

TESP 72

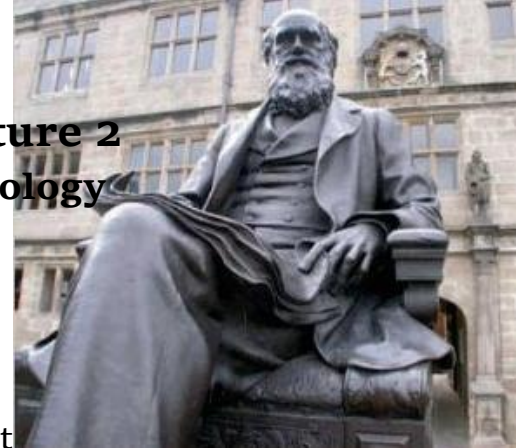
DARWIN, GOD, AND THE POETS

Course Outline: Winter 2016

Instructor: Prof. J. David Pleins

CORE: Religion, Theology, and Culture 2

**PATHWAYS: Values in Science & Technology
Paradigm Shifts**



General Information:

Phone: 408-554-4763

E-mail: jpleins@scu.edu

Office Hours: MW 2:15-3:15 pm or by appointment

Office: Kenna 300D

Section: 31831, 4 units

Class Meeting Times and Location: MWF 1:00-2:05 pm in Kenna 104

Focus of the Course:

This Second Course in Religion uses Darwinian and religious poetry to explore the following kinds of questions: What is the relation between faith and science? How have poets responded to the deep questions raised by Darwin and his ideas? Can the transcendent be found in life, death, and Nature? Do the realities of evil and doubt undermine the quest for an overarching human purpose? How can poetry serve as a vehicle for careful reflection on these major human issues?

A major emphasis of this course will be the recently rediscovered “Memorial Poem” to Charles Darwin written by his friend and colleague George John Romanes, a work now owned by SCU. This poem will form a thread that runs through the entire course.

As an RTC 2/Pathways course, the class focuses on analyzing complex religious phenomena through diverse disciplinary approaches to the subject, seeking to clarify religious beliefs through critical inquiry.

Required Texts:

Felstiner, *Can Poetry Save the Earth?*, Yale University Press, 0300168136

Holmes, *Darwin’s Bards*, Edinburgh University Press, 074869207X

Mitchell, *The Book of Job*, Harper, 0060969598
 Padel, *Darwin: A Life in Poems*, Knopf, 0375711929
 Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, Bloomsbury, 162356944

Prerequisites: Since this is a Second Course in religious studies, the prerequisite for this course is any one course from among SCTR 1-19, TESP 1-19, or RSOC 1-19.

Core Learning Objectives:

As an RTC level 2 course for the Core, this course has three major learning objectives:

- A. Students will be able to **analyze complex and diverse religious phenomena** (such as architecture and art, music, ritual, scriptures, theological systems, and other cultural expressions of religious belief). Following Bloom's taxonomy this dimension involves knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis.
- B. Students will be able to **integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches** to a coherent set of religious phenomena. Following Bloom's taxonomy this dimension involves comprehension, application, analysis, and synthesis.
- C. Students will be able to **clarify and express beliefs** in light of their critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence. Following Bloom's taxonomy, this dimension involves comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

In terms of objective A, through the "Daily Response Readings" prepared for each class session, students will chart literary analyses of specific poetic devices. Also, the 5 short comparative poetry analyses for each of the course units will ask students to analyze, both textually and contextually, specific poetic texts as they relate to key aspects of the relation of religion/faith to science.

In terms of objective B, the 5 short comparative poetry analyses also require students to examine poetic texts by using historical, philosophic, and theological methodologies.

In terms of objective C, each course session will revolve around a specific debate question that will guide the clarification of religious beliefs in light of critical engagement of the day's key question.

Values in Science & Technology Pathway:

This course is associated with the Values in Science & 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.

Paradigm Shifts and the Nature of Human Knowing Pathway

This course is also 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.

Additional Learning Goals and Objectives:

·Methodological/Interpretative: Students will engage and learn how to analyze the key hermeneutical questions concerning the interchange between theology and scientific speculation.

·Textual: By exploring the course subject matter in relation to poetry, students will engage in reflection, discussion, and written analysis concerning enduring theological questions of biblical worship and religious belief.

·Reflective/Existential: Students in this course will discuss and write on the contemporary theological, political, and philosophic dimensions of biblical texts. In writing and discussion, students will address the public policy challenges of using such texts in the public school setting as well as in the public square.

Classroom Pedagogy:

·Lecture/Seminar Format: In terms of instructional style or pedagogy, this Second Course in religion is conducted in a lecture/seminar form that accents collective investigation into the issues at hand. Key questions are posed for each session to focus our discussion and debates.

·Collective Inquiry: 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.

·Subject-Oriented Learning: Rather than being a teacher focused class or even a student focused class, the course seeks to put debate topics at the center of the class, allowing each of us who gather around that subject to act as “knowers” who wrestle with and explore the issues as they emerge in class discussion.

