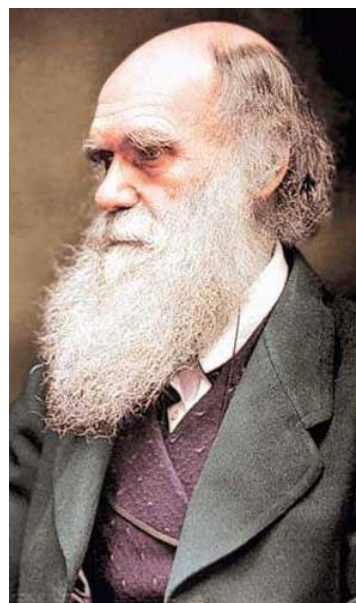


SCTR 170: DARWIN AND GOD

Spring 2016

CORE: Religion, Theology, and Culture 3



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Instructor: Dr. J. David Pleins

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Office Hours: MW 12:00-1:00 or by appointment

CLASS MEETING TIMES:

Section 35674 MW 3:30-5:15, Kenna 104

RELIGION THIRD COURSE PREREQUISITE:

This advanced level Religious Studies course is open to students who have completed RTC 1 and RTC 2 courses. The course does not count as fulfilling RTC 3 unless you have completed 88 units. Transfer students follow alternate guidelines.

PATHWAYS:

Paradigm Shifts and the Nature of Human Knowing Pathway

Values in Science and Technology Pathway

FOCUS OF THIS RTC 3 COURSE:

This RTC 3 course is devoted to the on-going debate over the relation between the ideas of Charles Darwin and religious belief. Was Darwin truly a religious skeptic? Do his ideas offer any constructive insights for contemporary theology? The course begins with a discussion of the historical and social context of Darwin's ideas. We then consider the precise nature of his religious skepticism as well as his positive contribution to the study of religion, namely the view that religion and morality evolve. We look at Darwin's way of seeing the world and consider him as a contemplative of nature. The course concludes with an exploration of how to construct a contemporary theology based on Darwinian ideas.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Darwin, *Autobiography of Charles Darwin*, Norton (0393310698)

Darwin, *Descent of Man*, Princeton University Press (0691023697)

Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, Bloomsbury (978-1-62356-594-7)

Pleins, *The Evolving God*, Bloomsbury (978-1-62356-247-2)

Re Manning, Russell, *Science and Religion in the Twenty-First Century*,
SCM Press (978-0-334-04594-6)

RTC 3 CORE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As an RTC 3 Core Course, this class has two major learning Objectives:

- A. Students will identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary questions. (Critical Thinking; Ethical Reasoning; Perspective)
- B. Students will evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ended questions facing contemporary society. (Critical Thinking; Religious Reflection.)

Mapping Objective A:

1. In terms of "identifying diverse perspectives," students in class discussion and their essays will identify the divergent content of atheism, humanism, fundamentalism, and theism in relation to the rise and continued influence of evolutionary ideas concerning religious belief in an age of science ("contemporary").
2. In terms of "evaluating ethical positions," students in class discussion and their research essays will evaluate the significance of an evolutionary scheme for drawing ethical conclusions in the "contemporary" world, both on a religious and a secular basis.

Mapping Objective B:

1. In terms of critically thinking about "open-ended questions" facing "contemporary" society, students in class discussion and their essays will "evaluate" affirmations and denials of the usefulness of Darwinian evolutionary ideas for the construction of a "contemporary" understanding of theology and ethics.
2. In terms of "applying insights" from the study of religion, students will demonstrate in class discussion and their essays how Darwinian evolutionary thought can bridge between secularism and progressive religious ideas.
3. In terms of "open-ended questions facing contemporary society," each class session will be governed by one overall "open-ended question" to be "evaluated" by the students. During class discussions, students will "apply insights from the study of religion" to their assessment of each session's guiding question.

CLASS PEDAGOGY: WHAT IS THE TEACHING APPROACH USED IN THIS COURSE?

•**Collective Inquiry:** In a course that employs a collective inquiry format, students engage in a group-oriented investigation into the topic. Prime importance is placed on students raising their own questions of the material, discussing and debating the issues at hand, and formulating tentative hypotheses in dialogue both with the course readings and with the other members of the class. Each student will regularly be asked to summarize and lead a discussion of a specific segment of the reading.

·Question-Oriented Learning: Rather than being a teacher-focused class or even a student-focused class, the class seeks to put the key questions about the subject at the center of each session, treating class members as “knowers” who are willing to wrestle with and explore the issues as they emerge.

