

Science and Philosophy of Religion

Spring 2019, RELS 3396-16991, W 1-230pm (H 135)
Honors College Course/Philosophy Department
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Office hours by appointment



Description

In the last years, turning points in physics (Higgs Boson) and genetic engineering (CRISPR) changed the knowledge of our world and ourselves. Moving from them, we will rethink the relations between science and religion. We will initially study some classic (Al Ghazali, Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Plato, Pascal, Kant) and new (Craig, Brecher, Brown, Findlay, Plantinga, Seeskin) philosophical ways of understanding God. Then we will turn to the continuity that lately characterizes the religious narrative and the scientific explanation of the world. This part of the course focuses on quantum physics (Rae), especially the big bang theory and the God Particle (CERN movie). Next, we will learn when the religious and the scientific explanation can coexist and when they cannot (McGrath, Popper, Rosenberg). Finally, we will study evolutionism (Howard, Dawkins) and genetic engineering (CRISPR Movie), where emerging bioethical issues challenge religious beliefs about human life.

Schedule

Jan 16	Introduction
Jan 23	Thinking about God (Plato, Seeskin)
Jan 30	Ontological and Modal Arguments (Anselm, Plantinga)
Feb 6	The Causal Argument (Descartes, Brecher)
Feb 13	Pascal's Wager Argument (Pascal)
Feb 20	The Moral Argument (Kant, Findlay)
Feb 27	The Cosmological Argument (Al Ghazali, Aquinas, Craig, Brown)
Mar 6	Creationism, Continuous Creation, Pantheism (Genesis, Spinoza)
Mar 20	Essential Quantum Physics (Rae)
Mar 27	Big-Bang and The God Particle (CERN Movie)
Apr 3	Scientific vs Religious Explanation (McGrath, Popper, Rosenberg)
Apr 10	Evolutionism (Howard, Dawkins)
Apr 17	Genetic Engineering (CRISPR Movie)
Apr 24	Bioethical Issues (Case Study)

Assignments and Assessments

This is a hybrid course. Part of it consists of reading the online materials and taking short quizzes in class. Here is the list of assignments and their corresponding value. (1) Attendance, participation, tests (20%), (2) a summary of one class subjects (20%), (3) a team-worked PowerPoint presentation on any bioethical issues (20%), (4) an argumentative and comprehensive final paper (3000 words) on the theoretical parts of the class (40%). Please, submit your final paper on Blackboard Learn via Turn-It-In. Late submissions are strongly discouraged and penalized but accepted. The attendance is mandatory but can be waived by the teacher for justified cases; otherwise, exceptions require a medical note.

Plagiarism or other forms of cheating will be reported and penalized. Look at the College (CLASS) bylaws for details on academic honesty, disabilities, and other matters about students and life on campus.

Bibliography

All the readings are available on blackboard learn. Below, you can find all their sources, including some other relevant (but optional) references. According to the subjects discussed by our invited speaker, new class material could be added during the semester.

- Anselm of Canterbury, *The Major Works* (Oxford 1998).
Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.
Bob Brecher, "Descartes's Causal Argument for the Existence of God" (*International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 7/3, 1976: 418-32).
P. Brown, "Infinite Causal Regression" (*Philosophical Review* 75/4, 1966: 510-25).
William L. Craig, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* (Macmillan 1979).
Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford 1989.
René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Oxford 2008).
Jonathan Howard, *Darwin* (Oxford 1982).
Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Hackett 2002).
Alistair McGrath, *Darwinism and the Devine* (Blackwell 2011).
Alistair McGrath, *The Big Question* (St. Martin's Press 2015).
Blaise Pascal, *Pensées and Other Writings* (Oxford 1995).
Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (Eerdmans 2002).
Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford 1974).
Plato, *Five Dialogues*. G.M.A. Grube and J.M. Cooper (eds). Hackett 2002.
Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (Routledge 2002).
Alex Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Science* (Routledge 2012).
Alastair I.M. Rae, *Quantum Physics* (Oxford 2005).
Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics and Other Works* (Princeton 1994)
Kenneth Seeskin, *Maimonides on the Origin of the World* (Cambridge 2006).