

Department of Religious Studies
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

RELI 421: Religion and Science

Spring 2015
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Tuesday/Thursday
9:30-10:45AM
Murphey Hall 105

Office Hours:
By Appointment

The interaction between religion and science is one of the most interesting and fraught issues in contemporary society. Some scholars trace the beginning of this divide as far back as the days of classical antiquity, seeing in the writings of pre-Socratic philosophers the foundations of a materialist worldview. Others place its origins with Galileo and Copernicus, in the Scientific Revolution and the beginning of European modernity. Still others see the great separation as only two or three centuries old, arising with the Enlightenment, or even later, nearer to the end of the nineteenth century when Darwin's theories gained widespread acceptance. This course will survey this great debate, challenging some of its core assumptions, as well as continuing to ask the most fundamental and interesting questions about the very nature of religion and science themselves.

At one level, this course is an overview of existing theories and claims about religion and science. We will look at some of the classic case studies in religion-science history, as well as discuss the writings of the “New Atheists” and their opponents. In both the popular media and the world of scholarship, this front line is still very real. However, in this course we will also spend time with writings that step back from the fray, with people and ideas that attempt to find new languages or sets of principles that may not necessitate a great clash, a rise and fall.

This course is divided into five units: (1) Positioning, (2) Historicizing, (3) Two Classic Case Studies, (4) Attempting Solutions, and (5) Escaping the Attempt at Solutions. These units are meant to suggest pathways of thought, avenues of approach, along which we can develop our study of the interaction of religion and science. However, the readings in this course should not act as the end of one’s study of the relationship between religion and science. In the research paper, you will be given your own chance to find new texts and modes of thinking to explain, examine, and question this important field of inquiry.

Alongside the research paper this course will focus on shorter forms of writing and analysis, as well as on your ability to lead others in conversation and debate. During the semester you will write a short paper, writer a longer research paper, and (with partners) facilitate at least one class discussion. All readings for this course will be available as PDF documents on Sakai (under “Resources”) unless listed below as Required Texts. (All required texts are available at the UNC bookstore, Amazon.com, or through the publisher’s website.) Readings should be completed for the day they are listed. You are required to bring a printed copy of the week’s reading to each class period, although you may bring the texts on a tablet computer but *not* a laptop computer.) You are

responsible for checking your UNC email regularly for communications about the course. The [UNC Writing Center](#) provides helpful overviews and links for improving your writing. They also have appointment services available to help edit papers or discuss the writing process with a tutor.

All papers must be written in 12-point font, Times New Roman or Garamond, with 1-inch margins.

This class has no prerequisites. The Instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, which includes assignment due dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

Accessibility Resource Policy: Those who qualify under the UNC policies and guidelines for special assistance should alert the Instructor privately at the start of the semester. Information concerning programs through UNC Accessibility Resources & Services can be found [here](#).

Late Paper Policy: All assignments are to be submitted hardcopy in class at 9:30AM on the day they are due. You will be penalized 10% for each day a paper is late. Papers submitted over one week after the deadline will not be accepted. If you are ill or have a family emergency you may email papers to the Instructor before 9:30AM on the due date, and then ask for a follow-up meeting to explain the situation once you have returned to class.

*Note: You may not contact the Instructor about papers or exams beginning 48-hours prior to their due date.

Required Texts

- John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge, 2014) [\$19.99]
- Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (Twelve, 2009) [\$16.00]
- Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (Basic, 2006) [\$16.95]
- Marilynne Robinson, *Absence of Mind: The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self* (Yale, 2011) [\$16.50]
- Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: God, Science, and the Search for Meaning* (Schocken, 2014) [\$16.95]
- W. G. Sebald, *After Nature* (Modern Library, 2003) [\$15.00]

Course Assignments and Expectations

Class Attendance, Participation, and Leadership of Class Discussion

Attendance will be taken during each class period. If you arrive late and attendance has already been taken, you are responsible for alerting the Instructor to your presence. Arrivals more than ten minutes after class begins, or continuous tardiness, will be counted as absence. More than two unexcused absences will affect your final grade by 2% per absence. If you have more than six unexcused absences you cannot receive a grade higher than a C for the course. Please notify the Instructor as soon as possible for absences related to illness or family emergencies. For more information, the UNC Class Attendance Policy can be found [here](#).