PARADIGM SHIFTS AND THE NATURE OF HUMAN KNOWING PATHWAY

This course is associated with the “Paradigm Shifts and the Nature of Human Knowing Pathway.” Many disciplines have experienced drastic changes in thought at some time or another, when people pushed beyond the limits of the discipline’s traditional approaches, assumptions, and understandings. Such paradigm shifts away from previously accepted ways of thinking can provide rich opportunities to explore how we learn, how we understand, and how we think. Understanding the many, sometimes wildly different ways knowledge is constructed and evidence interpreted in different disciplines allows students to reflect more insightfully on their own educations. This pathway includes courses that address ways of thinking within a discipline that are departures from the accepted norms and courses that include the usual ways of knowing and understanding in a discipline. If you declare a pathway in this area you may use a representative piece of work from this course in the Pathway Portfolio you will complete during your senior year. It is recommended that you keep electronic copies of your work.

VALUES IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PATHWAY

This course is approved for the “Values in Science and Technology Pathway.” Our contemporary world is shaped by science and technology to such a profound degree that our students cannot be effective leaders and citizens without the capacity to critically engage the scientific and technological dimensions of society. This pathway invites students to understand the social values and social context of science & technology as social forces. It will provide opportunities for students from all majors to critically examine the practice of science, the social dimensions of technology, the role that these play in society, and the influences of social values on these. This pathway is open to all students interested in this topic, and one need not be a science or engineering major to choose it. If you declare a Pathway in this area you may use a representative piece of work from this course in the Pathway Portfolio you will complete during your senior year. This may be a paper, a project, a problem set or a laboratory report. Please keep electronic copies of your work for possible submission in a Pathway Portfolio.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT PATHWAYS

You can find information about Pathways on the Core Curriculum website <http://scu.edu/core> including specific Pathways, all courses associated with them, and the Reflection Essay prompt and rubric used to evaluate the final essay you will submit." Consult the following link: <http://www.scu.edu/provost/ugst/core/pathways/managing-your-pathway-work/>

SAVE YOUR WORK FROM THIS CLASS FOR THE PATHWAY REQUIREMENT

If you declare this Pathway, you may use a representative piece of work from this course as one of the Pathway materials you will upload via eCampus during your junior or senior year. Therefore, it is recommended that you keep electronic copies of your work using Dropbox or Google Docs, in addition to saving copies on your own computer or flash drives. This may ensure you will have a range of choices for retrieving your saved files when you analyze and assemble your Pathway materials in preparation to write the Pathway reflection essay.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

*All students are expected to attend class *regularly* and *arrive promptly*.

*Chronic lateness or failure to attend class not only is an annoyance but may result in immediate dismissal and/or failure of the course, *regardless* of completion of assigned work. Exceptions require written proof of illness from the health service or from the student's personal physician. If you are unable to attend, leave word on email or at 408-554-4763.

*The basic rule of thumb is: 3 unexcused absences and the highest grade you may receive in the course is a C (you have missed 10% of the quarter at this point); 5 unexcused absences and you must withdraw from the class because if you do not, you will fail the course (you will have missed 15% of the course by that point).

*Students are expected to be actively involved in all Learning Community or Honors Program events and attend lectures, films, or plays related to the course.

*Note that the outside films are *mandatory*.

*Note, also, that your presence in class is *mandatory* for the discussion and presentation of the final research papers and that your papers may not be handed in by another student. Failure to appear for the paper discussion will result in an automatic reduction of two letter grade levels for the paper.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: "I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code." All written work must be uniquely and individually one's own work. Failure to abide by the spirit and the letter of this policy may result in dismissal from the course and a failing grade, and will lead to *procedural action* under the student conduct and honor codes. This instructor adheres to the rigorous *standards* we expect at SCU, thus while in-class discussion and outside of class discussion is certainly desirable and encouraged, the material that a student hands in must reflect the student's own labor and ought to be clearly and decisively distinguishable from the work of all other students in the class. At no time are students to represent as their own the work of others. Be sure that you indicate the sources of all quotes and paraphrases. The procedure is simple: If it is not your own material, you should not take credit for it. Indicate the source.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION POLICY:

To receive academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in Benson 216. The phone number is 408-554-4109 or inquiries can be emailed to Robin Cole, Administrative Associate, rcole@scu.edu. Students must register with Disabilities Resources and provide documentation of a disability to Disabilities Resources prior to receiving academic accommodations. (Other advising matters can be directed to The Drahnmann Center in Kenna 101, (408) 554-4318.)

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING (Note that you must complete *all* assignments to receive a grade for the course; note attendance and plagiarism policies below.)

