

## **Religion and Science Syllabus**

**REL 3160, Sect 6792**

Spring 2012

Class Location: Turlington 2349

T 5-6 (11:45am-1:40pm), Th 6 (12:50-1:40)

Department of Religion (352-392-1625)

University of Florida

Instructor: Amy L Brown

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Office Hours T and Th 10-11:30 am and by appointment (usually in AND 105)

### **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 philosophical issues related to scientific understandings about the natural world and human life, including cosmology, the origins of life, and evolution by natural selection. The second section will address various ethical issues, including those related to environmental problems, cloning, and scientific methods and procedures. The third section will focus on the way science is being used by contemporary scholars of religious studies, with particular attention to cognitive science and evolutionary psychology.

The course readings are written mostly by religious studies scholars, philosophers, and scientists, offering a diverse set of well-written, authoritative, and sometimes controversial approaches to the topic. Assignments will require students to read critically, evaluate and compare different perspectives, and write well-informed and well-argued essays.

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.

### **Objectives and Goals**

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;
4. 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;

5. To identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape scholarly thinking about religion and science, from both scientific and humanistic perspectives;
6. To approach these issues from diverse disciplinary and theoretical perspectives; and
7. To communicate the information and analysis developed in this course in a clear, organized, and effective way in written work and in class discussions.

**Prerequisite:** "sophomore standing."

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

A	93-100	(4.0)
A-	90-92	(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)
E	Below 60	(0)

For grades and grading policies, see:

[Registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html](http://Registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html)

*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:* All assignments should be submitted via e-mail (sent to [amylbrown@ufl.edu](mailto:amylbrown@ufl.edu)) in the form of a Word Document attachment unless otherwise announced by the instructor. Assignments will be returned via e-mail as well.
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, more than 2 unexcused absences will result in reduction of participation grade. 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.

10. *Writing Assistance*: In addition to scheduling time with the instructor, students are highly encouraged to seek assistance from the University Reading and Writing Center (<http://www.at.ufl.edu/rwcenter/index.html>). For additional assistance, I recommend Joshua Sowin's "A Guide to Writing Well" (<http://www.fireandknowledge.org/archives/2007/01/08/a-guide-to-writing-well/>). The University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center is also a valuable resource, especially for basic citation information: (<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>).

## Required Books

1. Gary B. Ferngren, ed., *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), ISBN 9780801870385
2. Mary Midgley, *Evolution as a Religion: Strange Hopes and Stranger Fears* (Routledge, 2002), ISBN 9780415278331
3. Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (Harper, 1990), ISBN 9780062505958
4. Todd Tremlin, *Minds and Gods: The Cognitive Functions of Religion* (Oxford 2010), ISBN 978-0199739011
5. Ted Peters, *The Stem Cell Debate* (Fortress, 2007), ISBN 9780800662295
6. Cass R. Sunstein and Martha Nussbaum, eds., *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions* (Oxford, 2005), 978-0195305104

## Articles and chapters (avail. on e-learning)

1. Francis Collins, *The Language of God* (Free Press, 2006), Chapter 5 (“Deciphering God’s Instruction Book: The Lessons of the Human Genome”, p109-144).
2. 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”)
3. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (First Mariner Books, 2008), Chapter 4 (“Why There Almost Certainly is No God”, p 137-189)
4. Stuart A. Kauffman, *Reinventing the Sacred* (Basic Books, 2008), Chapter 1 (“Beyond Reductionism”, p 1-9), Chapter 2 (“Reductionism”, p 10-18), Chapter 4 (“The Nonreducibility of Biology to Physics”, p 31-43) and Chapter 19 (“God and Reinventing the Sacred”, p 281-288)
5. Nathan Schneider, “What Happens to Religion When It Is Biologized?” *Science and Spirit* (May-June 2008): 44-49.

PLEASE NOTE: All readings will be available on reserve at Library West.

