

THEO 388 Interfacing Theology and the Natural Sciences

Systematics/Ethics, 3 Graduate Credits, Section 1002

Fall 2007, W 11-1:40 p.m., WW 150

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Office Hours: M 12:30-2, MW 4-5, and by appointment

www.marquette.edu/theology/interfacing

www.inee.mu.edu

Description

Are theology and the natural sciences adversaries, battling one another for supremacy? Or are they allies in search of truth in its various dimensions? If neither adversaries nor allies, do they have very little in common, one dealing with “how” and the other with “why”? Do the disciplines share similarities in methods and issues at their boundaries that make dialogue both possible as well as desirable? Can theology and the natural sciences be integrated in ways that avoid confusing and conflating them? Can a constructive relationship between theology and the natural sciences be taught at the undergraduate level?

Students will answer these questions beginning with an overview of the religion-science relationship historically and proceeding to examine (1) the characteristics of the disciplines of theology, physics, biology, neuroscience, and psychology to identify their respective data, methods, purviews and limitations, (2) their similarities and dissimilarities, (3) ways in which contemporary scholars are relating theology and the natural sciences on topics the disciplines address variously (e.g., the origin and nature of the universe, life, and consciousness), (4) one issue interfacing theology and a natural science in depth, and (5) a sampling of courses in which theology and the natural sciences are related.

Conducted in seminar fashion, this course will engage students in posing questions for discussion of assigned readings, leading seminar sessions, presenting a draft research-reflection paper on an approved topic that interfaces theology and a particular natural science, and critiquing the syllabi of religion-science courses. To hone the skills needed to write book reviews, students will select from a list and prepare one review following *Theological Studies* long version. As a culminating project, students will submit revisions of their draft research/reflection papers (approximately 6000 words of text).

Student Learning Objectives

(1) Identify, understand and appreciate the purviews, methods, data, and limitations of the theology and natural sciences disciplines; (2) think critically about ways of relating religion and science that have been modeled by other scholars, work cooperatively with other students to identify helpful rules for relating theology and the natural sciences, and conclude independently to one way that is most cogent/plausible when following these rules; (3) analyze assigned contemporary works on issues that interface the disciplines (e.g., the universe, life, and consciousness) and discern their implications for theology and theological doctrines (e.g., attributes of God, the human soul, free will); (4) exercise critical thinking skills in class discussion in a spirit of shared inquiry when addressing assigned texts and responding to student presentations of their research projects; (5) hone classroom managerial skills by leading seminar discussions on assigned readings; (6) demonstrate ability to analyze a recently-published religion-science book and write a scholarly review on it; (7) advance research skills by investigating an approved topic that interfaces theology and a natural science and by presenting draft findings in seminar; and, (8) demonstrate ability to write a scholarly paper on that topic following a style specified by a religion-science journal.

Evaluation

Objectives #1-5 will be evaluated on the basis of written and oral participation in seminar discussions, including entries on D2L of pertinent materials (50%); objective #6 on the basis of one book review to be submitted on the designated date (15%); objective #7 on research and presentation of a draft paper on one of the stipulated dates (15%); and, #8 on the final version of the paper to be submitted on December 12 (20%).

Attendance Policy

Presence in each seminar session is mandatory. A second absence will lower the class participation grade by 20% and three absences will warrant withdrawal from the course.

Academic Honesty Policy

Each student is expected to represent his/her own efforts in all assignments and examinations. Penalties for academic dishonesty will be rigorously administered pursuant to the Marquette University Academic Honesty Policy that is applicable to all students and faculty.

Required Texts

- I. Barbour, *Religion and Science* (HarperSanFrancisco 1997)
- R. Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Houghton-Mifflin 2006)
- J. Haught, *Is Nature Enough?* (Cambridge 2006)
- K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* (selected essays TBA)
- W. Pannenberg, *Toward a Theology of Nature* (Westminster/Knox 1993)
- J. Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist* (Princeton 1994)
- A. Peacocke, *Paths from Science Towards God* (One World 2001)
- D. Edwards, *God of Evolution* (Paulist 1999)
- A. Newberg & E. D'Aquili, *The Mystical Mind* (Fortress 1999)
- F. Watts, *Theology and Psychology* (Ashgate 2002)
- G. Kaufman, *In the Beginning...Creativity* (Fortress 2004)
- A. Pederson, *God, Creation and all that Jazz* (Chalice 2001)

Tentative Schedule of Classes

Introduction to Course and Religion-Science Basics

August 27 -- Overview of course from syllabus; identification of key journals and other sources (signup for journal reporting); Counterbalance bibliography (<http://www.counterbalance.org/>) and CTNS "best books" (http://www.ctns.org/books_bio.html); brainstorming about types of information needed on assigned authors/texts for leading seminar sessions; consideration of meeting once a week; overview of religion-science relationship historically; introduction to Ian Barbour's book.

Recommended: Barbour, *Religion & Science*, chaps. 1-3 for historical overview.

August 29 -- Ways of relating religion and science, models and paradigms, similarities and differences; finalizing types of information needed to proceed with sessions on monographs; begin drafting rules for relating disciplines constructively (to be finalized by end of semester).

Assigned: Barbour chaps. 4-6

Recommended: Haught, *Science & Religion* (Paulist 1995); volunteer other scholars' ways.

Exploring the Contemporary Views of Religion:Science Relationship

September 5 -- Dawkins and *The God Delusion*

September 12 -- Gould on NOMA, Gish on "creation science," and Dembski on "intelligent design"

Submit reviews of journals for discussion.

September 19 -- Haught, *Is Nature Enough?*

September 26 -- Rahner, Pannenberg, and Pope John Paul II

Submit research topic interest.

October 3 -- Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist*

October 4 -- Lecture by UW Biologist and Evangelical Calvin DeWitt on the Collaboration of Evangelicals and Scientists on Global Warming (RSVP dinner following in Henke Lounge)

October 10 -- Peacocke, *Paths from Science Towards God*

Submit outline and initial sources for R|R paper on October 10; set appointment to discuss with me.

October 17 -- Edwards, *God of Evolution*

October 24 -- Newberg & D'Aquili, *The Mystical Mind*

Submit book review October 24

October 31-- Watts, *Theology & Psychology*

November 7 -- Kaufman, *In the Beginning...Creativity*

November 14 -- Pederson, *God, Creation and All that Jazz*

AAR & THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 28 -- Paper Presentations

Pedagogy

December 5 -- Selected issue and critical examination of religion-sciences courses; course evaluation.

Final Paper

December 12 -- Submit Revised Seminar Paper at Noon in Lunda Private Dining Room