Class participation points are based on the following criteria: arriving in class on time; being awake and attentive during lecture; being responsive and active during discussions and small

group activities; respectfully listening when others are speaking; **being engaged in the course without texting or checking your phone or email.** Failure to meet these criteria will result in the loss of participation points throughout the semester.

Working in small groups, each student is responsible for leading at least one class discussion during the semester. As a group you may decide how best to address that week's assigned material. This may involve a class discussion, group work, an activity, a debate, etc. Each group must submit a *summary of their plan* to the Instructor for approval by 12PM on the day before their assigned discussion day.

Remember: when you lead class discussions, you will want and expect everyone to participate; return that favor when it is other's turn to lead.

Reading Quizzes

There will be a reading quiz on each Monday that features new readings. The quiz will consist of five short-response questions, answerable if you have done the entire assigned reading. Quizzes will be open-book.

First Paper: The Contemporary Media (three pages, double-spaced)

The first paper addresses the current politics of the religion-science debate. You must find two articles from the media *written in the past year*. Your paper is to be a discussion and analysis of the content and viewpoint of each article. This is not a summary of each article. Instead, you will look at how the story of religion and science is portrayed in each article; scrutinize the author's stance and language; and put the article into the larger context of its intended audience: Whom does it wish to persuade? Who might be its defenders and detractors? Be sure to include the *full citation information* for each article at the end of your paper.

(Due Thursday, January 29)

Midterm

For the midterm exam you will be asked to answer three questions concerning the first two units of the course. The exam is meant to test your ability to synthesize class discussions and course readings, as well as your ability to describe the relationships between historical research, opinion, and interpretation. The exam will be open-book, during the final 45-minutes of class.

(Thursday, February 19)

Research Paper (ten-to-twelve pages, double-spaced)

The research paper assignment is divided into three parts. It is *strongly* urged that you to meet with the Instructor early in the paper-writing process.

For Part One you must decide on your topic. You will hand in a sheet of paper that includes both a *thesis statement* and a *paragraph explanation* of why you have chosen this argument. That paragraph should describe the major questions you wish to address, what sort of audience you intend to write for, how your own personal views and ideas might play a role in forming your conclusions, and what scholarly sources you intend to use.

(Part One due Thursday, February 5)

Part Two is focused on the sources you will use to write the paper and a first-draft outline. You are required to cite *at least five* scholarly sources in your paper. Sources can include both books and journal articles, but not articles from a magazine or newspaper. You are to hand in a list of these sources (using Chicago citation style) as well as an *outline* of your larger research paper. The outline should be formatted appropriately, and include sections for each paragraph, your topic sentences, and your specific examples and citations.

You must use full **Chicago Style citation** (footnote, endnote, or bibliography) in your paper.

(Part Two due Thursday, March 5)

Part Three is the research paper itself. Your paper must be between ten and twelve pages in length, with a coherent thesis and argument. The paper must be about some aspect of religion-science: the angle—with the approval of the Instructor—is up to you.

(Complete Paper due Thursday, April 16)

Final Exam

The final exam will ask you to write one or more essays that address topics from class readings and class discussions. The final will be cumulative vis-à-vis the readings. During the exam you will be provided with a list of the course texts (titles and authors). The final exam questions will be broad so as to allow you to demonstrate your mastery over the course material.

You must bring your own Blue Book to the Final Exam.

(Final Exam: 8AM, Friday, May 1)

Grading

Class Attendance, Participation, and Discussion Leadership Day	15
Reading Quizzes	10
First Paper	10
Midterm	10
Research Paper	
Part One	5
Part Two	5
Part Three	25
Final Exam	$\frac{20}{100}$

Schedule

Week 1: January 8

Introduction: Religion and Science in Scholarship and Theology

One: Positioning

Week 2: January 13-15:

Where Does All This Start? How to Think About the Religion-Science Divide

Readings:

- John Headley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (“Interaction between Science and Religion: Some Preliminary Considerations” and “Postscript: Science and Religion in the Twentieth Century”) (Required Text)

Week 3: January 20-22

Who Are the “New Atheists” and Why Do They Matter?

Readings

- Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (“Putting it Mildly,” “Religion Kills,” “The Metaphysical Claims of Religion Are False,” “The Tawdriness of the Miraculous and the Decline of Hell,” “Religion as an Original Sin,” and “In Conclusion: The Need for a New Enlightenment”) (Required Text)

Week 4: January 27-29

Changing the Conversation

Readings

- Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods* (“‘Thou Shall Not Freeze-Frame,’ Or How Not to Misunderstand the Science and Religion Debate”) (Sakai)
- Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (“Provisional Synthesis”) (Sakai)

(Due Thursday, January 29: First Paper)

Two: Historicizing

Week 5: February 3-5

What is the Scientific Enterprise?