## Requirements new syllabus for Gordon Rule 4:

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 week 5 of class
4. Essay (4 pages, min. 1000 words) on religion and evolutionary thought (25%)—Due week 8 of class

5. Final paper (8-10 pages, min. 2000 words) on a contemporary issue in religion and science. Topic must be approved by instructor. A rough draft will be due two weeks before the final paper is due. You will receive comments on the draft by the instructor and through peer review within a week. The final paper will be due the week before classes end. (40% total for rough draft, and final draft).

More detailed instructions for each assignment, including the peer review process for the final paper, will be provided before each paper is due.

### **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>WEEK</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>
<b>1) Tues, Jan 10.</b>	Introduction to the class	
<b>Thurs, Jan 12</b>	Conflict or complexity?	Chapters 1-2 in Ferngren
<b>2) Tues, Jan 17</b>	Greece & early Christianity	Chapters 3-5 in Ferngren
<b>Thurs, Jan 19</b>	Islam	Chapter 6 in Ferngren
<b>3) Tues, Jan 24</b>	The Scientific Revolution	Chapters 7-10 in Ferngren
<b>Thurs, Jan 26</b>	The Scientific Revolution, cont.	Chapters 11-13 in Ferngren
<b>4) Tues, Jan 31</b>	European Science in Transition	Merchant, Introduction and Ch. 1-4
<b>Thurs, Feb 2</b>	Visions of Nature	Merchant, Chapters 5-7
<b>5) Tues, Feb 7</b>	Mechanism	Merchant, Chapter 8-10
<b>Thurs, Feb 9</b>	Women, Nature, and Science	Merchant, Chapters 11 and 12
* First short essay due Feb 10 at 4 pm via e-mail*		
<b>6) Tues, Feb 14</b>	Natural history and evolution	Chapters 14-16 in Ferngren
<b>Thurs, Feb 16</b>	Natural history and evolution	Chapters 17-18 in Ferngren
<b>7) Tues, Feb 21</b>	Darwin	Chpt 3-4 in <i>On the Origin of Species</i> *
<b>Thurs, Feb 23</b>	Religious responses to Darwin	Chapters 19-22 in Ferngren

<b>8) Tues, Feb 28</b>	Evolution as religion	Midgley, Chapters 1-6
<b>Thurs, Mar 1</b>	Evolution as religion	Midgley, Chapter 7-9
*2 <sup>nd</sup> short essay due Mar 1 at 4 pm via e-mail*		
<b>9) March 3-March 9: Spring Break, No Classes</b>		
<b>10) Tues, Mar 13</b>	Evolution as religion	Midgley, Chapter 10-18
<b>Thurs, Mar 15</b>	Current issues	Chapter 23-26 in Ferngren
<b>11) Tues, Mar 20</b>	Current issues	Chapters 27-30 in Ferngren
<b>Thurs, Mar 22</b>	Evol Biology and Religion	Schneider, "What Happens?"*
<b>12) Tues, Mar 27</b>	Cognitive Theory of Religion	Tremlin, Intro and Chapters 1-4
<b>Thurs, Mar 29</b>	Cognitive Theories of Religion	Tremlin, Ch. 5-6 and Conclusion
<b>13) Tues, April 3</b>	Stem cells and bioethics	Peters, Ch 1-4
<b>Thurs, April 5</b>	Stem cells and bioethics	Peters, Ch 5-8
<b>14) Tues, April 10</b>	Science, animals and ethics	Sunstein & Nussbaum, Ch. 1-2
*Peer editing session—First draft of Final Paper due April 10 in class (bring printed copy)*		
<b>Thurs, April 12</b>	Science, animals and ethics	Sunstein & Nussbaum, Ch 3-4
<b>15) Tues, April 17</b>	Science, Animals and Ethics	Sunstein & Nussbaum, Ch 5-7, 13-14
<b>Thurs, April 19</b>	Science and Atheism	Dawkins, chpt 4*, Collins, chpt 5*
*Final Paper due Friday April 20, by 4pm via e-mail*		
<b>16) Tues, April 24</b>	Future of religion and science?	Kauffman, chpt 1,2, 4, 19*