

## **HON 480-002: SCIENCE AND RELIGION**

SPRING 2010: R 7:00 PM – 9:30 PM

Room: Albertus Magnus 106

Credit Hours: 3.00



PROVIDENCE  
COLLEGE

### INSTRUCTOR:

Name: Fr. Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, O.P., Ph.D., S.T.L.

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I am generally in my office (Sowa 229B) or in my laboratory (Hickey 181) from 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM daily and am easily available with a prior appointment. To make an appointment, you may call me on my telephone or email me. I'll keep Friday afternoons from 2:00 P.M. to 4:30 P.M. for drop-in appointments. Please feel free to talk to me about any issue relating either to the course or to your life as a student here at Providence College.

### **A PRAYER BEFORE STUDY**

**St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P.**

**O God, Creator of all things, true source of light and wisdom, graciously let a ray of your light penetrate the darkness of my understanding. Give me a keen intellect, a retentive memory, and the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally. Give me the talent of being exact in my explanations and the ability to express myself with thoroughness and charm. Point out the beginning, direct the progress, and perfect my work. We ask you this through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.**

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What should the relationship between science and religion be like? Recent scholarship proposes four models for the relationship between science and religion: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. In this colloquium, we will use this four-fold typology and the Catholic conviction that faith and reason work together to address the big questions raised by both science and religion. As proposed by Professor Keith Ward, these questions include the following: How did the universe begin? How will the universe end? Is evolution compatible with creation? Do the laws of nature exclude miracles? What is the nature of space and time? Is it still possible to speak of the soul? Is science the only sure path to truth? Can science provide an explanation for morals and religious beliefs? Has science made belief in God obsolete? Does science allow for

revelation and divine action? We will respond to these questions through an intellectual engagement with the popular bestseller, *The God Delusion*, by Richard Dawkins.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Simon Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide* (New York: Oxford, 2005)
- Thomas Crean, O.P., *God is No Delusion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007)
- Brian Davies, O.P., *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* (London: Continuum, 2006)
- Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Mariner Books, 2006)
- Susan Haack, *Defending Science Within Reason* (New York, Prometheus Books, 2007)
- John F. Haught, *Science & Religion: From Conflict to Conversation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995)
- J.P. Moreland & Scott B. Rae, *Body & Soul* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000)
- Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1995)

We will also be reading papers and selected chapters from other books from the recent literature in the science and religion dialogue. These papers will be available on the ANGEL website.

#### ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS:

This course is an honors colloquium that will be conducted as an advanced seminar reminiscent of graduate-level classes. Students will be expected to read the assigned material so that they will be able to contribute to the discussion that will constitute the bulk of this course.

Each class meeting will focus on a specific theme and will be divided into three parts as follows:

In the first part, two students will lead the class discussion. Each student will be responsible for writing and reading a discussion paper at least 1,500 words long that will be divided into three parts. In the first part, the student will identify and summarize an argument or an assertion from *The God Delusion* that relates to the topic of the week. Next, the student will critically respond to the argument or the assertion: Is the argument or the assertion a valid and true statement? Why or why not? Finally, the student will identify the disputed points in the debate and propose possible responses to settle the dispute. Discussion papers will be submitted to the instructor for evaluation at the end of the following class period so that their authors can revise them in light of the in-class discussion.

In the second part of the class session, the instructor will address any remaining conceptual issues that were not raised during the student-led discussion.

Finally, in the third part, the class will identify candidate frequently asked questions (FAQs) relating to the theme of the session. The class will then discuss these questions and formulate a tentative response to each one to help each student to write an adequate and comprehensive response to his or her question.

Each discussion leader will be required to write two FAQs of at least 800 words in length that are due three weeks after he or she leads the class discussion. It is my hope that these FAQs can be published as an introduction to the issues being debated in the science and religion dialogue. Selected FAQs will also be submitted to *The Rhode Island Catholic* for possible publication.

Finally, each student will also be required to write a research paper of at least 3,500 words on any topic in the science and religion debate. Students should discuss their research topics with me. Research papers should include a close analysis and interpretation (not mere summary) of at least two books and three research papers not included on our reading list.

GRADING POLICY:

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Research Paper	40%
Discussion Paper	20%
FAQs	2x10%
Class Participation	20%

Academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism (“the stealing and passing off of the ideas or words of another as one’s own without crediting the source”) are not tolerated in the professional world of scientific and medical research and will not be tolerated in this class. For the first offense, the student will receive a zero for the assignment. For the second offense, the student will receive an F for the course. Please consult the current Providence College Undergraduate Catalogue for its statement on “Academic Honesty.”