Readings

- John Headley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (“Science and Religion in the Scientific Revolution”) (Required Text)
- Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (“Epistemologies of the Eye”) (Sakai)

Week 6: February 10-12

The West and the Rest? How European History Might or Might Not be Unique

Readings

- John Brooke and Geoffrey Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature: The Engagement of Science and Religion* (“Against the Self-Images of the New Age”) (Sakai)
- John Headley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (“Science and Religion in the Enlightenment”) (Required Text)

(Due Thursday, February 5: Research Paper, Part One)Week 7: February 17-19

The Role of Science in Christian Theology

Readings

- Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (“Introduction” and “Conclusion: From Secular Theology to the Enlightenment”) (Sakai)
- Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (“Introduction” and “Conclusion”) (Sakai)

(Thursday, February 19: Midterm)*Three: Two Classic Case Studies*Week 8: February 24-26

Why Do We Care So Much About Galileo?

Readings

- William R. Shea, “Galileo and the Church” (Sakai)
- David C. Lindberg, “Galileo, the Church, and the Cosmos” (Sakai)

Week 9: March 3-5

Why Do We Care So Much About Scopes and Monkeys?

Readings

- Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (“Introduction,” “Digging Up Controversy,” “Retelling the Tale,” and “Distant Echoes”) (Required Text)

(Due Thursday, March 5: Research Paper, Part Two)**March 9-13: Spring Break***Four: Attempting Solutions*Week 10: March 17-19

A Jewish Theologian and the Problem of Religion and Science

Readings

- Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: God, Science, and the Search for Meaning* (“Part Two: Why It Matters”) (Required Text)

Week 11: March 24-26

Scientists and the Problem of Religion and Science

Readings

- Stephen Jay Gould, “Nonoverlapping Magisteria.” *Natural History* 106, no. 2 (March 1997). (Sakai)

- Edward O. Wilson, *The Meaning of Human Existence* (“Religion” and “Alone and Free in the Universe”) (Sakai)
- Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why The Evidence of Evolution Reveals A Universe Without Design* (“Explaining the Very Improbable”) (Sakai)

Week 12: March 31-April 2

Enchantment and Disenchantment

Readings

- Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (“Introduction,” “The Bulwarks of Belief,” and “The Immanent Frame”) (Sakai)

*Five: Escaping the Attempt at Solution*Week 13: April 7-9

Humanity and Being

Readings

- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Who is Man?* (“Chapter Four”) (Sakai)
- Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (“The Dwelling Place of God”) (Sakai)

Week 14: April 14-16

Existence and Being

Readings

- Marilynne Robinson, *Absence of Mind* (“Introduction,” “On Human Nature,” and “Thinking Again”) (Required Text)

(Due Thursday, April 16: Final Research Paper)Week 15: April 21-23

Three Poems for the Future

Reading

- W. G. Sebald, *After Nature* (Required Text)

Final Exam: 8AM, Friday, May 1Further Reading

Some New and Noteworthy Books on Religion and Science

- Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York, 2006)
- Daniel Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life* (New York: 1995)
- Paul Feyerabend, *Conquest of Abundance: A Tale of Abstraction versus the Richness of Being* (Chicago, 2001)
- Adam Frank, *The Constant Fire: Beyond the Science vs. Religion Debate* (California, 2009)
- Ursula Goodenough, *The Sacred Depths of Nature* (Oxford, 2000)
- Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (Norton, 2012)

- Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge, 2008)
- John F. Haught, *Is Nature Enough: Meaning and Truth in the Age of Science* (Cambridge, 2006)
- Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (Bloomsbury, 2014)
- Armand Marie Leroi, *The Lagoon: How Aristotle Invented Science* (Viking, 2014)
- Lawrence Lipking, *What Galileo Saw: Imagining the Scientific Revolution* (Cornell, 2014)
- Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution* (Harper, 2007)
- Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford, 2012)
- Alvin Plantinga, *Where The Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (Oxford, 2011)
- John Polkinghorne, *Science and Religion in Quest of Truth* (Yale, 2012)
- Loyal Rue, *Nature is Enough: Religious Naturalism and the Meaning of Life* (SUNY, 2011)
- Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (Vintage, 1998)