

Issues of Science and Religion:
**“The Science of Religion and the Religion of Science: Science, Religion, and the
History of Philosophy”**

Fall 2009

Department of Religious Studies
Santa Clara University
Section 52308

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Course Description:

Our particular historical moment is marked by, among other things, a conflict between what one might call a ‘lived science’ associated with secular culture and ideologies and traditional religions like Christianity and Islam. Examples of this conflict include the New Atheists vs. religious fundamentalists, debates over stem cell research and genetic manipulation, environmental devastation, and the question of whether or not Creationism should be taught alongside Darwin’s theory of evolution. What is the historical genesis of these conflicts? Are they recent in their origin, or do they mark the return of a set of conflicts that have arisen at certain junctures over the course of Western history? Is science necessarily opposed to the religions? Is it itself religious in some way? This class aims to reconstruct the intellectual, cultural, and political histories to which the current conflicts between modern science and religion are closely related. We will examine, in particular, the relation of modern science to Western philosophy, on the one hand, and to the Abrahamic religions, on the other. We will explore and test the hypothesis that contemporary conflicts in the aforementioned domains of human life are the most recent example of a conflict between philosophy and the Abrahamic religions. We will see that those secular cultural critics, theorists, and scientists involved in these conflicts reenact under the conditions unique to our time disputes over the form of life that should structure and govern our personal, intellectual, social, and political lives that have marked the historical relation of philosophy to these traditions. We will also evaluate the hypothesis that philosophy – and, therefore, modern science understood as an outgrowth and form of philosophy – is itself a kind of religious tradition by examining the intellectual and socio-political life of philosophy at several key moments in its history.

The course will be divided into three modules. First, we will examine the historical genesis and character of the philosophical form of life. Second, we will work out modern science’s historical and conceptual relation to the philosophical form of life and its legatees in the Roman and European philosophical traditions and to the Abrahamic religions. Third, we will look at a variety of examples of the intellectual, social, and

political conflicts that have unfolded in the modern era between philosophy (and therefore, modern science) and the Abrahamic religions. In this regard, we will also attempt to determine whether there is a necessary conflict between the two or whether they can be harmonized or at least peacefully coexist.

Required texts

Ian G. Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners?* (book)
F.M. Cornford, excerpts from *From Religion to Philosophy* (digital handout)
Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (book)
David Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, Prehistory to A.D. 1450* (book)
Bruce Lincoln, "Notes Toward a Theory of Religion and Revolution" (digital handout)
Marx, excerpt from *The Communist Manifesto* (online text)
Plato, *The Republic* (online text)
Huston Smith, "Western Philosophy as a Great Religion" (digital handout)
Mao Zedong, *The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains* (online text)

Required films

Baraka (feature film)
The Four Horsemen (online documentary)
Secular Believers (online documentary)
Did Darwin Kill God? (online documentary)
The Root of All Evil (online documentary)

Course Requirements and Grade Weights

Ten response papers (one per week); a midterm exam; three 4-5 page research papers; and active participation in class discussions and in-class group discussions.

Course Engagement*: 10%

Response Papers: 10%

Midterm exam: 20%

Research Papers: 60%

***Note the following:**

- (1) **Attendance is mandatory.** You will be required to sign a sheet verifying your presence each class period, or, once I know everyone, I will note absences without a sign-in sheet. Unless an unexpected emergency arises, you must let me know beforehand if you will be missing a class. *For each unexcused absence one point will be deducted from your overall final course grade.*
- (2) **Your course engagement grade will be based on the degree to which you abide by five rules:** (1) you must display the neutral and empathetic manner of approaching the subject matter; (2) talking in class is not permitted, unless

your comments are directed to the whole class or, when appropriate, to the members of your discussion group; (3) you will treat the other members of the class – your fellow classmates and your instructor – with the kind of respect and dignity that you expect others to display toward you; (4) you will come prepared for each class, which means that you will have completed that day’s reading assignment, and you will be prepared to answer questions posed by your instructor related to that assignment; and (5) in your discussion group, you will actively engage your fellow group members.

Prerequisites: *You must have completed your first and second level course requirements in Religious Studies to take this class.*

Office Hours and E-mails

The hours specified above are my regular office hours. Individually or in groups, I encourage you to visit me to discuss ideas, questions, assignments, etc. If you are unable to visit during my regular office hours, please e-mail me to schedule an appointment. I will do my best to respond to your e-mails within 48 hours; I would ask that you do the same.

