

# **INDS/THEO 517: THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

CONFLICTED, COMPLEMENTARY OR COINHERENT?

Ross Hastings

Winter 2016

Wednesdays, 6:30 – 9:30 pm

2 or 3 graduate credit hours

TA: Meredith Cochran

## **Course Description**

Since the advent of modernity it has become increasingly common for people to view science and religion as being in conflict with one another. According to scientism and the new atheists, this is because the former relies on rationality and evidence, whilst the latter is the result of faith and superstition. In this course, the Christian theologian's response to this polarization will be given, and a complementary—even coinherent—position will be offered in its place, demonstrating that each of these great traditions of thought have “deep mutual relations” (T.F. Torrance) and are the richer for the reality of the other. Consideration of commonalities of epistemology (belief that is motivated), ontology, aesthetics, and various aspects of particular sciences will demonstrate that there is much more overlap in these two disciplines than is commonly thought. Ultimately, we hope to show that there is no contradiction between Scripture as properly interpreted and science as properly observed, and that science is not something that should be feared by Christians. Rather, science should become the subject of our curiosity and wonder and a means for the deepening of our worship. It is hoped also that those in scientific vocations can re-discover their work, as priests of creation, as participation in God's work in the world.

## **Learning Objectives**

1. Create awareness of the history of science within and as enabled by the Christian tradition.
2. Develop an understanding of the distinctness yet mutuality of Christian theology and science, with respect to epistemology and ontology.
3. Impart an introductory knowledge of various aspects of particular sciences which illustrate connections with theological realities.

4. Encourage the development of encyclopedic theologians who, in contrast to viewing science as something that should be feared, respond to all reality in forming their theology.
5. Evoke a sense of curiosity and wonder about God's creation that leads to a doxological posture in all of life.
6. Validate and enrich the vocation of scientists in light of their image-bearing and priestly calling.

### **Academic Requirements and Time Investment**

|                | 2 cr hr            | 3 cr hr            |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Lectures       | 36 hrs             | 36 hrs             |
| Reading        | 32 hrs (640 pages) | 48 hrs (960 pages) |
| Book Report    | ---                | 8 hrs              |
| Book Responses | 8 hrs              | 8 hrs              |
| Term Paper     | 14 hrs             | 35 hrs             |
| TOTAL          | 90 hrs             | 135 hrs            |

**Please note:** The amount of time taken by students will vary. This information is intended to be used as an approximation for planning purposes.

### **Assignments**

#### **1. Reading**

2 credit hour students are required to read 460 pages and 3 credit hour students are required to read 700 pages from the books in the required list.

- 460 pages will come from the readings assigned for each day in class. Students must have read the pages assigned for the day before coming to class, have written a one page summary of their responses to the readings (see assignment #3 below), and be prepared to interact on their content. This will be the totality of reading for 2 credit hour students in the required list.
- Readings that are not taken from the required reading list will be made available as photocopies or on Moodle.
- The rest of the readings for 3 credit students must include some pages from each of the books in this required list. If students have read one of these books before they may substitute that book with another from the recommended list, with approval from the professor.

Students are also required to read 260 pages (180 pages for 2 cred hr students) from books of their choice from the recommended list.

**2. Book Report (3 credit hour students only)**

Students are required to write one book report on one of the books from the required reading section.

The book report will identify the book's main approach to science and religion. Write a review of the book in which you (i) clearly and succinctly describe its approach towards science and religion, (ii) identify what you consider to be the main strengths and/or weaknesses of its approach (use textual evidence; avoid ungrounded personal opinions), and (iii) briefly outline any ways in which you think it might need to be supplemented by any of the other approaches that were discussed in the class. Length: 1,000 words.

**Due on TBD**

**3. Book Responses (all students)**

Students are required to write a one page response to the assigned readings in preparation for each day in class. These responses will contain a summary of what they have learned, and a brief account of their own critical engagement with the material.

**Due each class**

**4. Term Paper (all students)**

Students are to write an academic paper on one of the following topics:

- a. The Basis for Knowledge in Science and in Christian Theology
- b. The Origin of Humanity, describing the pros and cons of any two viewpoints that are biblically and scientifically credible. [Preferably pick the two viewpoints you agree and disagree with most strongly, referring to any wider reading you have done on the topic (including the book reviews). Give an evaluation of what you consider their strengths and weaknesses to be, being careful to offer arguments to support your praise or criticism (use textual evidence; avoid ungrounded personal opinions). In your concluding remarks comment on what ramifications your chosen viewpoint has for understanding the relationship between science and Christianity.]

- c. How I would teach/preach a series of sermons or adult/youth Christian Education classes on the relationship between science and theology, thereby evoking the curiosity and wonder and worship of Christian disciples. This essay will reflect a thorough knowledge of the subject material, and include outlines of each sermon/talk given and a full manuscript of one of the sermons/talks.
- d. A topic approved by the professor.

Length: 1,200 words for 2 credit hour students; 3,000 words for 3 credit hour students

**Due on TBD**

## **Evaluation**

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| Book Report    | 20% |
| Book Responses | 20% |
| Term Paper     | 60% |

## **Important Policies**

**Note** that while every effort is made to ensure that assignments do not go missing, students are strongly advised to keep a copy of all course work in the event that resubmission is required.