Department Areas:

Religious Studies courses are divided into three major categories:

Area I--Scripture and Tradition

Area II--Theology, Ethics and Spirituality

Area III--Religion and Society

This course is in Area II.

STANDARDS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

Attendance Policy:

·All students are expected to attend all classes and to *arrive promptly*. Chronic lateness or failure to attend class may result, at the instructor's

discretion, 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 at 408-554-4763 or on email.

·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 course at this point); with 4 unexcused absences, you are encouraged to withdraw from the class because if you do not, you will fail the course.

·Note that your presence in class is particularly expected for the discussion of papers and that your papers may not be handed in by another student.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty Policy:

·Student Conduct Code: "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."

·One's Own Work: All written work must be uniquely and individually one's own work. While in-class discussion and outside of class discussion is certainly desirable and encouraged, the material that a student hands in must reflect one's own labor and ought to be clearly and decisively distinguishable from the work of all other students in the class.

·Quoting Sources: In assignments and papers, you are to make clear when you are quoting sources others have written or when you are substantially paraphrasing the work of others. You are not to claim as your own the work that others have done. Such dishonest conduct harms the class, fellow students, the university degree, and oneself.

·Failure and Dismissal: Failure to abide by the spirit and the letter of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the course and will merit a failing grade for the course. Note also that such academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office for Student Life and Leadership for action under the University Code of Conduct.

·Students in the School of Engineering are reminded that their work is also governed by the Engineering Honor Code.

Disability Accommodation Policy:
See separate sheet.

GRADING AND REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS

Papers and Class Participation:

1. *Daily Reading Responses*: Each session requires submission of a Daily Reading Response analysis sheet based on the question for the day and the assigned reading. In addition, active and informed course discussion based on this reading is expected. Regular contact with the instructor (e-mails or office hours) is also expected. This aspect is considered “Class Participation”: 75% of course grade.
2. *Five Short Comparative Poetry Analysis Essays*: 25% of course grade.

Daily Reading Responses for Class Discussion

For each session’s assigned question and reading, you are to write a one-page (typed single space) response to the reading and pose two discussion questions.

Type the question of the day and the reading assignment at the top of the response page.

The response to the day’s assigned reading question should take into account *both* the poetry in the selected reading *and* the commentary on that poetry. So be sure to quote *both* the poetry *and* the commentary in your response.

Always consider poetic elements as you make your points, such as structure, rhyme, meter, theme, sound elements, alliteration, enjambment, stanzas, and the like. When you quote poetry, do not quote large blocks and waste space. Quote as follows: “line 1 / line 2 / line 3.” In other words, indicate any line breaks with a slash and run the lines in a sequence like a normal sentence.

When quoting an author’s commentary simply put the page number in parentheses after the quote.

These assignments will be graded as follows: up to 3 points for the response section and 1 point for the two questions (but you must get a 2 or 3 in the response segment to qualify for the 1 point for the questions).

Comparative Poetry Analysis Essays

During the course of the quarter you will write a series of five short comparative analysis papers. Each paper ends a unit of the course. The papers should build on the daily written responses and do not require additional outside research (except for the final paper which will draw on new reading from the Felstiner course text).

These papers will be no more than 3 pages each (typed double space).

The introduction should be *only* two sentences: pose a question and state a thesis.

You will compare two or three poems (depending on the assignment) that are connected to the specific topic dealt with in that part of the course.

The paper should organize its topics *comparatively by theme* rather than one poem after the next. Thus, divide the paper into three or four “comparison/contrast” themes. Number and label these sections of the paper.

The poems you discuss should be analyzed in terms of their poetic devices as well as thematic content and historical context.

When quoting an author’s commentary simply put the page number in parentheses after the quote.

The paper should close with a one sentence conclusion.

Attach the poems to your paper and mark them for poetic elements.

Note carefully the Core Learning Objectives stated earlier in the syllabus.

These papers will be graded with a standard letter grade (A, B, C, D, F).

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

I. SEEKING A HIGHER TRUTH THROUGH POETRY

Jan 4

On Reading Poetry

Q: How can Darwinian poetry help us tackle the deep perplexities of life?

Jan 6

Poetic Images of Life's Transience

Q: How can poetry help us move beyond mute suffering in a Darwinian universe?

Reading: Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, chs. 1-2 (pages 1-30)

Jan 8

Naming Eternal Things through Poetry

Q: Is there an eternal ground beneath the fleeting things of Nature?

Reading, Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 2 (pages 30-42)

Jan 11

Poetry and the Divine

Q: Does Darwinian poetry enable us to touch deeper realities at work in the world?

Reading, Holmes, *Darwin's Bards*, ch. 3 (pp. 75-89 only!)
and Browning, *Caliban Upon Setabos* (handout)

Jan 13

Comparative Poetry Analysis Essay #1 Due: Romanes, Holmes, Browning

II. SEEKING ENLIGHTENMENT IN DEATH

Jan 15

Darwinism, Death, and Immortality

Q: Can the evolutionary reality of death offer a new view of life's larger purpose?

