

REL3750 Science and Religion

Course # 43437.201840

4 Credits/Fall, 2018

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General Religious Studies Mission Statement:

In keeping with the institutional goals of Oakland University to nurture student success, foster an environment for creative endeavors and engage with the general public, Religious Studies undertakes the interdisciplinary exploration of the world's religious traditions, beliefs and practices to develop critical thinking concerning the role of religion and spirituality in human affairs, and to cultivate cross-cultural competencies among students and the broader community.

It is possible to obtain a concentration or independent major in religious studies at OU. Students may select this major only through special arrangement. If you are interested, you may contact the program chair, Dr. Alan Epstein (Epstein@oakland.edu), or the instructor of this course, Dr. Charles Mabee, director of Christianity Studies. The religious studies program also offers minors in Judaic, Christian, and Islamic Studies. You may wish to check the OU religious studies web site at <http://www.oakland.edu/religiousstudies/>

Course Learning Objectives:

This course will enhance your critical thinking skills and better appreciate the ongoing debate and dialogue between religious commitment and scientific knowledge. Are these two approaches to truth mutually exclusive of one another, or can ways be found to integrate them in a reasonable and satisfying manner? At the conclusion of the course, you will have a deeper understanding of the historic relationship between science and religion that challenges the assumption that they are absolutely independent avenues of the human search for truth and reality. Because no universal standard for the determination of truth exists, attention will be given to the political dimension of such epistemological clashes as "faith vs. reason," "evolution vs. intelligent design," and "evidence-based knowledge vs. mythological thinking." The class seeks to reward the diligent student with foundational tools upon which s/he may construct a well-reasoned argument that finds a place for each epistemological method of truth-seeking. It analyzes the thought of formative thinkers who have provided especially deep insight into the interplay of both the spiritual and scientific quests.

In more specific terms, these learning goals for the class will be addressed by focusing on the following:

1. You will be acquainted with the basic language, arguments and issues in the debate between science and religion for truth in the modern world.
2. You will gain a foundational knowledge of the revolution in our way of viewing the world brought about by Einstein's theory of relativity and quantum theory and the implications of this new worldview for all religious thought.

3. You will examine religious presuppositions already embedded in Einstein's theory of relativity.
4. You will have a better understanding of the importance and place of Charles Darwin in the formation of modern biology and the importance of understanding the theory of "evolution" for religious thought.
5. You will achieve a basic grasp of the dialogue between evolution and Creationism/Intelligent Design in modern America.

Required Texts:

Steven Gimbel, *Einstein's Jewish Science (2 Modules)*

Philip Clayton, *Religion and Science (2 Modules)*

Kenneth Miller, *Finding Darwin's God (2 Modules)*

Bruce Glass, *Exploring Faith and Reason (Final Paper)*

Course Procedure: Online posting and essay interaction with other class members in 2-week modules

Grades in this course will be based on equal evaluations of each of the six learning modules and the final paper. Remember: Late submission of work is not acceptable, and will receive a modular grade of 0.0!

There are 6 major learning modules in the class that last two weeks each. Generally, throughout the semester, you are given the first week of the module to complete the assigned reading and produce a rough outline of the key points you will develop in the "reading" essay that is due near the beginning of the second week of the module (all due dates are given on the Moodle homepage and are absolute). No late work is accepted unless cleared with the professor **ahead of time**. The purpose of this "reading" essay is to show that you have completed a detailed and careful analysis of the assigned *reading* (hence the name!). A more detailed description of this essay is given on the Moodle homepage. At the beginning of the second week of each module you will post in the appropriate Moodle "Forum" the final version of this reading essay (generally 3-4 pages, single-spaced, space between paragraphs). Then, several days later after you have had a chance to read the posted essays of your fellow learners, you will submit a second essay which is more subjective in nature. This is called the "next-step" essay. The intention here is to show how you are understanding and processing key ideas that you find in the posted core essays of your fellow learners in the class. Now you complement the objective reading essay with a subjective essay that serves to help "personalize" your learning experience by relating it to your own life history, or provides additional research that you find helpful to augment the assigned reading, or elaborates on the ideas of your fellow students that you wish to develop with additional thought and/or discussion. **At the conclusion of each learning module, you will receive a modular grade from the professor that combines the evaluation of the two required essays *as well as* comments that will offer ways in which you can improve your work if appropriate.** You will find this in the "Grades" link on the Moodle homepage. Thus, you will have personal contact with the professor at a minimum of every two weeks throughout the semester. The reading essay is the more important of the two essays because it serves as the foundation of your modular learning and is given appropriately greater weight (approximately 3x) in the grading determination.

In addition, there is a final required paper that encourages you to review the work of the entire semester from a new standpoint (cf. the Moodle homepage for more details). All modules and the final paper are worth an equal amount, or 1/7 of the final class grade.