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Regular attendance is required. Please email the instructor in advance if you expect to miss a class. The student will be required to write a five-page essay on the topic discussed in the class that he or she has missed.

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS

### January 21, 2010: On Dawkins's *The God Delusion*

What is Richard Dawkins's main argument in *The God Delusion*?  
What are the book's strengths? What are its weaknesses?  
How would you respond to his argument?  
If you had to pick a single chapter in *The God Delusion* to respond to, which chapter would you choose and why?

#### READINGS:

Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 2006.

### January 28, 2010: On Knowledge and Truth [BARDEN, BROWN]

What is knowledge? What is belief?  
When is knowledge justified?  
What is scientific knowledge?  
What is theological knowledge?  
What is truth?  
What are the major theories of truth?  
What are their strengths and weakness?  
What is postmodernism?  
How has it influenced the dialogue between science and religion?

#### READINGS:

Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide*, 2007.

### February 4, 2010: On the Nature of Science and Theology [BRUNO, CAO]

How are science and theology similar ways of knowing?  
How are they different?  
What is faith? What is reason?  
According to Benedict XVI, what is the relationship between reason and religious belief? What are the implications of this relationship or lack of it on the cultural role of religion in contemporary society?

#### READINGS:

Crean, Chapter One [Professor Dawkins's Argument]  
Haack, *Defending Science Within Reason*, 2007.

- St. Thomas Aquinas, ST I.1.1-10.
- Benedict XVI, The Regensburg Lecture, September 12, 2006.
- Elizabeth Culotta, "On the Origin of Religion," *Science* 326 (2009): 784-787.

**February 11, 2010: On the Relationship Between Science and Theology**  
**[COFFEE, DEPEW]**

How have science and religion related in the past?  
What does the Galileo affair tell us about the evolving relationship between science and religion?  
What does the Scopes Trial tell us about the evolving relationship between science and religion?  
How should science and religion relate in the present?  
According to John Paul II, how should science and religion relate to each other? Why?

READINGS:

Haight, Chapter One ["Is Religion Opposed to Science?"]

- John Paul II, "Letter on Science and Religion," June 1, 1988.
- Colin A. Russell, "The Conflict of Science and Religion," in *Science & Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 3-12.
- David B. Wilson, "The Historiography of Science and Religion," in *Science & Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 13-29.
- David C. Lindberg, "Galileo, the Church, and the Cosmos," in *When Science & Christianity Meet*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 33-60.

**February 18, 2010: On The Reasonability of Religious Faith in a Scientific Age**  
**[DESMARAIS, FREDERICK]**

Is it reasonable to believe in God in a scientific age?  
What are the five ways of St. Thomas Aquinas? Are his arguments valid?  
Why or why not?  
What are the main arguments for the existence of God?  
What are the main arguments against the existence of God?  
What is God? What can we say about God?  
What can the scientific method tell us about God?

READINGS:

Crean, Chapter Two [Prof. Dawkins and St. Thomas Aquinas]  
Haight, Chapter Two [Does Science Rule Out a Personal God?]

- St. Thomas Aquinas, ST I.2.3, ST I.12.12-13
- Brian Davies, "Aquinas on What God is Not" in *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 227-242.
- Alexander Pruss, "Ex Nihilo Nihil Fit: Arguments New and Old for the Principle of Sufficient Reason," in J. Campbell, M. O'Rourke, and H. Silverstein, eds. *Explanation and Causation: Topics in Contemporary Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), pp. 291-310.

**February 25, 2010: On the Problem of Evil [GROVER, HOLMSEN]**

What is evil? How many kinds of evil are there?  
How have Christian theologians reconciled the presence of evil  
and the reality of God?  
How has a scientific worldview come to terms with evil in the world?

READINGS:

Brian Davies, O.P., *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* (London: Continuum, 2006)

**March 11, 2010: On Divine Action in a Scientific World [KIVLIN, LAPRADE]**

What is divine providence?  
What are the main arguments for and against  
the existence of divine providence?  
How have theologians explained God's working in the world?

READINGS:

- St. Thomas Aquinas, ST I.22, ST I.105.5-7
- Robert John Russell, "Does 'The God Who Acts' Really Act? New Approaches to Divine Action in the Light of Science," *Theology Today* 51 (March 1997): 43-65.
- Michael J. Dodds, "Science, Causality and Divine Action: Classical Principles for Contemporary Challenges," *CTNS Bulletin* 21 (Winter, 2001): 3-12.