Reading, Holmes, *Darwin's Bards*, ch. 4 (Death)

Jan 18 = Holiday

Jan 20

Love that Transcends Life's Brutality

Q: Is it better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all?

Reading: Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (handout)

and Holmes, *Darwin's Bards*, ch. 2 (pp. 62-74 only!)

Jan 22

Sacred Spaces

Q: Where are the sacred spaces that can help ease our qualms over death?

Reading: Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 3 (pp. 43-68)

Jan 25

Tomb as Source of Enlightenment

Q: What are the most fundamental "forces" in Nature: material or spiritual?

Reading: Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 3 (pp. 68-89)

Jan 27

The Great Forces: Sublime and Love

Q: Beyond matter and motion, does the universe run on the "forces" of beauty and love?

Reading: Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 3 (pp. 89-116)

Holmes, *Darwin's Bards*, ch. 8 (pp. 235-245 only!)

Jan 29

Comparative Poetry Analysis Essay #2 Due: Tennyson, Romanes, and Holmes

III. SEEKING ULTIMATE PURPOSE THROUGH THE SCIENTIFIC QUEST

Feb 1

Poetry and the Challenges of the Scientific Quest

Q: Does science necessarily destroy belief in God?

Reading, Padel, *Darwin: A Life in Poems*, 3-62 (selections listed on separate sheet)

Feb 3

Poetry and the Agony of Scientific Discovery

Q: Is the pursuit of truth worth the toll it takes on the seeker?

Reading, Padel, *Darwin: A Life in Poems*, 65-141 (selections listed on separate sheet)

Feb 5

The Dangers of Fame

Q: Is it possible to remove egoism from the pursuit of truth?

Reading, Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 4 (pp. 117-135)

Feb 8

Fame as a Life Force

Q: What energies are required to inspire the quest for human understanding?

Reading, Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 4 (pp. 135-153)

Feb 10

Darwin, the Human, and the Contemplation of Nature

Q: How does Darwinian quest recast our sense of what it is to be human?

Reading, Holmes, *Darwin's Bards*, ch. 6

Feb 12

Comparative Poetry Analysis Essay #3 Due: Padel, Romanes, and Holmes

Feb 15: Holiday

IV. SEEKING THE TRANSCENDENT IN NATURE

Feb 17

Gratitude and Sorrow on the Journey

Q: How can the contemplation of Nature nurture the broken human spirit?

Reading, Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 5 (pp. 155-171)

Milton, *Il Penseroso* (handout)

Feb 19

The Weighing of the Heart

Q: Is there a transcendent reality buried in our hearts?

Reading, Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 5 (pp. 171-186)

Arnold, *The Buried Life* (handout)

Feb 22

Seeking Nature's Harmonies

Q: How can we participate in the deeper harmonies of Nature?

Reading, Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 5 (pp. 186-205)

Feb 24

Wonder and Transience

Q: What poetic insights can we gain from our awe at Nature and our participation in its transience?

Reading, Felstiner, *Can Poetry Save the Earth?*, pp. 34-55 (Wordsworth and Keats)

Feb 26

Songs for the Soul

Q: How does the contemplation of Nature and all that is Human restore the soul?

Reading, Felstiner, *Can Poetry Save the Earth?*, pp. 94-103 (Hopkins); pp. 266-274 (Levertov)

Feb 29

Comparative Poetry Analysis Essay #4 Due: Milton (or Arnold), Romanes, and Felstiner

V. SEEKING MEANING IN AN EVIL UNIVERSE

Mar 2

Job: Raging Against the Infinite

Q: Is suffering built into the nature of things and can one find spiritual consolation in this awareness?

Reading, Mitchell, *The Book of Job* (pp. 13-24, 50-88)

Mar 4

Job: The Transcendent and the Problem of Evil

Q: Can Darwinism be made compatible with belief in a benevolent Deity?

Reading, Holmes, *Darwin's Bards*, ch. 3 (pp. 89-101 only!)

Mar 7

The Elemental War

Q: Are we merely victims of blind natural selection?

Reading, Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 6 (pp. 207-227)

Mar 9

A Greater Plan?

Q: Does natural selection give expression to a greater plan at work in the world?

Reading, Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 6 (pp. 227-250)

Mar 11

Merging Faith and Reason

Q: Can faith and reason merge constructively in a world of suffering?

Reading, Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin*, ch. 6-7 (250-294)

FINALS WEEK:

Meeting Time: Friday, March 18 at 1:30 p.m.

Comparative Poetry Analysis Essay #5 Due:

Mitchell (The Book of Job), Holmes, Romanes, and any two other poets from Felstiner except selections already assigned.

Attendance for presentations is mandatory. No exceptions. Note that this is the last possible finals time slot for the week! Plan your travels accordingly!