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Spring 2013

## Syllabus: Science and Religion

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*Providence College*

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## **HON 480-003: SCIENCE AND RELIGION**

SPRING 2013: W 7:00 PM – 9:30 PM

Room: Feinstein 315

Credit Hours: 3.00



PROVIDENCE  
COLLEGE

### INSTRUCTOR:

Name: Fr. Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, O.P., Ph.D., S.T.L.

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I am generally in my office (Sowa 229B) or in my laboratory (Hickey 181) from 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM daily and am easily available with a prior appointment. To make an appointment, you may call me on my telephone or email me. I'll keep Monday and Thursday mornings from 10:00AM to 11:30AM for drop-in appointments. Please feel free to talk to me about any issue relating either to the course or to your life as a student here at Providence College.

### **A PRAYER BEFORE STUDY**

**St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P.**

**O God, Creator of all things, true source of light and wisdom, graciously let a ray of your light penetrate the darkness of my understanding. Give me a keen intellect, a retentive memory, and the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally. Give me the talent of being exact in my explanations and the ability to express myself with thoroughness and charm. Point out the beginning, direct the progress, and perfect my work. We ask you this through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.**

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What should the relationship between science and religion be like? Recent scholarship proposes four models for the relationship between science and religion: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. In this colloquium, we will use this four-fold typology and the Catholic conviction that faith and reason work together to address the big questions raised by both science and religion. As proposed by Professor Keith Ward, these questions include the following: How did the universe begin? How will the universe end? Is evolution compatible with creation? Do the laws of nature exclude miracles? What is the nature of space and time? Is it still possible to speak of the soul? Is science the only sure path to truth? Can science provide an explanation for morals and religious beliefs? Has science made belief in God obsolete? Does science allow for

revelation and divine action? We will respond to these questions through an intellectual engagement with the popular bestseller, *The God Delusion*, by Richard Dawkins.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Brian Davies, O.P., *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil* (New York: Oxford, 2011).
- Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Mariner Books, 2006).
- Daniel Garber, *What Happens After Pascal's Wager? Living Faith and Rational Belief* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009).
- Sam Harris, *Free Will* (Free Press, 2012).
- R. Keith Loftin, ed. *God and Morality: Four Views* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012).
- Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow, *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).
- Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1995)

We will also be reading papers and selected chapters from other books from the recent literature in the science and religion dialogue. These papers will be available on the SAKAI website.

#### ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS:

This course is an honors colloquium that will be conducted as an advanced seminar reminiscent of graduate-level classes. Students will be expected to read the assigned material so that they will be able to contribute to the discussion that will constitute the bulk of this course. Moreover, as an honors colloquium this course has to fulfill the writing requirements set up for this type of course. They are as follows: Multiple writing assignments, totaling at least 25 pages (6000 words) of out-of-class formal writing, including at least one research paper (minimum of 10 pages). Colloquium courses also must be interdisciplinary in approach, and require rigorous and extensive readings.

#### WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

*WEEKLY REFLECTION PAPERS:* To prepare for our in-class discussions, each student is required to submit a weekly reflection paper of at least 650 words on the assigned readings. A prompt consisting of a single question will be provided for each week's assignment. The reflection paper has to do three things. First, the paper has to summarize what you think would be Richard Dawkins' answer to the prompt based on your reading of *The God Delusion*. Next, the paper has to include your own answer to the question. This section should engage the texts assigned for the week's reading. Finally, you need to respond to Dawkins' argument. What are its strengths or weakness?

*DISCUSSION PAPERS:* In the first part of each class meeting, one or two students will lead the class discussion. Each student will be responsible for writing and reading a discussion paper of at least 1,250 words long that will be divided into three parts. In the first part, the student will identify and summarize an argument or an assertion from *The God Delusion* that relates to the topic of the week. Next, the student will critically respond to the argument or the assertion: Is the argument or the assertion a valid and true statement? Why or why not? Finally, the student will identify the disputed points in the debate and propose possible responses to settle the dispute by appealing to the other assigned readings for the week. Discussion papers are due 24 hours before the class meeting. Please email copies of the paper as a WORD document to the instructor. However, after we read and discuss these papers, authors will have an additional week to revise their papers in light of the in class discussion before a final draft is submitted for grading. Discussion papers count as two reflection papers. Note that students writing discussion papers for class do NOT have to write a reflection paper for that week.

