

PT 700 Dialogues in Faith and Science

Methodist Theological School of Ohio
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Catalog Description

The purpose of this course is to engage in meaningful discourse between science and theology for the purpose of developing a thoughtful, relevant faith conversant with scientific discovery and progress. Contemporary discoveries in neuroscience, cosmology, anthropology, evolutionary theory, genetics, ecological sciences all offer opportunities for engaging understanding of faith. Two or three scientific areas will be chosen for dialogue with the Christian faith traditions.

BOOKS:

Required:

Dixon, Thomas. *Science and Religion: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Johnson, Elizabeth. *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014.

Re Manning, Russell & Michael Byrne. *Science and Religion in the 21st Century*. London: SCM Press, 2013.

Swimme, Brian Thomas and Mary Evelyn Tucker. *The Journey of the Universe*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Tucker, Mary Evelyn and John Grim. *Ecology and Religion*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2014.

Supplemental:

Gilkey, Langdon. *Nature, Reality, and the Sacred*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.

Recommended:

Bauman, Whitney A., Richard R. Bohannon and Kevin J. O'Brien. *Inherited Land: The Changing Grounds of Religion and Ecology*. Portland: Wipf & Stock, 2011.

Cronon, William. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: WW Norton, 1996.

Haught, John. *Science and Faith A New Introduction*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2013.

Vaughn-Lee, Llewellyn and Joanna Macy. *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of Faith*. Point Reyes Station, CA: Golden Sufi Center Press, 2013.

COURSE OUTLINE

February 5 – Intro and Syllabus review

Frameworks for Conversation

February 12 - Read Dixon

February 19 – Read Re Manning

February 26 – Read pdf's in Resource folder for today

The Story of the Universe

March 5 – Read *The Journey of the Universe*

March 12 - Read pdf's in today's Resource folder

March 19– Read pdf's in today's Resource folder

March 26 & April 2 – Spring Break & Holy Week Break

Evolution

April 9 – Read *Ask the Beasts* (thru chapter 5)

April 16 – Read *Ask the Beasts* (to end)

April 23 - Read pdf's in Resource folder for today

Ecology and Species Extinction

April 30 - Read *Ecology and Religion* (thru chapter 6)

May 7 – Read *Ecology and Religion* (to end)

May 14 – pdf's in today's resource folder (TBD)

May 21 - Finals Week (we will meet as ordered by the Illuminati)

Assignments

Discussion and Class Participation (30%)

Discussion will be a central part of this seminar and students are expected to attend each class having completed all of the assigned reading and ready to interact in an informed and helpful manner.

Final Paper (70%)

Research and write a final paper (18-22 pages) exploring a particular idea or issue through scientific and religious resources. Final paper is due May 21 (for seniors) or May 26 (everyone else) at midnight.

Class Attendance and Participation

Individuals will have different styles for demonstrating full engagement with the class. Introverts and extroverts can participate without penalty. If you choose to do the required reading and bring your best ideas to the course, you will fully participate. If you have any concerns about this or other requirements, please set up a meeting and we will discuss it.

Because of the format of this class, your presence at and involvement in all class-meetings is essential.

You are permitted the equivalent of 1 class session (3 hours) absence during the semester—no questions asked. Additional absences and/or chronic tardiness will result in the lowering of your final grade.

During class discussions it is not likely or even desirable that we will agree on all issues. Be civil and respectful in your disagreement—rude and/or disrespectful behavior is not permitted.

Please turn cell phone ringers off during class. Surfing the internet, participating in social media and sending/receiving text messages during class as rude and disrespectful behavior. Repeat offenders will be asked to leave the

class and may fail the course.

Due Dates and Course Extensions

All assignments are to be completed by the date assigned. A course extension cannot be granted by the faculty but must be requested through the procedures described in the student handbook.

Office Hours

Please contact me by e-mail tvanmeter@mtso.edu or by phone to schedule an appointment if you desire a meeting.

GRADING

A range: written and oral work is superior, with attention to detail, clarity and depth of thought, good flow and excellent grammar. Appropriate and mature participation in class is necessary.

B range: written and oral work is good, with solid thinking processes, good grammar/flow and obvious quality of time spent on the assignments. Appropriate and mature participation in class is necessary.

C range: written and oral work is adequate, though there are significant problems with clarity, argument and grammar. Appropriate and mature participation in class is necessary.

F range: written and oral work is not completed as assigned, or the work indicates that the student is not giving attention to or is incapable of completing requirements in this course.

Inappropriate or lack of participation, improper use of internet access during class, or incomplete assignments may be a factor in a lower grade.

Additional Notes

1. Use of inclusive language is expected both in class and in your writing. For example, do not assume that “man” refers to all of humankind. Inclusive metaphors for God are encouraged strongly; God is more than simply “Father.”
2. Use the Turabian manual for information about citations and research as necessary.
3. If writing is a challenge, please contact the school’s writing mentor.
4. **There will be no extensions for work in this course. Please plan ahead.**

Please see Student Handbook for sections providing policy details on the following:

ADA—MTSO seeks to remove barriers to inclusion in its learning communities. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs at the beginning of the semester. Please contact the Director of Student Services to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any accommodation must be agreed upon prior to the due date of the affected course requirement.

Class attendance—Regular attendance is expected in all classes. During unavoidable absences, students are responsible for missed work. An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction or course failure, despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will not be allowed credit for a course if he or she is absent for 25% of the class sessions. As it relates to blended courses, students may not be allowed credit if they are absent for 25% of class meetings or if 25% of online course work is not completed. Use of Skype or similar technology is not a substitute for attendance in class.

Electronic Devices—Turn mobile devices off or “vibrate only” during class. Browsing the Internet or engaging in email or social network conversations during class is discouraged. Instructors have the right to impose grading penalties for disruptions due to electronic devices.

Human Subjects Research—Research by MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel that collects non-public information from and/or about living individuals or contemporary organizations/groups for purposes of publication or public presentation (including class assignments) must be approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee. MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel should err on the side of caution and apply for committee approval of any activity that may fit this description.

Inclusive Language—In accordance with MTSO’s policy on inclusive language, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing and in the classroom discussions when referring to human beings.

Incompletes—To receive a course grade of Incomplete, students must submit the petition form from the Registrar with all signatures to the Dean’s Office before the last day of regularly scheduled classes. See Student Handbook for intensive term deadlines. Any petition submitted without a due date for outstanding work will be denied. If work is not complete by the due date the Registrar will record the grade of F for the course.

Pass/Fail—The decision to exercise this option must be made before the end of the second week of the course by completing the appropriate form available through the Registrar. To receive a grade of "pass" the student must do at least the equivalent of C minus work in the course.

Plagiarism—Plagiarism is a serious matter of academic, professional, and personal integrity. All students at the masters level are expected to understand the requirement to provide attribution when the work of others is used. Students are also expected to be familiar with and understand the school’s policy

on Academic Misconduct found in the Student Handbook. If students have questions about attribution, citation, and how to avoid plagiarism they should consult the course instructor, the school's writing instructor, or library staff. When in doubt it is better to provide attribution even if one is uncertain about the proper citation form. Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct that results in disciplinary actions per the Student Handbook that may range from failing an assignment or course to expulsion.

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