270-76 \(due before class\)](#)

12

Tuesday, November 6 and Thursday, November 8


**PRIMARY SOURCE READINGS****Tuesday, November 6th:**


- Bertrand Russell, "An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish," pp. 181-206 (Walker presents; Gabby is devil's advocate)

Thursday, November 8th:

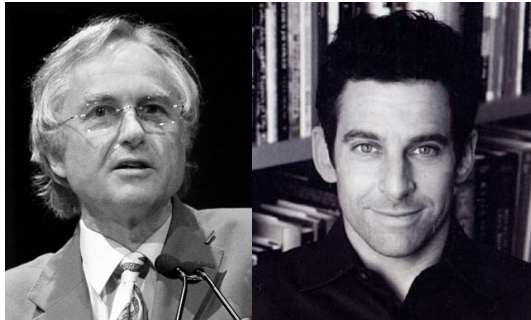
- Ian McEwan, "End of the World Blues," pp. 351-65 (Hannah presents; Christina R. is devil's advocate)

RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, November 6 - Bertrand Russell, "An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish," pp. 181-206 \(due before class\)](#)


 [Response Assignment: Thursday, November 8 - Ian McEwan, "End of the World Blues," pp. 351-65 \(due before class\)](#)

13 Tuesday, November 13 (NO CLASS on Thursday, November 15)

**PRIMARY SOURCE READINGS**


- Richard Dawkins, "Gerin Oil," pp. 305-6 (Chavis presents; Dylan is devil's advocate)

David Blankenberrger will be teaching class today as part of the graduate Teaching Religious Studies class.

 [Required video: Dawkins on Militant Atheism](#)

 [Recommended video: Alain de Botton on Atheism 2.0](#)

RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, November 13 - Richard Dawkins, "Gerin Oil," pp. 305-6 \(due before class\)](#)

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, November 13 - Required video: Dawkins on Militant Atheism \(due before class\)](#)

class)

14

Tuesday, November 20th (no class Thursday, November 22nd, for Thanksgiving)




NOTE: BOOK REVIEWS DUE TODAY (link below) and final day to turn in drafts of position papers

PRIMARY SOURCE READING:

- A.C. Grayling, "Can an Atheist Be a Fundamentalist?" pp. 473-77 (Anna is devil's advocate)

 [Book review assignment submission](#)

RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT

 [Response Assignment: Tuesday, November 20 - A.C. Grayling, "Can an Atheist Be a Fundamentalist?" pp. 473-77 \(due before class\)](#)

15

**Tuesday, November 27 and Thursday, November 29:
Debate preparation in class**

Tuesday, December 4th

Resolved: Atheists have no proof that atheism is true.

Pro: Chavis, Christina, Julia, Jonathan

Con: Walker, Ray, Brandon, Loren

Tuesday, December 11th, 2:00-4:30

Resolved: Atheism is a religion.

Pro: Sarah, Dylan, Anna, Mary

Con: Hannah, J.D., Gabby, David

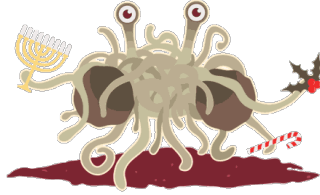
Resolved: Religion is a force for good in society.

Pro: Josh, Trent, Paige, Daja


Con: Parkker, Patrick, Ashley, Alex

**Note that your final position papers are due on Tuesday, December 11th, at the beginning of period in
HARD COPY (not submitted through email or an assignment link)**

MAY HIS NOODLY APPENDAGES



TOUCH YOU THIS HOLIDAY SEASON















 Please take class survey by Sunday, August 26th at 11:45 (open August 20th -- use password "atheism")

16











RESOURCES

LIBRARY RESOURCES












ORGANIZATIONS:




-  [National Secular Student Alliance](#)
-  [Atheists and Other Freethinkers \(Sacramento, CA\)](#)
-  [American Atheists](#)
-  [American Humanist Association](#)
-  [Freedom from Religion Foundation](#)
-  [Secular Organizations for Sobriety](#)
-  [Atheist Alliance International](#)
-  [Atheist Nexus](#)
-  [Foundation Beyond Belief](#)
-  [American Ethical Union](#)
-  [Secular Summer Camp](#)
-  [Council for Secular Humanism](#)
-  [Center for Inquiry](#)
-  [The Clergy Project](#)

BLOGS AND BLOGLIKE THINGS:



-  [One of many lists of top atheist/agnostic blogs](#)
-  [Positive Atheism](#)
-  [Freethought blogs \(many links\)](#)
-  [Atheism: Proving the Negative](#)
-  [Atheist Ethicist](#)
-  [Common Sense Atheism](#)
-  [Friendly Atheist](#)
-  [Greta Christina](#)
-  [Atheists for Jesus](#)
-  [Why Won't God Heal Amputees?](#)

RESOURCES:

-  [Many, many links](#)
-  [American Religious Identity Survey](#)
-  [Secular News Daily](#)
-  [New York Times "Atheism Navigator"](#)
-  [BBC on atheism](#)
-  [Atheist Experience TV show](#)
-  [Who's Who in Hell?](#)
-  [Belief in God Rises with Age \(NORC survey results\)](#)
-  ["Atheism, Secularity, and Well-Being," by Phil Zuckerman](#)
-  [Philo: journal for Humanist philosophers](#)
-  [Coming Out Atheist: a research project](#)
















-  [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#)
-  [Online shopping for atheist attire and such](#)
-  [Atheist Marketplace](#)


DEBATES AND LECTURES

-  [Is Christianity Good for American Politics? Susan Jacoby vs. Dinesh D'Souza](#)
-  [Don Cupitt on Non-Realism About God](#)
-  [Julia Sweeney: Letting Go of God](#)
-  [Daniel Dennett responds to Rick Warren](#)
-  [Ricky Gervais on atheism](#)
-  [Dawkins on Colbert](#)
-  [Sam Harris: Clash Between Faith and Reason](#)
-  [More Dawkins](#)
-  [Smackdown: Christopher Hitchens and Al Sharpton](#)
-  [Debate: The World Would Be Better Off Without Religion](#)
-  [Dawkins: The Greatest Show on Earth](#)
-  [Video: Mitchell and Webb's take on Richard Dawkins and publishing](#)
-  [David Mitchell's Soapbox: What The Hell is Going On?](#)

17

ATHEISM IN THE NEWS

-  [Harvard Prayer Study](#)
-  [Atheist Media Blog](#)
-  [Alain de Botton and his "Temple to Atheism"](#)
-  [Soldier Sues Army](#)
-  [More Atheists Shout it from the Rooftops](#)
-  [Where Creches Once Stood](#)
-  [African American Atheists](#)
-  [Pitzer add degree in Secular Studies](#)
-  [Atheist Holiday Message](#)
-  [You Say God is Dead? There's an App for That](#)
-  [HuffPost Religion Blog: Is Atheism a Religion?](#)
-  [Response: Ye Olde "Atheism is a Religion" is a Canard](#)
-  [Founding Fathers \(Charlotte skirmish\)](#)
-  [From Saints to Aints: Baseball Meets Atheism](#)
-  [Separation of Church and State?](#)

 Moodle Docs for this page

You are logged in as Joanne Robinson (Logout)

Home

7.110271 secs
 RAM: 7MB
 RAM peak: 7.2MB
 Included 95 files
 ticks: 711 user: 11 sys: 1 cuser: 0 csys: 0
 Load average: 1.52
 Record cache hit/miss ratio : 0/0