*RESEARCH PAPERS:* Finally, each student will also be required to write a research paper of at least 3,500 words on any topic in the science and religion debate. Research papers in this course have to engage a particular argument from a scholarly source as a foil for the paper. Be sure to identify one author and one argument that you want to respond to. It is helpful to identify an argument that you oppose because it is easier to write a clear and passionate response to someone when you disagree with him or her.

Students should discuss their research topics with me. Outlines with annotated bibliographies will be due on the specified dates on the syllabus. Research papers should include a close analysis and interpretation (not a mere summary) of at least three scholarly books and five scholarly papers not included on our reading list.

### GUIDE FOR WRITING SCHOLARLY PAPERS

Reflection and Discussion papers will be evaluated as follows:

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 10 Points | Exemplary Paper: The student has clearly read, understood, and thought through the assigned readings. He or she was able to <i>critically</i> respond to the readings and relate it to the material covered in class and to a wider philosophical or social context. <u>The paper was organized and clearly written without any grammatical or stylistic errors.</u>                              |
| 9 Points  | Excellent Paper: The student had clearly read, understood, and thought through the content of the assigned readings. He or she was able to critically respond to the text but was unable to relate it to the material covered in class and to a wider philosophical or social context. <u>The paper was organized and clearly written but there were several grammatical or stylistic errors.</u> |
| 8 Points  | Good Paper: The student had clearly read and understood the content of the assigned readings. However, he or she was not able to critically reflect   |

upon its context. There were minor logical flaws in the argument of the paper. The paper was not well organized and there were numerous grammatical or stylistic errors.

7 Points      Adequate Paper: The student had clearly read the assigned readings. However, the paper suggests that he or she did not understand the content of the text. Moreover, he or she was unable to critically respond to its content. The paper was not well organized and there were numerous grammatical or stylistic errors.

0-6 Points      Inadequate Paper: It is not clear if the student had read or understood the assigned readings. Moreover the paper was not well written with numerous grammatical or stylistic errors.

Research papers will be evaluated as follows:

### 1. Effective Introduction (10% of grade)

An effective introduction should do three things following. First, it should contextualize your paper. Why are you writing this paper? Why is your question a pressing question? Why should I care about the ideas you will? Next, it should articulate the argument that you are responding to. In other words identify your foil and your interlocutor's argument. Summarize your interlocutor's argument. What does he or she say? Finally, it should outline your own argument in response to the foil. This outline will include your thesis statement. An effective introduction to a scholarly paper will conclude with a brief outline of the overall text to give the reader an overview of the landscape of the essay.

### 2. Quotes and Analysis (30% of grade)

I will be looking for your effective engagement with the material we have read for this course. Use plenty of short relevant quotations from your sources to support your claims. This is especially important when you summarize your interlocutor's argument. Be sure to support your interpretation of the argument so that the reader is convinced that you are responding to your foil and not to a straw man. Did you give your interlocutor an honest reading? Did you clearly summarize his or her argument? Good papers include specific details and/or highly relevant quotes in almost every paragraph (on average 3-4 highly relevant short quotes per page).

### 3. Critical Insights (40% of grade)

I will be looking for insightful engagement with the material in your argument. This means that you cannot simply parrot back what was discussed in class. I want to hear YOUR voice using arguments from your own intellectual and experiential history. Is your response to the foil effective? Did you make a logical and compelling argument? Was the evidence you used to support your argument relevant and probative? This is the most important part of your paper.