**March 18, 2010: On Miracles and Grace [MCCOY, OVOIAN]**

What is a miracle? What is a law of nature?  
Is it reasonable to believe in the possibility of miracles?  
Does a scientific worldview exclude miracles?  
Is it reasonable to believe in the resurrection of Jesus?  
What is grace? What are the different kinds of grace in the Catholic tradition?

READINGS:

Crean, Chapter Three [Prof. Dawkins and Miracles]  
Crean, Chapter Four [Prof. Dawkins and the Gospels]

- Stephen Griffith, "Miracles and the Shroud of Turin," *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (1996): 34-49.
- John C. Pokinghorne, "The Credibility of the Miraculous," *Zygon* 37 (2002): 751-740.
- Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Grace* (Princeton: Scepter Press, 1996), pp. 15-45.

**March 25, 2010: On Creation and the Evolution of Life [PARTON, PATEL]**

What does the Bible have to say about the origin of life?  
Does an evolutionary worldview contradict the Sacred Scriptures?  
How does evolution challenge a theistic worldview?  
How have theologians attempted to reconcile the Christian worldview with evolutionary theory?

READINGS:

Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning...*, Trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Comp. 1995), pp. 1-58.

Haught, Chapter Three [Does Evolution Rule Out a Personal God?]

- Nicanor Austriaco, O.P., "In Defense of Double Agency in Evolution: A Response to Five Modern Critics," *Angelicum* 80 (2003): 947-966.

**March 29, 2010: On Evolutionism and Intelligent Design [QUINN, RODENAS]  
(MAKE UP CLASS FOR EASTER WEEK)**

What is evolutionism? What is creationism? What is the design argument?  
What is intelligent design? What are the arguments for and against ID?  
What is irreducible complexity? What are the arguments for and against IC?  
Is intelligent design theory science, theology, or something else?

READINGS:

- Michael Ruse, "The Argument from Design: A Brief History," in *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* ed. William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.13-31.
- Kenneth R. Miller, "The Flagellum Unspun: The Collapse of "Irreducible Complexity," in *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* ed. William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 81-97.
- Michael J. Behe, "Irreducible Complexity: Obstacle to Darwinian Evolution," in *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* ed. William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 352-370.

**April 8, 2010: On Personal Identity and the Human Soul [SANTILLI, SCIMECA]**

What is the classical doctrine of the soul?  
What are the scientific challenges to the classical doctrine of the soul?  
What is physicalism? What is dualism?  
What are the main theories to explain personal identity?  
How can we reconcile the classical doctrine of the soul with a scientific worldview?

READINGS:

Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*, 2000, pp. 17-120.

Haught, Chapter Four [Is Life Reducible to Chemistry?]

- St. Thomas Aquinas, ST I.75

**April 15, 2010: On Human Freedom [SINHA, SULLIVAN]**

What is free will? What is determinism?  
What are the scientific challenges to the classical account of human freedom?  
How can we reconcile the classical doctrine of human freedom  
with a scientific worldview?

READINGS:

Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*, 2000, pp. 121-230.

**April 22, 2010: On the Origin and Nature of Morality**

What is morality? What is good? What is evil?  
What is the theological explanation for existence of morality?  
What is the scientific explanation for the existence of morality?  
What is human dignity? What is the basis for human dignity?  
What is the basis of contemporary secular morality?  
What is the basis of Christian morality?

Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning...*, Trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Comp. 1995), pp. 59-100

Crean, Chapter Five [Prof. Dawkins and the Origins of Morality]

Crean, Chapter Seven [Prof. Dawkins, Morals, and the Bible]

- Steven Pinker, "The Stupidity of Dignity," *The New Republic*, May 28, 2008.
- Yuval Levin, "Indignity and Bioethics" *National Review Online*, May 14, 2008.
- Greg Miller, "The Roots of Morality," *Science* 320 (2008): 734-737.
- Jonathan Haidt, "The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology," *Science* 315 (2007): 998-1002

**April 29, 2010: On Prayer**

What is prayer? Is there a technique in prayer?  
What is Christian prayer?  
What can science say about the efficacy of intercessory prayer?

- Thomas Dubay, S.M., *Fire Within: St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and the Gospel on Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989). pp. 1-12.
- K Jorgensen et al., "Divine Intervention? A Cochrane review on intercessory prayer gone beyond science and reason," *J Negat Results Biomed* 8 (2009): 7.
- U. Schjoedt et al., "Highly religious participants recruit areas of social cognition during personal prayer," *SCAN* 4 (2009): 199-207.