Academic Dishonesty

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to an environment of academic integrity and respect for the educational process and the safety and well being of all members of the community. Adherence to the Student Code of Conduct will be expected; violations of this code will be reported to the Dean of Students. The Code of Academic and Student Conduct can be found at <http://www2.oakland.edu/deanofstudents/handbook/conduct.cfm>.

Below are examples of academic dishonesty in our class. Students, faculty or staff who know of possible academic violations are expected to report the alleged violation to the Dean of Students Office. The report will include a brief written statement and relevant evidence (original material when available). A copy of this report with supporting evidence is given to the accused student as the statement of the charge. When appropriate, the faculty member will issue a grade of Incomplete until the academic conduct matter has been resolved.

1. Cheating on assignments and examinations. This includes, but is not limited to, the following when not authorized by the instructor: the use of any assistance or materials such as books and/or notes, acquiring exams or any other academic materials, the use of any other sources in writing drafts, papers, preparing reports, solving problems, works completed for a past or concurrent course, completing homework or carrying out other assignments. No student shall copy from someone else's work or help someone else copy work or substitute another's work as one's own. No student shall engage in any behavior specifically prohibited by an instructor in the course syllabus or class discussion.
2. Plagiarizing the work of others. Plagiarism is using someone else's work or ideas without giving that person credit. By doing this, a student is, in effect, claiming credit for someone else's thinking. This can occur in drafts, papers and oral presentations. Whether the student has read or heard the information used, the student must document the source of information. When dealing with written sources, a clear distinction should be made between quotations, which reproduce information from the source word-for-word within quotation marks, and paraphrases, which digest the source of information and produce it in the student's own words. Both direct quotations and paraphrases must be documented. Even if a student rephrases, condenses or selects from another person's work, the ideas are still the other person's and failure to give credit constitutes misrepresentation of the student's actual work and plagiarism of another's ideas. Buying a paper or using information from the Internet without attribution and handing it in as one's own work is plagiarism.

Note the following statement from the Student Handbook of the University of Edinburgh that may help you better understand the seriousness of plagiarism in the academic environment: "In order to assess your work and to give you useful feedback the professor needs to have a clear sense of what ideas you have developed for yourself and what comes from elsewhere. To be fair to all of the students in the course it is important that each student is given grades that accurately reflect their own efforts. Students sometimes wonder where to draw the line between discussing their ideas with their peers (which can be an excellent learning experience) and unacceptable collusion. The time to be particularly careful is when you are preparing work for assessment. You need to be certain that the work you submit represents your own process of engagement with the task set. You may get into difficulty if, for example, reading another students' plan for their work influences you, or if you show them your plan. Assisting another student to plagiarize is a cheating offence. In addition to giving references for all of the materials that you have actually included within your assignments, it is important to appropriately acknowledge other sources of guidance you have used when preparing your work."

3. Unauthorized collaboration on assignments. This is unauthorized interaction with anyone in the fulfillment of academic requirements and applies to in-class or take-home coursework. Individual (unaided) work on exams, homework, computer assignments and documentation of sources is expected unless the instructor specifically states in the syllabus or verbally that it is not necessary. Collaboration can also include calculating homework problems with another person, having another help to rewrite a

University Services

Disability Support Services Disability Support Services acts as an advocate for students with disabilities and works with 500-600 students per semester. In addition to helping students understand university policies and practices, we assist students in addressing personal and academic concerns. We supply referrals to other university offices when appropriate. Visit <https://oakland.edu/dss/>

The Writing Center The Writing Center provides writers with an interested and supportive audience of well-trained consultants who help both novice and expert writers explore ideas, revise drafts, and develop the skills to draft polished works. Learn more about the writing center by exploring www.oakland.edu/ouwc/ and by visiting Oakland University's "Write Space" in Kresge Library.

Gender and Sexuality Center The Gender and Sexuality Center is dedicated to providing services and education on issues of gender and sexuality for the Oakland University community through resources, referrals, programs and advocacy. For more information visit <https://oakland.edu/gsc/>

Note: If you do not identify with the name that is listed with the registrar, please notify me so that I may appropriately amend my records. In addition, if you prefer to go by a different pronoun, please inform me.

OU Help Desk

For all technology related questions, please contact the OU Help Desk. This is your "go to" resource for online help in case you have questions, or encounter problems throughout the semester. More specific information can be found at <https://oakland.edu/helpdesk/>

Academic Advising

Academic advisers at the university guide you along your learning journey. For more information, visit <https://oakland.edu/advising/>. On this site, you can find who you should be seeing for academic advising and information to help make the most out of your academic advising appointments and your time at OU.

The **First Year Advising Center** is the first stop for all incoming first-year students and undecided transfers. In addition to orientation, that office provides academic advising for all first-year, undecided and re-deciding students; programs and events for first-year students; and major exploration and career counseling for all undergraduate students.