#### 4. Stylistic finesse, grammar, punctuation, and formatting (20% of grade)

Your research papers should be double-spaced with 1" margins, 12-point font. Be sure to include page numbers and staple your paper together. Be sure to check your paper for all grammatical, spelling, and stylistic errors. If your paper includes more than two errors, I will not be able to give you an A grade.

#### CLASS PARTICIPATION:

This honors colloquium seeks to be a forum where ideas are discussed critically and insightfully. We will only be able to do this if students are willing to speak in class about the reading that they have done. Students will be evaluated for their intelligent and engaged participation every week. They will be allowed to drop the three lowest participation grades this semester.

#### GRADING POLICY:

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Research Paper	40%
Discussion & Reflection Papers	30%
Class Participation	30%

Academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism (“the stealing and passing off of the ideas or words of another as one’s own without crediting the source”) are not tolerated in the professional world of scientific and medical research and will not be tolerated in this class. For the first offense, the student will receive a zero for the assignment. For the second offense, the student will receive an F for the course. Please consult the current Providence College Undergraduate Catalogue for its statement on “Academic Honesty.”

#### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Regular attendance is required. Please email the instructor in advance if you expect to miss a class. The student will be required to write a 1,500-word essay on the topic discussed in the class that he or she has missed.

# SYLLABUS OF READINGS

## **January 23, 2013: On Dawkins's *The God Delusion***

PROMPT: OF DAWKINS' ARGUMENTS FOR ATHEISM, WHICH IN YOUR VIEW WAS THE STRONGEST?

### READING:

- Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 2006.

## **January 30, 2013: On the Nature of God DISCUSSION LEADERS: WENDEL, SZOT**

PROMPT: WHAT IS GOD?

### READINGS:

- Brian Davies, O.P., *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil* (New York: Oxford, 2011), pp. 9-64.
- Robert Sokolowski, "The Incarnation and the Christian Distinction," in *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), pp. 31-52.

## **February 6, 2013: On the Nature of Science and Theology DISCUSSION LEADER: SULLIVAN**

PROMPT: IS FAITH REASONABLE?

### READINGS:

- St. Thomas Aquinas, ST I.1.1-10.
- Bruce D. Marshall, "Quod Scit Una Uetula: Aquinas on the Nature of Theology," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed R. Van Nieuwenhove and J. Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); pp. 1-35.
- Daniel Garber, *What Happens After Pascal's Wager? Living Faith and Rational Belief* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009).

## **February 13, 2013: On the Historical Relationship Between Science and Theology DISCUSSION LEADERS: SPORTELO**

PROMPT: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION?

### READINGS:

- John Paul II, "Letter on Science and Religion," June 1, 1988.
- John Haught, "Is Religion Opposed to Science?" Chapter One in John Haught, *Science & Religion: From Conflict to Conversation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), pp. 9-26.

- Colin A. Russell, "The Conflict of Science and Religion," in *Science & Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 3-12.
- David B. Wilson, "The Historiography of Science and Religion," in *Science & Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 13-29.

**February 20, 2013: On The Reasonability of Theism in a Scientific Age**  
**DISCUSSION LEADER: SLATTERY, SEXTON**

PROMPT: IS IT REASONABLE TO THINK THAT GOD EXISTS?

READINGS:

- Charles Taliaferro, "The Project of Natural Theology," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 1-23.
- St. Thomas Aquinas, ST I.2.3, ST I.12.12-13
- Brian Davies, "Is God Beyond Reason?" *Philosophical Investigations* 32 (2009): 338-359.

**February 27, 2013: On the Problem of Evil**  
**DISCUSSION LEADERS: SCOLLAN**

PROMPT: WHAT IS EVIL?

READINGS:

- Brian Davies, O.P., *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil* (New York: Oxford, 2011), pp. 65-132.
- Rudi A. te Velde, "Evil, Sin, and Death: Thomas Aquinas on Original Sin," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed R. Van Nieuwenhove and J. Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); pp. 143-166.

**March 13, 2013: On Divine Action in a Scientific World**  
**DISCUSSION LEADERS: RUFO, RONQUILLO**

PROMPT: HOW IS GOD'S ACTING IN THE WORLD DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY WE ACT?

