



## **REL 3160: RELIGION AND SCIENCE**

Spring 2015

Tues. 4<sup>th</sup>, Little Hall 233, and Thurs. 4<sup>th</sup>- 5<sup>th</sup>, Florida Gym 285

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:45-1:30 and Thursdays 12:40-1:30 and by appointment

### **Description**

This class examines the relationship between religion, science, and philosophy in different religious traditions, focusing on the West.

For several thousand years, at least, religious, scientific, and philosophical ways of thinking have interacted in complex, varied, and sometimes conflictive ways. This class surveys a range of issues, thinkers, and approaches to some of the most important ways in which religion and science interact. The course will be divided into three sections. The first will cover the historical development of scientific and religious understandings about the natural world in the West. The second will focus on Darwin's theory of evolution and the various philosophical and ethical debates related to it, including cognitive theories of religion. The third section will address ethical issues related to environmental problems and bioethics.

This class does not require any previous training in religious studies or in the specific topics addressed. However, as an intermediate level course, it will include intensive reading and writing, including critical analysis of complex materials and issues. As a Gordon Rule class, further, it will require 2000 words of writing outside of class (essay assignments, detailed below).

## **Objectives and Goals**

### General Education Humanities Objectives

1. To become familiar with diverse approaches to the study of religion and science, including those that assume conflict, integration, and separation between the two fields;
2. To learn about and discuss the relations between religion and specific scientific themes, including evolution, cognitive neuroscience, cosmology, and scientific method;
3. To improve students' ability to discuss and analyze theoretical claims and supporting arguments; and
4. To improve students' ability to express, in writing and orally, their own analytical arguments.

### General Education Student Learning Outcomes

1. To learn the history, underlying theory and methodologies used to analyze the relations between religion and science, as an interdisciplinary field of study drawing on natural and physical sciences, religious studies, and philosophy;
2. To identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape scholarly thinking about religion and science, from both scientific and humanistic perspectives;
3. To approach these issues from diverse disciplinary and theoretical perspectives; and
4. To communicate the information and analysis developed in this course in a clear, organized, and effective way in written work and in class discussions.

### Other Student Learning Outcomes

1. To learn about and analyze the importance of the religion and science debate in contemporary society;
2. To understand the ways different approaches to this topic have entered into contemporary cultural and scholarly debates;
3. To read and analyze prominent thinkers in the field and to compare not only their substantive arguments but also the ways their disciplinary, methodological, and ideological backgrounds have shaped their thinking; and
4. To craft, both in writing and orally, well-informed critical analyses of the issues at hand, with a comparative perspective based on cumulative reading and comprehension of all course materials.

### **Grading Scale (Letter, Percentage, GPA)**

A	93-100	(4.0)
A-	90-93	(3.67)
B+	87-89	(3.33)
B	84-86	(3.0)
B-	80-83	(2.67)
C+	77-79	(2.33)
C	74-76	(2.0)
C-	70-73	(1.67)
D+	67-69	(1.33)
D	64-66	(1.0)
D-	60-63	(0.67)
F	Below 60	(0)

*Please Note:* A “C-“ will not be a qualifying grade for major, minor, General Education, Gordon Rule or College Basic Distribution credit. You must receive a “C” or better in order to receive that credit.

### **Policies, Rules, and Resources**

1. *Handing in Assignments:* Place all papers in my mailbox in the Religion Department, 107 Anderson Hall. DO NOT slip them under the door or leave them on the door of my office, the main department office, or the teaching assistant’s office. Please also keep a dated electronic copy of all your papers.
2. *Late or Make-Up Assignments:* You may take an exam early or receive an extension on an exam or essay assignment *only* in extraordinary circumstances *and* with prior approval from the instructor. If an extension is not granted, the assignment will be marked down ½ grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.
3. *Completion of All Assignments:* You must complete all written and oral assignments and fulfill the requirement for class participation in order to pass the course. I will not average a grade that is missing any assignment or requirement.
4. *Attendance and Participation:* Class attendance is required. Do not register for this class if you cannot arrive on time. Students should arrive on time and prepared to discuss the day’s readings. Tardiness harms your understanding of the material and disrupts the class. After the first late arrival, the instructor reserves the right to mark you absent. The instructor will *not* provide notes or discuss material that has already been covered for students who arrive late, barring extraordinary circumstances (which do not include failing to find a parking place or sleeping in).
5. *Common Courtesy:* Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who receive or make calls during class will be asked to leave. You may take notes on a laptop computer, although the instructor reserves the right to ask you to turn off the computer if circumstances warrant. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class. If that occurs, the student will be marked absent for the day.
6. *Honor Code:* On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The university specifically prohibits cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, bribery, conspiracy, and fabrication. For more information about the definition of these terms and other aspects of the Honesty Guidelines, see <http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html>. Any student(s) demonstrated to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in *any assignment* for this course will fail the course. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

