Graduate Seminar: Dialogue in Science and Religion

Course Number: FAMMD 606-I

Institution: Medical University of South Carolina

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One of the most dynamic edges of thought in the decade of the 90's was the intellectual expansion at the interface of science and religion. Revolutionary changes occurred in both domains during the 20th century, with the result that science and religion no longer appear mutually exclusive and antagonistic. Indeed, some scholars cross-trained in both domains have pushed their ideas beyond the conventional boundaries of either discipline, out into uncharted waters where their probing questions place both science and religion in new, interactive, and potentially creative perspectives.

This seminar will survey the evolution of thought in Western science and religion during the last 300 years, with major attention to the 20th century. It is arguable to name an era, but many would say we have come to the end of the Enlightenment or Modern era and are in transition to a new kind of awareness with strikingly different assumptions about rationality, objectivity, and cosmology. Following a thorough overview of the field via Ian Barbour's Religion and Science (1997), members of the seminar may choose one major work from the last decade and present to the seminar a substantive, critical report on that book. (The written report should be distributed one week prior to presentation.) A final, summary essay will allow each member to describe how his/her mind has changed regarding science and faith during this course of study.

Specifically, **course objectives** for the Graduate Seminar are that every participant:

Place the current dialogue between science and religion/theology in the context of religion-science interactions in the West since the Enlightenment.

Understand both the differences and the similarities between scientific method and theological method with command of the relevant philosophical vocabulary.

Examine carefully and critically the substantive themes discussed by Barbour in his book Religion and Science.

With equal care and criticism, examine other viewpoints or research programs in the science-theology dialogue, including at least one from a theological perspective other than Christian.

Clarify your integrity and vision as scientists (or scientific physicians), achieving whatever integration of your professional life and your faith perspective you choose.

Course Requirements

The course will be graded Honors/Pass/Incomplete. For **two credit hours** do the following:

Prepare, attend, and participate actively in every seminar. Excused absences should be arranged in advance with the course director except for emergencies.

Prepare a summary of the argument and critical evaluation of one book from the list below or other book agreed upon with a course director. The report should be written, 5-10 pages, and distributed to the class one week in advance of presentation in the seminar. Models of successful reports and guidelines for seminar presentation will be available.

Write a final essay describing how your mind has changed (or not changed) during this seminar in respect to the relation of science and religion, highlighting important ideas that have influenced you. The essay should contain the beginning of your own research program as indicated in class, demonstrating the interaction of science and religion from your perspective. The essay should be 5-6 pages and is due one week after the last seminar.

Complete a standardized course evaluation.

For **three credit hours**, choose a second book and report on it as above. 5-10 pages will be accepted.

Book List

The following is a list of important books from which selections may be made for presentation. A more extensive bibliography (compiled by the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences) will be distributed at our first meeting. *The choice of a book should be made with the course director,* after discussion of the student's interests and level of study.

Ian Barbour, Religion and Science (1997--*textbook*), Ethics In an Age of Technology (1993)

Harold I. Brown, Rationality (1990)

Paul Davies, The Mind of God (1992), God and the New Physics (1995)

James E. Loder (theologian) and W. Jim Niedhardt (physicist), The Knight's Move (1992)

Philip Hefner, The Human Factor: Evolution, Culture, and Religion (1993)

Mary Midgley, Science As Salvation: A Modern Myth and Its Meaning (1992)

Sallie McFague, The Body of God: An Ecological Theology (1993)

Arthur Peacocke (evolutionary biologist), Theology For a Scientific Age (1993), God and the New Biology (1994)

John Polkinghorne, The Faith of a Physicist (1994), Belief In God In an Age of Science (1998), Science and Theology: An Introduction (1998).

Warren Brown and Nancey Murphy, eds., Whatever Happened To the Soul?

R. J. Russell, N. Murphy and C. J. Isham, eds., Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature

Stephen Toulmin, The Return To Cosmology (1992)

B. Alan Wallace, Choosing Reality: a Buddhist View of Physics and the Mind (1996)

Course Agenda and Schedule , Spring 2002

Mapping the Territory

1.	1/9/02	Introduction to the study and glossary of terms; viewing of the Smithsonian videotape, *The Quantum Universe*
2.	1/16	Overview and typology of the relation of science and religion Reading: Barbour, 4-5 Teacher: Keller
3.	1/23	Religion and the history of science in Enlightenment/Modern era Reading: Barbour, 1-3 Teachers: 17th Century, (to be filled out the first day of class) 18th Century, 19th Century,
4.	1/30	Basic similarities and differences: history in science and religion, objectivism and relativism, religious pluralism Reading: Barbour, 6 Teacher: Ogilvie
5.	2/6	Religion and theories of science: physics and metaphysics

Reading: Barbour, 7

Teacher:

6. 2/13 Astronomy and Creation

Reading: Barbour, 8

Teacher:

7. 2/20 Evolution and Continuing Creation

Reading: Barbour, 9

Teacher:

8. 2/27 Human Nature: biology, religion, and the human future

Reading: Barbour, 10

Teacher:

9. 3/6 How does God act if the world is governed by scientific laws?

Reading: Barbour, 12

Teacher: Keller and Ogilvie

SPRING BREAK

Critical Study of Other Research Programs

10. 3/20 Book: Hefner, The Human Factor

Presenter: Keller

11. 3/27 Book:

Presenter:

12. 4/3 Book:

Presenter:

13. 4/10 Book:

Presenter:

14. 4/17 Book:

Presenter:

15. 4/24 Book:

Presenter:

WRAP-UP OF THE COURSE, COURSE EVALUATIONS HANDED IN