READINGS:

- St. Thomas Aquinas, ST I.22, ST I.105.5-7
- Robert John Russell, "Does "The God Who Acts" Really Act? New Approaches to Divine Action in the Light of Science," *Theology Today* 51 (March 1997): 43-65.
- Michael J. Dodds, O.P. "Science, Causality and Divine Action: Classical Principles for Contemporary Challenges," *CTNS Bulletin* 21 (Winter, 2001): 3-12.
- Harm Goris, "Divine Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination, and Human Freedom," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed R. Van Nieuwenhove and J. Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); pp. 99-122.



**March 20, 2013: On Miracles**  
**DISCUSSION LEADERS: ROCHE**

PROMPT: WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

READINGS:

- David Hume, "Of Miracles" in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 1784.
- John C. Polkinghorne, "The Credibility of the Miraculous," *Zygon* 37 (2002): 751-740.

**April 3, 2013: On Creation and the Evolution of Life**  
**DISCUSSION LEADER: ROBLEE, PARANAL**

**[PAPER OUTLINES AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE TODAY]**

PROMPT: WHAT IS CREATION?

READINGS:

- Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning...*, Trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Comp. 1995), pp. 1-58.
- Nicanor Austriaco, OP, "In Defense of Double Agency in Evolution: A Response to Five Modern Critics," *Angelicum* 80 (2003): 947-966.
- Gilles Emery, OP, "Trinity and Creation," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed R. Van Nieuwenhove and J. Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); pp. 58-76.

**April 10, 2013: On Evolutionism and Intelligent Design**  
**DISCUSSION LEADERS: NOONAN**

PROMPT: WHAT ARE INTELLIGENT DESIGN AND EVOLUTIONISM AND HOW ARE THEY SIMILAR?

READINGS:

- Michael Ruse, "The Argument from Design: A Brief History," in *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* ed. William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.13-31.
- Kenneth R. Miller, "The Flagellum Unspun: The Collapse of "Irreducible Complexity," in *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* ed. William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 81-97.
- Michael J. Behe, "Irreducible Complexity: Obstacle to Darwinian Evolution," in *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* ed. William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 352-370.

**April 17, 2013: On Personal Identity and the Human Soul**  
**DISCUSSION LEADER: MARTINO**

PROMPT: IS IT REASONABLE IN A SCIENTIFIC AGE TO THINK THAT HUMAN BEINGS HAVE AN IMMATERIAL MIND?

READINGS:

- Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- Gyula Klima, "Aquinas on the Materiality of the Human Soul and the Immateriality of the Human Intellect," *Philosophical Investigations* 32 (2009): 163-182.

**April 24, 2013: On Human Freedom**  
**DISCUSSION LEADER: LEVASSEUR, LARRIVEE**

PROMPT: IS IT REASONABLE IN A SCIENTIFIC AGE TO THINK THAT HUMAN BEINGS HAVE FREE WILL?

READINGS:

- Sam Harris, *Free Will* (Free Press, 2012).
- Thomas Williams, "Human Freedom and Agency," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* ed. Brian Davies, OP, and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 199-208.
- Joseph Wawrykow, "Grace," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed R. Van Nieuwenhove and J. Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); pp. 192-221

**May 1, 2013: On the Nature of Morality**  
**DISCUSSION LEADER: HALLORAN**

**[FINAL PAPERS DUE TODAY]**

PROMPT: IS THERE A UNIVERSAL MORAL LAW THAT BINDS ALL PEOPLE AT ALL TIMES AND ALL PLACES?

READINGS:

- Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning...*, Trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Comp. 1995), pp. 59-100.
- R. Keith Loftin, ed. *God and Morality: Four Views* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012).
- Steven Pinker, "The Stupidity of Dignity," *The New Republic*, May 28, 2008.
- Yuval Levin, "Indignity and Bioethics" *National Review Online*, May 14, 2008.