CORE 2410

SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN
DIALOGUE: THE CASE OF
DARWIN

CORE THEME: COMMUNITIES AND
ENVIRONMENTS

SPRING 2007, MW 10:00-11:50 A.M.

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Course description: Science and religion are two important forces in American life. The relationship between science and religion has become increasingly controversial in America, as indicated by today’s passionate debates over the proposed teaching of “intelligent design” in public school science classes, the morality of stem cell research, genetic engineering and cloning, and, more broadly, what the Founders meant when they prescribed a constitutional separation of church and state. These debates are deeply consequential for American life, and our ability to settle them depends on how we understand, and relate, science and religion.

This course examines the relationship between science and religion. Our key question is “What is the best way to understand or construe this relationship?” To anchor our inquiry we focus on the life, the scientific discoveries, and the religious commitments and struggles of Charles Darwin. Darwin’s evolutionary theory fundamentally shaped modern science. But in so doing it also raised significant challenges to religious belief, particularly in Christian communities of faith. In fact, Darwin is as controversial today as he was nearly 150 years ago. Thus, Darwin’s career is the perfect entry point for considering much broader issues in the relationship between science and religion in American life.

Course goals—We seek to accomplish the following:
• Explore the different ways that one can understand the relationship between science and religion;
• Learn about Charles Darwin: his life and times, his scientific discoveries, and his influence on religion and culture;
• Clarify the nature and implications of evolutionary theory as an approach to understanding the world;
• Appreciate the character and purposes of religious beliefs and commitments, including organized religion’s attitudes toward evolutionary science;
• Consider the public policy issues raised by the encounter between science and religion; for example, the “intelligent design” controversy in public schooling, and the separation of church and state.

Textbooks—The following required textbooks are available in the Bookstore:
• John F. Haught, God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution (Westview Press, 2000);
• David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (Dover Philosophical Classics, 2006).

Supplemental readings [hereafter TBD] and other materials will be distributed in class throughout the Quarter.

Course requirements—Advance preparation, regular attendance, and active participation in class discussions are essential for success in this course.

The reading assignments listed below should be completed prior to coming to class. Sometimes study questions will be distributed in advance as a way to focus your reading and stimulate discussion.

There will a mid-term exam, two take-home exercises, a final position paper, and a final exam. Shorter thought exercises or “freewrites” will be distributed from time-to-time and considered as part of your class participation grade.

Grades will be assigned according to this formula:
• Class Participation 10% (including performance on freewrites)
• Exercise 1 15%
• Mid-term examination 20%
• Exercise 2 15%
• Final Position Paper 20%
• Final Exam 20%

Course etiquette—You are expected to be in class on time. There will be a 10-minute break, usually between 10:50 and 11:00 a.m., during every class period. Leaving class at the break is impolite and disrespectful to classmates and teachers. If you have a compelling conflict that requires you to either arrive late, leave early, or miss class altogether, let us know beforehand. Please do not bring food to class. Water bottles and soft drink containers are permitted. Please turn off your cell phone and/or pager during class. Conducting personal, electronic correspondence and “surfing” the Internet during class time are also considered discourteous and are not welcomed; students who engage in these activities may be dismissed from class with an unexcused absence noted in the record.

Academic Integrity/Honor Code—The instructors presuppose that all students have subscribed to the Honor Code, and that you understand and are fully committed to the standards of academic integrity outlined therein. If you have any questions about plagiarism, citation of sources or attribution, do not
hesitate to ask. You can link to the Honor Code on the Internet from DU’s home page. We suggest you review it.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS AND EXAMINATIONS

Note: Please bring texts—including supplemental readings for the day—with you to class so that you can refer to them during lectures, discussions, and freewrites.

WEEK 1
Mar 26  Introduction to the course  
What is science? What is (the study of) religion?

Mar 28  Understanding the relationship between science and religion

WEEK 2
Apr 2  Darwin in his social and intellectual context
VIDEO: Charles Darwin: His Life, Journeys, and Discoveries

Apr 4  Darwin—and your instructors—in the Galapagos Islands
VIDEO: Galapagos, Part II (National Geographic Society)
Reading: Norton: 65-94

WEEK 3
Apr 9  Darwin and post-Enlightenment, philosophical skepticism
Reading: Hume, Dialogues, 1-90
Exercise 1 to be distributed

Apr 11  The Origin of Species (1859)
Reading: Norton: 95-174

WEEK 4
Apr 16  Biblical interpretation in Darwin’s day
Reading: Herman Samuel Reimarus, Fragments (handout)

Apr 18  The Descent of Man (1871)
Reading: Norton: 175-254

WEEK 5
Apr 23  Scientific responses to Darwin; evolutionary theory after Darwin.
Reading: Norton: 255-270, 280-325; 342-355; 459-465

Apr 25  Ecclesiastical responses to Darwin: Bishop Wilberforce’s debate with Huxley; Loose ends; Exam review; continued on p. 4
Reading: Samuel Wilberforce, “Review of The Origin of Species (1860)” available online: http://www.victorianweb.org/science_texts/wilberforce.htm
Exercise 1 due
WEEK 6
Apr 30  MIDTERM EXAM

May 4  Science and religion in conflict in early 20\textsuperscript{th}-century America. American, Christian fundamentalism & “creationism.”
Reading: Harry Emerson Fosdick, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” (available on-line: http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5070/)

WEEK 7
May 7  Tennessee v. John Scopes: The “trial of the century”? 
Reading: Ronald Numbers, Darwin Comes to America, 76-91 (handout); Norton 542-549
Exercise 2 to be distributed

May 9  Film viewing: Inherit the Wind.

WEEK 8
May 14  Analyzing Inherit the Wind: Timeless wisdom or gratuitous propaganda? Mainstream religion on Darwinism today 
Reading: Norton, 525-533; + TBD

May 16  The challenge of “Intelligent Design”
VIDEO: Unlocking the Mystery of Life.
Reading: Norton 534-541, 577-623; + TBD

WEEK 9
May 21  Is ID a scientific response to Darwin or a religious one? 
Reading: TBD

May 23  A genuinely religious [Christian] engagement with Darwin 
Reading: Haught, God after Darwin, 1-104
Exercise 2 due

WEEK 10
May 28  MEMORIAL DAY

May 30  Toward a [Christian?] Theology of Evolution
How can we best understand the relationship between science and religion? 
Final exam review
Reading: Haught, God after Darwin, 105-191
Position paper due

WEEK 11
Jun 4  FINAL EXAM, 10:00 a.m.