7. *Accommodation for Disabilities*: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

8. *Counseling Resources*: Resources available on-campus for students include the following:

- University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling;
- Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling;
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling;
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

9. *Software Use*: All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

### **Required Books**

1. Gary B. Ferngren, ed., *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002; ISBN 9780801870385)
2. Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (Harper)
3. Mary Midgley, *Evolution as a Religion: Strange Hopes and Stranger Fears* (Routledge, 2002; ISBN 9780415278331)
4. Todd Tremlin, *Minds and Gods: The Cognitive Functions of Religion* (Oxford 2010), ISBN 978-0199739011)
5. Aaron Mackler, *Introduction to Jewish and Catholic Bioethics: A Comparative Analysis* (Georgetown, 2003; ISBN 0878401466)

### **Articles and chapters** (available on Sakai)

1. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (Pocket Books, 2008), Chapter 3 (“Struggle for Existence”) and Chapter 4 (“Natural Selection; or The Survival of the Fittest”)
2. Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic,” from *A Sand County Almanac*

All readings will be available on reserve at Library West.

## Requirements

1. Attendance and participation in class discussions, including timely and close reading of all assigned texts (10% of final grade)
2. Essay (4 pages, min. 1000 words) on the history of Western religious and philosophical thinking about science (25%) - Due Wednesday, Feb. 17 by 4:00 pm in my mailbox
4. Essay (4 pages, min. 1000 words) on religion and evolutionary thought (25%) – Due Wed. April 3 by 4:00 pm in my mailbox
5. Final exam (40%) – date to be announced, according to university calendar.

## Schedule

\*\* PLEASE NOTE: There may be changes in dates and assignments as the semester proceeds. Students will be informed of any changes and will be responsible for having assignments completed by the updated due dates.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>
Tues 1/6	Introduction to the class	
<u>Part One: Developments and issues in the history of Western Science</u>		
Th 1/8	Conflict or complexity?	Ferngren, Chapters 1-2
Tues 1/13	Greece	Ferngren, Chapter 3
Th 1/15	Early Christianity	Ferngren, Chapters 4-5
Tues 1/20	Islam	Ferngren, Chapter 6
Th 1/22	The Scientific Revolution, 1	Ferngren, Chapters 7-8
Tu 1/27	The Scientific Revolution, 2	Ferngren, Chapters 9 and 13
Th 1/29	European science in transition	Merchant, Introduction and Ch. 1-2
Tu 2/3	Nature as organism	Merchant, Chapters 3-4
Th 2/5	Nature and disorder	Merchant, Chapter 5-6
Tu 2/10	Dominion over nature	Merchant, Ch 7-8
Th 2/12	Mechanism	Merchant, Ch. 9-10
Tu 2/17	Philosophies of Nature	Merchant, Ch. 11-12

Wed. 2/18 \* First Essay Due \*

Part Two: Evolution

Th 2/19	History and evolution	Ferngren, Chapters 14-16
Tu 2/24	Natural history and evolution	Ferngren, Chapters 17-18
Th 2/26	Darwin	Chapters 3-4 in <i>On the Origin of Species</i> *
	* SPRING BREAK *	
Tu 3/10	Religious responses to Darwin	Ferngren, Chapters 19-22
Th 3/12	Evolution as religion	Midgley, Chapters 1-6
Tu 3/17	Evolution as religion	Midgley, Ch. 7-12
Th 3/19	Evolution as Religion	Midgley, Ch. 13-18
Tu 3/24	Cognitive theories of religion	Tremlin, Introduction and Chapter 1
Th 3/26	Cognitive Theories of Religion	Tremlin, Ch. 2-3
Tu 3/31	Cognitive Theories of Religion	Tremlin, Ch. 4
Th. 4/2	Cognitive Theories of Religion	Tremlin, Ch. 5-6 and Conclusion
Wed. 4/3	* Second Essay Due at 4:00 pm in my mailbox *	

Part Three: Contemporary Ethical Issues

Tu 4/7	Environmental ethics	Ferngren, Ch. 27; Leopold “The Land Ethic”
Th. 4/9	Introduction to Bioethics	Mackler, Ch. 1-2
Tu 4/14	Euthanasia and end of life	Mackler, Ch. 3-4
Th. 4/16	Abortion and reproduction	Mackler, Ch. 5-6
Tu 4/21	Health Care access	Mackler, Ch. 7 and Conclusion

Final Exam: TBA