Once you reach sophomore standing, your academic program of choice will determine the academic advising office you will visit. Each school and the college at Oakland University house their own professional academic advising office. Use the **"Find My Academic Adviser"** tools on this website to determine which advising office you will be visiting. Faculty advisers within each **academic department** also are qualified to advise you and connect you with additional resources.

Academic advising is an ongoing partnership between the student and adviser, empowering students to plan for their academic success. Advisers help students with both the "here and now" as well as life after graduation.

	<p><u>The Tutoring Center</u> The Tutoring Center offers a host of free support services — individual and group peer tutoring (for most 000 - 299 level courses), Supplemental Instruction and study skills assistance through a number of instructional and informational videos.</p> <p>The students and staff of the Tutoring Center understand that everyone learns differently. Their mission is to coach and challenge you to take control of your own academic success. All services and support programs are available at no cost to currently enrolled OU students.</p>
	<p><u>OU Counseling Center</u> The Oakland University Counseling Center, located in the Graham Health Center, provides a broad range of mental health services which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal Counseling• Psychological and Psychoeducational Testing• Career Testing and Counseling• Substance Abuse Evaluation, Treatment, and Prevention• Consultation and Outreach• Crisis Intervention <p>More information can be found at https://oakland.edu/oucc/ Counseling is provided by licensed psychologists and interns. Staff that are not fully licensed are supervised by licensed psychologists. Counseling services are based on a short-term model. If long-term counseling is indicated, the staff is happy to help with outside referrals. In order to meet with a counselor, you can call or come in to the Counseling Center and schedule an appointment. Same day appointments may be available, subject to counselor availability.</p>

Class Schedule

Note: Check specific posting assignments and dates in the Forum link on the Moodle homepage. This is the broad outline of the class. Be sure and put these dates in your calendar at the beginning of the semester! Any posting after the due date/time will not receive credit. This is a class in personal discipline as much as science and religion!!!

POSTING DUE DATE

SUBJECT

***Post Before Sept. 8 Post 1-page Summaries of the Syllabus+Practice Essay (Check for Model Essay provided by the professor after you complete your submission)**

**Note: The first week assignments are non-graded. It is only intended to introduce you to one another and class technology.*

Sept. 10-19

First Module: The Debate Between Science and Religion in Traditional Areas of Scientific Research

Reading Assignment for Learning Module One: Clayton, pp. viii-85

Sept. 24-Oct. 3

Reading Assignment for Learning Module Two: What is the Future Interplay of Science and Religion, Especially Regarding Bodily Issues?

Reading Assignment for Learning Module Two: Clayton, pp. 86-171

Oct. 8-17

Third Module: Einstein's Jewish Science—The Jewishness of Einstein's Science

Reading Assignment for Learning Module Three: Gimbel, pp. 1-111

Oct. 22-31

Fourth Module: Einstein's Jewish Science—Relativity and Einstein's Global Outlook

Reading Assignments for Learning Module Four: Paul Davies, Gimbel, pp. 112-217

Nov. 5-14

Fifth Module: The Importance of Charles Darwin for Religion, Part One

Reading Assignments for Learning Module Five: Kenneth Miller, *Finding Darwin's God*, pp. xi-128.

Nov. 19-28

Sixth Module: The Importance of Charles Darwin for Religion, Part Two

Reading Assignment for Learning Module Six: Kenneth Miller, *Finding Darwin's God*, pp. 129-292.

Post by Dec. 14

Post Final Paper: Post this paper in two (2) places in the Discussion Area (by cut&paste and attachment).

Final Paper Assignment: Read Bruce, *Glass, Faith and Reason*.

In this final assignment of the class, read Glass, *Faith and Reason*. The book is written from a particular religious perspective. Your assignment is to critique the book from the standpoint of what you have learned this semester about the interplay of science and religion. I am not primarily concerned with your point of view with regard to the theory of evolution, but how you evaluate the way that Glass argues in his book. Be critical!!! Show what you've learned and how it impacts how you see things now. It is clear that Darwin's

theory of evolution has caused major consternation among numerous religious believers. After reading this book, do you believe that he has successfully navigated the murky waters that exist between science and religion? Why, or why not? The issue raised here is relevant beyond the specific Christian tradition out of which Glass comes. At the beginning of the semester, we discussed something of the interplay between Judaism and science in the thought of Einstein. In similar ways, we could find other instances of relating science to other religious traditions, such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. A major question arises in all of this discussion: what holds the primary hand in the debate: science or religion? Which "side" is attempting to integrate into the other? Which represents the major voice of criticism? How do you see this dynamic playing out in Glass's book? As you address this question, make sure that you provide numerous references and illustrations from *Faith and Reason* so that I know that you have carefully read and studied the book. Do NOT copy and paste from the Internet!!! **Your paper should be 4-5 pages, singled-spaced, space between paragraphs.**