
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF CONTINUING STUDIES
SPRING 2010
TIME AND LOCATION: TBA

DISCOURSES & DISCORD: SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Overview

In popular perception today, the relationship between science and religion is and has been an open and bitter conflict. However, much of the history of science and religion is riddled with myths and misunderstandings that have led to this unfortunate and often inaccurate point of view. The relationship has historically been more complex. While atheists and devout believers abound in the historical debates, many of the world's most notable scientists were also persons of faith and many well known religious leaders and believers have come to accept scientific findings and have attempted to reconcile these with the teachings of their faith. This course introduces students to cross-cultural perspectives on the relationship between science and religion through many of the most important moments of discourse and discord in their history. Lecture, readings, and research will provide students with an opportunity for a better understanding of how science and religion have crossed paths in the search for answers to the biggest questions of human existence and the meaning of life.

Faculty

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Textbooks

Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion (Hardcover)
by Ronald L. Numbers (Editor)
Harvard University Press; 1 edition (March 31, 2009)
ISBN-10: 0674033272
ISBN-13: 978-0674033276

Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction (Paperback)
by Gary B. Ferngren (Editor)
The Johns Hopkins University Press (August 1, 2002)
ISBN-10: 0801870380
ISBN-13: 978-0801870385

Grading

The final grade will be determined as follows:

- 93% to 100% = A, 90% to 92% = A-
- 87% to 89% = B+, 83% to 86% = B, 80% to 82% = B-
- 77% to 79% = C+, 72% to 76% = C, 68% to 71% = C-
- 57% to 67% = D, Below 57% = F

Grades for this course will be based on your performance on five in-class assignments, two exams and a final paper.

Exams

Two exams will be given during the semester gauging your grasp of the material. Each exam is worth 30% of your final grade (collectively **60%** of your grade).

In-class Assignments

Five assignments to be completed in class, individually or in groups, will each account for 2% of your final grade (collectively **10%** of your grade).

Final Paper

You will choose a current issue or controversy where science and religion are in discourse and/or discord. Examples of such issues include climate change, human cloning, abortion, euthanasia, genetically modified food, or even the “classical” issues such as human origin and the creation of life from non-living material. You will research and analyze how religion and science are approaching the issue or controversy of your choice today and relate this discourse and/or discord to the historical examples discussed throughout the course. The paper should highlight similarities and difference between this current issue and the way in which science and religion have interacted in previous historical periods and/or different cultures on similar or related issues. The paper should be approximately 2,500 words. Grades will be based on the quality of research and the arguments put forth (*not* on the position you advocate—you have the complete academic freedom to express your informed point of view). The paper is worth **30%** of your grade.

Incompletes

Incompletes are not available in this course

Attendance & Late assignments

Attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss class, it is your responsibility to make sure any assignments are submitted on time. It is also your responsibility to get the lecture notes, handouts, etc., from a classmate. If one is unable to submit an assignment before its due date students should seek the prior approval of the instructor. “Prior approval” means that the student must communicate with the instructor before the assignment’s deadline. Grades for late work may be reduced by 10 percent for every day it is late.

Plagiarism & the Georgetown Honor System

The sources for all information and ideas in your papers must be documented using the style followed by the American Psychological Association (APA). In addition, all quotations must be identified as quotations, using quotation marks and documentation of the source of the quotation. Anything less than these standards is plagiarism and will be treated as such. Plagiarized work will be reported to Georgetown’s Honor Council (see below). If the council finds that the work has been plagiarized, the work will receive an F for a first offense; a second plagiarism will earn an F for the course.

All students are expected to follow Georgetown’s honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at www.georgetown.edu/honor, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, “What is Plagiarism?”, “Sanctioning Guidelines”, and “Expedited Sanctioning Process.” Papers in this course will be electronically checked for plagiarism. Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and

to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or arc@georgetown.edu.

Snow and other emergencies

During inclement weather or other emergencies, check <http://preparedness.georgetown.edu> or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open.

Course Schedule

<u>Class and topic</u>	<u>Readings and focus</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1: An introduction to the history of science and religion 	Readings provided in class by instructor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 2: Theories of Everything (TOE) in “the beginning” and now; perspectives on creation and origin 	<i>Ferngren:</i> Part I—Science and Religion: Conflict or Complexity? <i>Numbers:</i> Introduction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 2: The Pre-Modern relationship between faith and reason; philosophy and early Christianity 	<i>Ferngren:</i> Part II—The Premodern period <i>Numbers:</i> Myths 1-4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 3: The Medieval period: the flat earth; the Islam and science; and medicine human dissection 	Readings provided in class by instructor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 4: The Great Plague: Comparing the responses of Christianity and Islam 	<i>Ferngren:</i> Part III—The Scientific Revolution (chapters 7-10) <i>Numbers:</i> Myths 5-7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 5: The Enlightenment: Astronomy and alchemy; the Reformation and science 	<i>Ferngren:</i> Part III— The Scientific Revolution (chapters 11-13) <i>Numbers:</i> Myths 10-14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 6: The Scientific Revolution: The Catholic Church and the New Paradigm 	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 7: Midterm examination 	Readings provided in class by instructor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 8: The American Founders: Religious and scientific beliefs among the authors of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution 	<i>Ferngren:</i> Part IV—Transformations in Geology, Biology, and Cosmology (chapters 14-16) <i>Numbers:</i> Myths 15-17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 9: Evolution: Challenges to orthodoxy from the fossil record and Darwin 	<i>Ferngren:</i> Part IV—Transformations in Geology, Biology, and Cosmology (chapters 17-18) <i>Ferngren:</i> Part V—The Response of Religious Traditions <i>Numbers:</i> Myths 18-20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 10: Evolution continued: Creationism; the Scopes Trial; Intelligent Design 	<i>Ferngren:</i> Part VI—The Theological Implications of Modern Science <i>Numbers:</i> Myths 21-23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 11: The trouble with the Big Bang: Physics coming to terms with a 	<i>Ferngren:</i> Part VII—Current Historiographical Issues

- “beginning”; quantum mechanics and free will
- **Week 12:** Challenges: Postmodernism and the social construction of science
 - **Week 13:** Review
 - **Week 14:** Final Meeting
- Numbers:* Myths 24-25
- Readings provided in class by instructor
- Roundtable and writing workshop
- Final paper due and final exam distributed (due on date TBA)