I. Daily Written Assignments and Class Participation:

(1) *Daily Written Assigned Questions:* For most class sessions, you will be assigned a brief question to answer based on the day's reading. Type your answer single-space and roughly half a page.

Grading of the daily written assignments is as follows (0-3 points):

- 0 is for failure to submit an assignment (late papers not accepted).
- 1 is for a "personal opinion" response to the question.
- 2 reflects some attention to the reading including brief quotation.
- 3 indicates serious engagement of the reading, complete with a range of abbreviated quotations.

(2) *Active Participation:* Be active preparation and consistent involvement in the lecture/discussion sessions of the course; ask good questions; make relevant comments; raise key issues; explore hypotheses. Show involvement by addressing questions posed in class, whether you are asked them in a general way or if the instructor calls on you for comment. Show leadership during group discussions.

(3) *Readings:* Evidence of knowledge of course readings as preparation for the class session.

(4) *Discussion Prep:* Bring the relevant course book and articles to each class session.

(5) *Appointments:* Set up additional appointment times to discuss course content and paper topics with the instructor and to approve final paper topic.

(6) *Films:* Attend assigned films outside of class.

(7) *Technology Use:* No texting, web surfing, or phone use during class!

(8) *E-mail:* Contact the instructor your ideas about the course subject matter, questions discussed in class, thoughts about the readings, and to get papers approved.

Participation factors as *80% of grade.

II. Topical Essays Based On Course Readings: Critical Interpretive Papers

(1) Students will develop both a Midterm and Final Critical Interpretive Essay based on the sequence of topics covered in the course. The topic must be approved by the instructor.

(2) These essays must address the course Objectives as listed above.

(3) Consult the separate grading rubric for further guidance regarding the professor's assessment of the paper's content.

(4) All essays are to be typed double space. The essay should be 4 pages in length.

(5) Each essay must quote from a broad range of all the course readings and take into account any films viewed for the course.

(7) The essay must be turned in on time and be presented to the class during the final exam session.

*The essays total 20% of the total course grade.

III. Topical Essay Grading Policies

Course grades run from A to F. Here are several additional considerations. There are three areas that are considered as papers are evaluated for *quality*.

1. **Comprehension:** Excellent papers will show a high degree of comprehending the course content, avoiding superficial comparisons. Such papers will offer strong critical reflections on the readings. Such papers will fulfill all the course objectives in a compelling way.
2. **Critical Reasoning:** Excellent papers will ask thought-provoking questions that can be debated. Such papers will quote (evaluate, analyze, apply insights) relevant sources and offer rigorous use of evidence to make the case. These papers will tap different analytic approaches to examine the data. These papers will unfold in a logical fashion a tightly considered argument. They will also show a healthy ability to spar with opponents' views.
3. **Synthesis:** Excellent papers will make strong comparisons between different readings, time periods, and analytic methods. Such papers will “make connections” between thinkers, sources, time periods and regions.
4. **Course Objectives:** Excellent papers will be constructed with strong attention to the two main course objectives and the attending explanations of those objectives.

Good papers (B) are less strong, usually in at least one area, or are less strong in terms of consistent use of cited evidence but still demonstrate a genuine engagement of the sources and a diverse use of critical methodologies. Such papers show good attention to the course objectives.

Fair papers (C) show some command of these three categories but are more superficial in character in terms of argument and use of sources, often substituting personal opinion for researched facts. These papers show an uneven command of the RTC 3 goals.

Deficient papers (D) make a weak effort at all categories, substituting personal opinion in virtually all cases for evidence of research. Such papers fail to engage the course readings in a substantive way. Such papers fall short in their engagement of the course objectives.

Failing papers (F) have not engaged the analytic criteria in major aspects.

RELIGION MAJORS, RELIGION MINORS, OR HONORS STUDENTS: If you are a religious studies major, religion minor, or honors student, please identify yourself at the start of the quarter and make an appointment to discuss the construction of your assignments for the quarter.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE:

(Note: The syllabus date gives the work to be read or completed for that specific date.)

TOPIC #1: Darwin as Seeker

March 30

Beyond the Stereotypes

Q: Are religion and science at war? Does Darwinism lead to Atheism?
Did the Victorians suffer a “crisis of faith”?



