STANFORD UNIVERSITY
Spring 2014

Religion and Science: Opposing Forces or Intellectual Partners?

REL 84  Stanford Continuing Studies
[RELGST 28  Religious Studies Department, Stanford University]

Mondays, 7-9 p.m.  Paul Crowley, SJ, PhD
  pcrowley@scu.edu

Oliver Putz, PhD
  oputz@scu.edu

Course Website: TBA

Structure of the Course:
This is a special Stanford course, sponsored by the Stanford Religious Studies Department. This course is designed for the entire Stanford community, and Continuing Studies students will be joined in the classroom by Stanford undergraduates.

For Continuing Studies credit:  Attend lectures

There will be a sign-in each week for those seeking course credit. Questions to spur your thinking will be posted on the course website following each lecture.

Course Readings:


- Further readings will be posted on the course website

- Individual lecturers may recommend short articles that would accompany their lectures. These will be posted on the course website for your convenience.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

THE BIG QUESTIONS
Paul Crowley and Oliver Putz

Description: An introduction to the structure and the main objectives of the course. What are some of the underlying questions about “religion and science” as an academic filed of research? This calls for a brief overview, a rough outline of the current situation between religion and science, and the overall approach of the course to the encounter between religion and science. We will ask whether the relationship between the two disciplines is a dialogue, a debate, or a conversation. Here it is important to understand that we are not engaging in theology, but rather in the level of discussion that is required before theology can take place. In this course, all theological issues will be approached within the context of their intellectual and cultural frameworks as partial expressions of the encounter between religion and science.

Week 2

METHOD IN SCIENCE AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES
Oliver Putz on science, Paul Crowley on religion

Description: An investigation of various understandings of the nature of “religion” and “science.” The difference between religion and theology as well as between a scientific worldview and the natural sciences as such. The various meanings of belief, and their implications for an encounter between religion and science. The reach and limits of method in science and religious studies.

Themes:
- metaphysical foundations of the natural sciences
- distinction between epistemological and ontological aspects of scientific endeavor
- difference between “explanation” and “understanding”
- principles of empirical research
- differences between falsification, induction and deduction
- status of “objective knowledge” in light of historicity of understanding
- limits of the scientific enterprise
- experience as a category of understanding
- religion distinguished from theology and from faith
- theology as a science of faith (lived religion) in Aquinas
- faith as ultimate concern (Tillich)

Bronowski...?? [TBA]
Week 3

WAYS OF RELATING RELIGION AND SCIENCE

Oliver Putz and Paul Crowley

Description: After having explored the foundations and methods of religious study and science, we investigate how these two disciplines have been related to each other, using the four-fold typology of Ian Barbour as a guide.

Themes: conflict
independence
dialogue
integration


Week 4

THE GALILEO CASE

Guest Lecturer: Paula Findlen, Stanford University

Description: Here we examine the Galileo case and how its interpretation has shaped the common perception of the relationship between religion and science as one of warfare.

Themes: Galileo and the Roman Inquisition
the Arisotelico-Thomistic paradigm and natural theology
the meaning of truth in this paradigm
the “book of nature” versus the “book of revelation”

Reading: Galileo, “Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina” (1615)


**Week 5**

**THE RELIGIOUS RECEPTION OF DARWIN**

**Guest Lecturer:**
**John David Pleins, Santa Clara University**

**Description:** This session will investigate the early reception of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* by religious thinkers at the time. It will also address the question of how far Darwin himself saw his scientific theory as a roadblock for religious faith. We will also talk about contemporary religious opposition to the theory of evolution.

**Themes:**
- natural selection
- Thomas Huxley versus Samuel Wilberforce
- Alfred Russell Wallace
- the religious world of Darwin and his associates
- Catholic caution regarding Darwin’s theory (but not rejection)

**Reading:** TBA

**Recommended:**

Week 6

**DIVINE ACTION AND THE LAWS OF NATURE**

*Guest Lecturers:*

Robert. J. Russell, The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, Berkeley; and William R. Stoeger, SJ, Vatican Observatory

**Description:** The last two sessions have indirectly entailed theology. Here a theological question comes to the fore, pushed there by both Galileo and Darwin: Does God” act in the world? And if so, how? This was an active question in the early development of modern scientific methods. Science views the universe as governed by relationships that can be captured by scientific models. Is there room for an acting God in this worldview? Correlatively, are there laws for us to discover, or do we create them in order to describe natural phenomena?

**Themes:**
- what is meant by the word “God”?
- divine action
- objective special divine action
- non-interventionist objective action (NIODA)
- compatibilism
- incompatibilism

**Reading:**

Approaches to Divine Action in Light of Contemporary Science,” in *Cosmology from Alpha to Omega: The Creative Mutual Interaction of Theology and Science* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 110-150.

**Recommended:**


Week 7

**EVOLUTION AND CREATION**

**Guest Lecturer:**

Ted Peters, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

**Description:**

How can the theory of evolution be reconciled with a cosmology understood within a framework of “creation”? Much depends on what is meant by creation, and how cosmology is understood.

**Themes:**

What is meant by “creation”? various approaches within religion
natural selection
biological evolution
cosmology and cosmic evolution
creation theology

**Reading:**


**Recommended:**


Week 8

**FREE WILL AND BIOLOGY**

**Guest Lecturer:**

Celia Deane-Drummond, University of Notre Dame

Tim O’Connor, Indiana University

**Description:**

Do we have free will in the face of our biological makeup? Abrahamic traditions have always placed a significant emphasis on free will, but
recently neurobiologists have claimed that free will does not exist at all. To them, our brains mechanistically “decide” and create the illusion that we have freely chosen our acts. Are we free, or pre-determined by biology?

Themes:
free choice of the will
biological determinism
brain, mind and freedom
compatibilism
morality as an evolved capacity
morality in animals

Reading:
TBA

Recommended:

Week 9

*Memorial Day Holiday*

Week 10

**RELIGIOSITY**

**Guest Lecturer: Thomas Sheehan, Stanford University**

Description: In our final session we look at the phenomenon of religiosity from an anthropological and philosophical perspective. Is there a way that the human can be understood as “naturally” given to the search for transcendence? Can such a philosophical anthropology be sustained by scientific evidence? Need it be?

Themes:
religiosity as a human universal
evolution of religiosity
cultural evolution and religion
transcendental-evolutionary frameworks for understanding the human

Reading: TBA


Week 11 Continuing Studies students meet for a discussion of the quarter, and to raise new topics for further consideration.