Angel Course Management System

You are **required** to use the University’s online course management system in this course. This means, each of us should enroll in this section on our online course page by the end of the 1st week of classes.

Disability Accommodation Policy

Those of us with a disability or other impairment for which accommodations will be requested should work through Disability Resources.

Grading Policies and Regulations:

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|----|-------------|
| A | 95%-100% |
| A- | 90%-94% |
| B+ | 87%-89% |
| B | 83%-86% |
| B- | 80%-82% |
| C+ | 77%-79% |
| C | 73%-76% |
| C- | 70%-72% |
| D+ | 67%-69% |
| D | 63%-66% |
| D- | 60%-62% |
| F: | 59% or less |

Academic Integrity and Related Expectations

Throughout this course we should conduct ourselves in accordance with the academic integrity standards and policies articulated in the University Bulletin.

Grading Policies and Regulations:

For the standard sense of each grade (A, B, etc.), please refer to Undergraduate Bulletin. Specific policies related to individual assignments will be given along with those assignments as is appropriate.

Subject to Change

This syllabus is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements and changes made while you were absent.

Reading Schedule:

Week 1 – Introduction

September 21st: Movie: *Baraka*; no readings;

September 23rd: Introduction and syllabus; no readings; “Secular Believers”:
<http://www.onlinedocumentaries4u.com/2008/09/bbc-secular-believers.html>; **Quiz 1**

Week 2 – From Religion to Philosophy: Nature and the Two Forms of Philosophy

September 28th: Cornford, excerpts from *From Religion to Philosophy* (digital handout);
G. van der Leeuw, excerpt from *Religion in Essence and Manifestation, Vol. 2* (digital handout)

September 30th: H. Smith, “Western Philosophy as a Great Religion” (digital handout);
Quiz 2

Week 3 – Philosophy and the Philosophical Form of Life I

October 5th: Hadot, Part 1, Chapters 1-4

October 7th: Hadot; Part 2, Chapters 5-7; **Quiz 3**

Week 4 – Philosophy and the Philosophical Form of Life II

October 12th: Hadot, Part 2, Chapters 8-9; Part 3, Chapter 10

October 14th: Hadot; Part 3, Chapters 11-12; **Quiz 4**

Week 5 – Modern Science, Philosophy, and Religion I

October 19th: Lindberg, Chapters 1-4; **Paper 1 due at the beginning of class**

October 21st: Lindberg; Chapters 7-8; **Quiz 5**

Week 6 – Modern Science, Philosophy, and Religion II

October 26th: Lindberg, Chapters 9-10

October 28th: Lindberg, Chapters 11 & 14; **Midterm Exam**

Week 7 – Living Philosophy: Secular Believers, Modern Science, and Religion I

November 2nd: *See “Week 7: Digital Handouts I” document located on our Angel
“Lessons” page

November 4th: *See “Week 7: Digital Handouts II” document located on our Angel “Lessons” page; Richard Dawkins: “The Emptiness of Theology” (<http://richarddawkins.net/article,88,The-Emptiness-of-Theology,Richard-Dawkins>) + Documentary: “The Root of All Evil” (<http://www.onlinedocumentaries4u.com/2008/07/root-of-all-evil.html>); **Quizzes 6 & 7; Paper 2 due at the beginning of class**

Week 8 – Living Philosophy: Secular Believers, Modern Science, and Religion II

November 9th: Barbour, Chapter 1: “Four Views of Science and Religion”

November 11th: Barbour, Chapter 2: “Astronomy and Creation”; **Quiz 8**

Week 9 – Living Philosophy: Secular Believers, Modern Science, and Religion III

November 16^h: Barbour, Chapter 6: “God and Nature”

November 18th: Barbour, Chapter 3: “The Implications of Quantum Physics”; **Quiz 9**

Week 10 – November 23rd – 27th: Thanksgiving Break; no class

Week 11 – Living Philosophy: Secular Believers, Modern Science, and Religion IV

November 30th: Barbour; Chapter 4: “Evolution and Continuing Creation”; Stephen J. Gould: “Darwinian Fundamentalism” (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1151>); Daniel Dennett et al.: “‘Darwinian Fundamentalism’: An Exchange” (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1096>) + Documentary: *Did Darwin Kill God?* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2Z95Y0p3WY>)

December 2nd: Barbour, Chapter 5: “Genetics, Neuroscience, and Human Nature”; **Quiz 10 + Paper 3 due at the beginning of class**