**Course Evaluations** are an essential way for the College to measure and improve the effectiveness of its courses. Submitting a course evaluation is considered a requirement of this course. Near the last class session you will receive an e-mail notice with a link to an online course evaluation. Once you have submitted your evaluation you may then view your course grade online.

**Extensions** for a date that falls more than 7 days after the end of term must be requested through the Student Services Office. They will be granted only in cases of demonstrated and unforeseen emergency and may be subject to a grade penalty. The extension policy and application form can be downloaded from the College website ([Current Students](#) / [Academic Catalogue](#) / [Course Policies](#)). The deadline for applying for an extension for assignments due after the end of classes is the due date of those assignments.

**Academic Honour** is upheld by Regent College, as the highest standards of academic responsibility are part of our commitment to Christ in all of life. Students are required to familiarize themselves especially with the discussion of “Academic Integrity” in the College Catalogue.

## Course Outline

- Jan. 14 Introduction to the relationship between theology and science  
[Reading: Polkinghorne, 1-32; McGrath, 1-54]
- Jan. 21 Science the Child of Theology now the Rebellious Teenager:  
The History of Science  
[Reading: Loren Wilkinson, "The New Story of Creation: A Trinitarian Perspective," *Crux* XXX, 4 (December 1994), 26–36.]
- Jan. 28 Resonances between theology and science related to knowing  
(Epistemological commonalities, models, and analogies)  
[Reading: McGrath, 57-86]
- Feb. 4 Resonances between theology and science related to being  
(ontology)  
[Reading: Polkinghorne, 60-87]
- Feb. 11 Reading Week
- Feb. 18 Important Practitioners in the Science/Theology dialogue  
[Reading: McGrath, 207-229]
- Feb. 25 Origins of the universe – the Big Bang Theory  
[Reading: Lennox, 58-77; Polkinghorne, *Science and Creation*, 17-33; *Quarks, Chaos & Christianity*, 20-35; McGrath, 177-186]
- Mar. 3: Origins of the earth – the four views: Young Earth, Progressive Creationism, Intelligent Design and Evolutionary Creationism  
[Reading: McGrath, 186-192; Lennox, 186-192; Michael Behe, 3-25; 187-208]

- Mar. 10                      Quantum physics and theology: order and disorder, chance and necessity.  
[Reading: Polkinghorne, 73-82; Quarks, Chaos & Christianity, 36-61; Quantum Physics & Theology, 1-47]
- Mar. 17                      Brain science, psychology and theology (Guest: Rod Wilson);  
geology & theology (Guest: )  
[Reading: Struthers, in Haarsma and Hoezee, Delight in Creation, 70-83; Stearley, in Haarsma and Hoezee, Delight in Creation, 182-197]
- Mar. 24                      Reading Week
- Mar. 31                      Chemistry and theology, the origin of life;  
astronomy and theology  
[Reading: Haarsma in in Haarsma and Hoezee, Delight in Creation, 198-217]
- Apr. 7                        Theological perspectives on Landscape Science and Global  
Environmental Change (Guest: Olav Slaymaker);  
Aesthetics in theology and science  
[Reading: Turner in Haarsma and Hoezee, Delight in Creation, 156-181]
- Apr. 14                      The Vocation of the Scientist, Scientist Theologian, Theologian  
Scientist  
[Reading: Crouch in in Haarsma and Hoezee, Delight in Creation, 16-31; Wiseman, 1-5]

## **Bibliography**

### **Required Reading**

McGrath, Alister E. *Science and Religion: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. ISBN: 9781405187916. \$116.00. 250 pages.

Polkinghorne, J. C. *Science and the Trinity the Christian Encounter with Reality*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. \$39.99. 180 pages.

Lennox, John C. *God's Undertaker Has Science Buried God?* Updated ed. Oxford: Lion, 2009. ISBN: 9780745953717. \$22.99. 220 pages.

Ratzsch, Delvin Lee, *Science & Its Limits: The Natural Sciences in Christian Perspective*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000. ISBN: 9780830815807. \$27.99 190 pages.

*All prices are subject to change without notice. Please note that the Regent College Bookstore offers a 20% discount on regularly priced books (some exceptions may apply).*

### **Recommended Reading**

Alexander, Denis. *Rebuilding the Matrix: Science and Faith in the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003.

Alexander, Denis. *Can We Be Sure about Anything?: Science, Faith and Postmodernism*. Leicester: Apollos, 2005.

Andrews, E. H. *Who Made God?: Searching for a Theory of Everything*. Darlington, England: EP Books, 2009.

Badger, Steve and Tennesen, Mike. "Does the Spirit Create Through Evolutionary Processes? Pentecostals and Biological Evolution" in *Science and the Spirit: a Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, Yong, Amos and Smith, James K. A. (Eds.), 92-116.

Barbour, Ian G. *Religion in an Age of Science*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990.

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Berry, R. J. *Real Scientists, Real Faith*. Oxford: Monarch, 2009.

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Brooke, John Hedley. *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

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- Giberson, Karl, and Mariano Artigas. *Oracles of Science: Celebrity Scientists versus God and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
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- Gunton, Colin E. *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1998.
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- Gunton, Colin E. *Christ and Creation: The Didsbury Lectures*, 1990. Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, Reprint edition, June 9, 2005.



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- Greene, John C. *Science, Ideology, and World View: Essays in the History of Evolutionary Ideas*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
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