April 1

Encounters

Q: Did the *Beagle* voyage change Darwin’s understanding of religion?
Reading: Pleins, *The Evolving God*, ch. 1

April 6

Doubt and Seeking

Q: What role did “doubt” play in the development of Darwin’s thinking?
Reading: Pleins, *The Evolving God*, ch. 2



April 8

Materialist Theory of Religion

Q: Does a materialist theory capture the full truth about religion?
Reading: Pleins, *The Evolving God*, ch. 3

April 13

Making Sense of Religion

Q: Do humans have a religion instinct that has evolved?
Reading: Darwin, *Descent of Man*, vol. 1: 34-69; vol. 2: 385-405

TOPIC #2: A Darwinian Consciousness

April 15

Darwin on the Sublime and Beauty

Q: Do oceanic feelings signal the reality of the Transcendent?
Reading: Darwin, *Descent of Man*, vol. 2: 316-354

April 20

Unknowable Reality: Science, Mathematics, and Mystery

Q: Does evolution have a built-in trajectory?
Reading: Re Manning, *Science and Religion*,
ch. 2, essay by Simon Conway Morris
ch. 3, essay by Philip Clayton

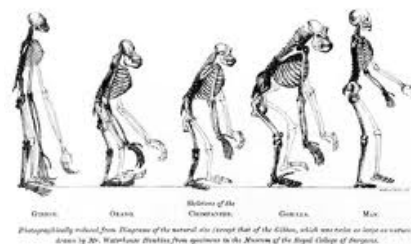
April 22

Moral Awareness

Q: If morality has evolved, what ethics should we have?

Reading: Pleins, *The Evolving God*, ch. 4

Darwin, *Descent of Man*, vol 1: 70-106



April 27

Religious Awareness

Q: Is there a God section of the brain?

Reading: Re Manning, *Science and Religion*, ch. 5, essay by Malcolm Jeeves

April 29

Midterm Paper Presentations: Seeking and Awareness

TOPIC #3: Contemplating Suffering in a Darwinian Universe

May 4

Does Science Needs God?

Q: How would Teilhard answer Darwin (and vice versa)?

Reading: Ursula King, “The Heart of Teilhard de Chardin’s Spirituality” (handout)

May 6 [Guest lecture: Dr. Paul Crowley]

Religion and Suffering

Q: Compare and assess the evolutionary and theological views of suffering. Are they compatible? In conflict?

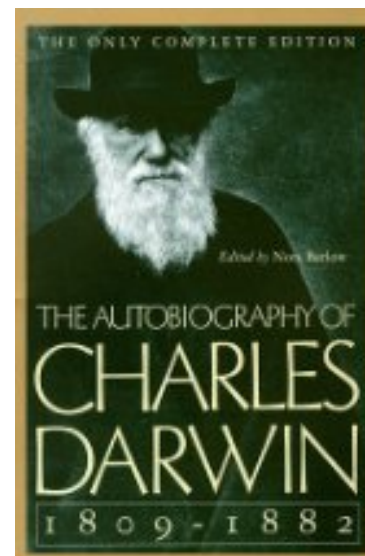
Reading: Crowley, “The Terrain of Suffering” (handout)

May 11

Hostility or Sympathy: Darwin’s Final View of Religion

Q: Was Charles Darwin an Atheist?

Reading: Pleins, *The Evolving God*, ch. 5 and Conclusion



May 13

Darwin as a Contemplative Naturalist

Q: What is different about the Darwinian contemplation of Nature?

Reading: Douglas Burton-Christie (handout)

Re Manning, *Science and Religion*, ch. 1, essay by John Haught

TOPIC #4: A Darwinian Synthesis of Religion and Reason

May 18

Darwin and Atheism, Agnosticism, and Theism

Q: What are Darwin's best arguments for and against religious belief?

Reading: Darwin, *Autobiography*, 69-111 ("From my return to England" ... "The Formation of Vegetable Mould.")

May 20

Where Science Meets Faith (and vice versa)

Q: Can a Darwinian be religious?

Reading: Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, chs. 1-2

May 25 (holiday)

May 27

The Death and Burial of Charles Darwin

Q: Does Charles Darwin impart a new revelation for religion?

Reading: Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, chs. 3



June 1

Journey to Down House

Q: How does the Darwinian view change the way spirituality sees the world?

Reading: Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, chs. 5

June 3

Bringing Faith and Reason Together

Q: Can religion and science build constructive bridges toward each other?

Reading: Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, chs. 6-7

FINAL PAPER PRESENTATION TIMES:

Topic: Seeing and Synthesis

Wednesday, June 10: 6:30 p.m.

Your presence in class is **MANDATORY** for the discussion of final papers and your paper may not be handed in by another student. **NOTE THAT EXAM TIMES ARE *FIXED* AND THAT EXCEPTIONS CANNOT BE MADE TO ALLOW STUDENTS TO GO HOME EARLIER.** Be careful of airline ticketing!



Nothing in biology makes sense except in the
light of evolution.

(Theodosius Dobzhansky)