**IST 1010: First Year Interdisciplinary Course**

**Christianity and Evolution**

**Fall 2017, Monday 1:00-4:30 PM**

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**Course Description:**

A first year introductory course is required in the MTS, MDiv, MASJE, and MAPSC programs. The purpose of these courses is to:

* Expose incoming students to the relevance of the academic, interdisciplinary study of religion and theology so they recognize from the first year of study that theological/religious studies disciplines work together to generate significant knowledge that matters to the world.
* Expose students in a collaborative way to the critical questions and issues that focus the research of the faculty.
* Provide a core first year experience and orientation to academic skills necessary for success at the graduate level.

Christianity and Evolution examines the variety of Christian responses to the theory of evolution, from rejection and hostility to qualified acceptance to embracing evolution as a theological resource. The course will also explore the larger issues of how different Christians interact with science and the implications of evolution for theological understandings of human nature and the existence of suffering.

**Learning Goals:**

The course introduces theories and methods in the study of religion and theology, and provides learning experiences able to support the following learning outcomes for students: Students identify and describe characteristic approaches to the academic study of religion related to at least four of the six curricular areas identified in the core curriculum.

1. Students demonstrate critical reading skills, such as the capacity to identify the thesis of a text, its methodology, the contextual situation of the author’s argument in a larger discourse, the contours of its argument, and the implications of its constructive work.
2. Students demonstrate the capacity to write a brief, thesis-driven paper drawing on textual resources with appropriate academic citation and a writing style appropriate to the genre.
3. Students are able to identify appropriate academic resources through library research in order to address a research question of significance to them.
4. Students engage in critical, respectful, and constructive academic dialogue and reflection in a diverse cultural setting (the classroom).
5. Student motivation, curiosity, and commitment to the engaged academic study of religion and theology increases.

**Course Expectations:**

Students are expected to attend every class, except for cases of illness or family emergency. It is not possible to pass the class if you miss more than two classes. Assigned readings should be completed before class meetings.

**Schedule:**

**September 11: Course Introduction**

Viewing (in class): Institute for Creation Research, *Your Origins Matter*

ProgressiveChristianity.org, *Living the Question 2.0*, “Stories of Creation”

Writing Exercise (in class): How did human beings come to be who we are? What does your answer imply for our relation to the world and each other?

**September 18: Historical Background**

Reading: Noll—*American Evangelicalism*, Chapter 8 (Canvas)

National Science Teachers Association—“The Teaching of Evolution” Position Statement

<http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/evolution.aspx>

Academic Literacy Skills: Getting to Know the Writing Lab, Assess the Writing Situation, Write a Solid Thesis. Writing Center Director Elizabeth Coody, 30 minutes.

**September 25: Intelligent Design Movement**

Reading: Alumkal—“Strategic Frame Ambivalence” (Canvas)

Discovery Institute Center for Science and Culture, <http://www.discovery.org/id/>

Phillip Johnson—“Bringing Balance to a Fiery Debate” (Canvas)

Stephen Meyer—“A Scientific History—and Philosophical Defense—of the Theory of Intelligent Design” (Canvas)

Academic Literacy Skills: Library Research. Micah Saxton, Taylor Library, 1 hour (Students look for resources relevant to their final paper.)

**October 2: Qualified Acceptance of Evolution; Pro-Evolution Theology**

Reading: Lewis—*The Problem of Pain*, Chapter 5 (Canvas)

Pope John Paul II—“Humans are Spiritual and Corporeal Beings”

<http://inters.org/John-Paul-II-Catechesis-Spiritual-Corporeal>

Polkinghorne—*Exploring Reality*, Preface and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 8

**October 9: Process Theology**

Reading: Gnuse—“A Process Theological Interpretation of the Primeval History in Genesis 2-11” (Canvas)

Kirkpatrick—“The Role of Evolutionary Psychology within an Interdisciplinary Science of Religion.” (Canvas)

Lee—“The Human Dark Side” (Canvas)

Assignment Due: Submit Short Paper #1 on Canvas.

**October 16: Pro-Evolution Theology**

Reading: Haught—*Making Sense of Evolution*, Introduction and Chapters 1-7

**October 23: Outsider Perspectives on Christianity and Evolution**

Reading: Dawkins—“The Improbability of God” (Canvas)

Ruse—“Belief in God in a Darwinian Age” (Canvas)

Gould—“Nonoverlapping Magisteria” (Canvas)

Assignment Due: Bring Short Paper #2 draft to class for peer reviewing.

