August 2015

Syllabus: Faith and Science

Nicanor Austriaco

Providence College

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HON 480-002: FAITH AND SCIENCE
SPRING 2015: W 7:00 PM – 9:30 PM
Room: Ruane 202 [Liberal Arts Honors Seminar Room]
Credit Hours: 3.00

INSTRUCTOR:

Name: Fr. Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, O.P., Ph.D., S.T.L.
Office: Sowa 229B
Laboratory: Hickey Hall 181
Phone: 401-865-1823 (office)
        401-865-1620 (laboratory)
        401-865-1906 (personal)
Email: naustria@providence.edu

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 Wednesday afternoons open from 2PM to 4PM 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:**


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 our course’s 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 1,000 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 critically respond to the readings and relate it to the material covered in class and to a wider philosophical or social context. The paper was organized and clearly written without any grammatical or stylistic errors.

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. The paper was organized and clearly written but there were several grammatical or stylistic errors.

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 discuss? 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%

The following scale is provided as a general guide for how overall numerical averages in this course have translated to letter grades over the past several times that I have taught this course: 93-100 A; 89-92.9 A-; 85-88.9 B+; 82-84.9 B; 79-81.9 B-; Etc. In any particular year the precise numerical boundaries demarcating letter grades have varied though the letter grades will never be lower than the indicated scale. This will be the case this year as well. Grades will be made available to students on SAKAI throughout the course of the semester.

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 14, 2015: On Dawkins’s *The God Delusion*

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

**READING:**


January 21, 2015: On the Nature of Science and Theology

**DISCUSSION LEADER:** BERNING

**PROMPT:** IS FAITH REASONABLE?

**READINGS:**


January 28, 2015: On the Nature of God

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** BOYD, CLARKE

**PROMPT:** WHAT IS GOD?

**READINGS:**

February 4, 2015: On the Historical Relationship Between Science and Theology  
DISCUSSION LEADER: CROWLEY

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

READINGS:


February 11, 2015: On The Reasonability of Theism in a Scientific Age  
DISCUSSION LEADER: DOUGLAS

PROMPT: IS IT REASONABLE TO THINK THAT GOD EXISTS?

READINGS:

  [http://www.dhspriory.org/thomas/english/summa/index.html]

February 18, 2015: On the Problem of Evil  
DISCUSSION LEADER: FRAZIER

PROMPT: WHAT IS EVIL?

READINGS:

February 25, 2015: On Divine Action in a Scientific World  
DISCUSSION LEADERS: GRANATO  

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.  
  [http://www.dhspriory.org/thomas/english/summa/index.html]  

March 4, 2015: On Miracles  
DISCUSSION LEADERS: HAMMOND  

PROMPT: WHAT IS A MIRACLE?  

READINGS:  

March 18, 2015: On Creation and the Evolution of Life  
DISCUSSION LEADER: HILL  

[PAPER OUTLINES AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE TODAY]  

PROMPT: WHAT IS CREATION?  

READINGS:  
March 25, 2015: On Evolutionism and Intelligent Design
DISCUSSION LEADERS: KARAM

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

READINGS:


April 8, 2015: On Personal Identity and the Human Soul
DISCUSSION LEADER: MAZZUCCA

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

READINGS:


April 15, 2015: On Human Freedom
DISCUSSION LEADER: O'BRIEN

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

READINGS:

April 22, 2015: On the Nature of Morality  
DISCUSSION LEADER: REYNOLDS  

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

READINGS:  


April 29, 2015: On the Secularity of a Secular Age  
DISCUSSION LEADERS: ROGERS, RUHL  

PROMPT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE IN A SECULAR AGE?  

READINGS:  