**October 30: Pro-Evolution Theology; Eco-Feminism**

Reading: Haught, Chapters 8-11

McFague—*Body of God*, Chapters 2 (Canvas)

Assignment Due: Submit Short Paper #2 on Canvas

**November 6: Political and Theological Stakes**

Reading: National Center for Science Education, <http://ncse.com/>. Look at home page, about, and recent action alerts.

Pew Research Center—“Religious Groups Views on Evolution”

<http://www.pewforum.org/2009/02/04/religious-groups-views-on-evolution/>

Academic Literacy Skills: Read for your Peers. Elizabeth Coody, Writing Center Director, 1 hour. Bring a draft of your final paper to share with classmates.

**November 13: Conclusion**

No reading

**November 17: Submit Final Paper on Canvas.**

**Written Assignments:**

The written assignments fulfill the goals of the class by providing you with an opportunity to engage in a more detailed critical analysis of the course topic. The assignments build on each other.

1. Short Paper #1: Choose a document that represents a religious individual or organization articulating a stance on evolution. Describe the arguments that the document makes. Then discuss the document in its historical context. How does the document continue previous arguments? Does the document introduce new perspectives? Be sure to reference relevant course readings and lectures. The paper should be approximately 4 pages.

2. Short Paper #2: Find two theological sources related to the document from the previous paper. The first source should be generally supportive of the author(s) and/or the larger religious group they represent. The second source should be generally critical. Discuss the theological perspective of the source authors, including the basic assumptions associated with their worldview. The paper should be approximately 4 pages.

3. Final Paper: Discuss your document in its historical and theological context. Then discuss your own agreement or disagreement with the document. Are the document’s arguments intellectually sound or intellectually deficient? How does the documents theological assumptions compare with your own? Of course, we expect you to incorporate material from the short papers. Also, you should reference relevant course readings and lectures. The paper should be approximately 10 pages.

All written assignments must use an accepted method of citation. (Hint: Go to <http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/socrel/for_authors/instructions.html> to see the citation method commonly used by sociologists. This is one of the easiest methods.)

**Grading:**

Participation: 20%

Short Paper #1: 15%

Short Paper #2: 15%

Final Paper: 50%

Our assumption is that students in a masters program can be expected to produce academic work that is above average (in comparison to undergraduates). Therefore, the modal grade we assign is B+. A paper will earn a B+ if it fulfills all of the requirements of the assignment. A paper will earn a grade higher than a B+ for exceptional quality. A paper will earn a grade of B or B- if there are minor to moderate shortcomings. Grades below B- are reserved for papers with major shortcomings.

This course may be taken pass/fail, but you must request this during the first two weeks by emailing the instructors. You do *not* need to provide a justification for you request.

**Course Readings Detailed Citations:**

Alumkal, Antony. 2012. “Strategic Frame Ambivalence: Intelligent Design and Reparative Therapy Navigate the Worlds of Religion and Science.” Paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association.

Dawkins, Richard. 1998. “The Improbability of God.” *Free Inquiry* 18:6.

Gnuse, Robert Karl. 2002. “A Process Theological Interpretation of the Primeval History in Genesis 2-11.” *Horizons* 29:23-41.

Gould, Stephen Jay. 1997. “Nonoverlapping Magisteria.” *Natural History* (March):16-22.

Haught, John F. 2010. *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

Johnson, Phillip E. 2008. “Bringing Balance to a Fiery Debate.” Pp. 23-40 in *Intelligent Design 101: Leading Experts Explain the Key Issues*, edited by H. Wayne House. Grand Rapids: Kregel.

Kirkpatrick, Lee A. 2011. “The Role of Evolutionary Psychology within an

Interdisciplinary Science of Religion.” *Religion* 41:329-39.

Lee, Joseph. 2014. “The Human Dark Side: Evolutionary Psychology and Original Sin.” *Journal of Religious Health* 53:614–629.

Lewis, C. S. 1962. *The Problem of Pain*. New York: Collier Books. Chapter 5

McFague, Sallie. 1993. *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. Chapters 2.

Meyer, Stephen. 2008. “A Scientific History—and Philosophical Defense—of the Theory of Intelligent Design.” *Religion - Staat – Gesellschaft* 7.

National Science Teachers Association. 2013. “The Teaching of Evolution”

Noll, Mark A. 2001. *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. Chapter 8.

Polkinghorne, John. 2005. *Exploring Reality: The Intertwining of Science and Religion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Pope John Paul II. 1986. “Humans Are Spiritual and Corporeal Beings.”

Ruse, Michael. 2009. “Belief in God in a Darwinian Age.” Pp. 368-89 in *The Cambridge Companion to Darwin*, edited by M. J. S. Hodge and G. Radick. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.