Theological Perspectives on the Science of Economics

Course Number: MCSI 320

Institution: Macquarie Christian Studies Institute

Instructor: Paul Oslington

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Macquarie Christian Studies Institute

Macquarie Christian Studies Institute is an independent, non-denominational teaching and research centre, affiliated with Macquarie University. The Institute was set up in 1998 to bridge the gap in the Australian higher education system between the government run universities (many of which are prohibited in their foundation documents from teaching theology) and church run theological colleges that train ministers of religion. The Institute encourages students to integrate theological perspectives with their other studies, and courses taught by the Institute are fully accredited degree courses at Macquarie University.

Robert Banks, formerly Professor of Lay Ministry at Fuller Seminary in the US, returned to Australia to be foundation director of the Institute.

Contact details of the Institute are: Email integrating@mcsi.edu.au and Web www.mcsi.edu.au

Co-ordinator

Paul Oslington is senior lecturer in economics at the Australian Defence Force Academy within the University of NSW. He completed a B.Ec at Macquarie University, then M.Ec and PhD in economics from University of Sydney, and BD from Melbourne College of Divinity. Subsequent research has focused on the economics of international trade and unemployment, and relationships between economics and religion. The course is supported by a US$10,000 award from the Science and Religion Course Program, Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences in Berkeley, funded by the Templeton Foundation.

Contact details are: School of Economics and Management, University of NSW/ Australian Defence Force Academy, Northcott Drive, Canberra ACT 2602.

Web: http://emnw3.arts.adfa.edu.au

Course
The course will be run in intensive mode at Macquarie University from February 4-8 2002. Times are 9-12am then 2-5pm each day. Classes will be a mixture of lectures, discussion and group work.

Assessment

20% Research Project (2000 words). Choose one of the case study areas (e.g. globalization, environment, church economic activity) and examine the issues from the perspective of Christian theology. You may wish to comment on whether the issues in the case study area which have received most attention in contemporary public debate are the most important from the perspective of Christian theology, on the analytical tools (e.g. economics) which have been used, and on the criteria used in public debate. This project is designed to get students reading and thinking about the issues before the course commences, and prepare students to contribute to the discussion in the area they have researched. Criteria for marking will be thoroughness of research, identification of links between theology and the issue, clarity of exposition and presentation. Any sources used should be properly referenced. The project is due on at the Institute on Monday 11th February. It will then be marked and returned to students by mail. Please use A4 paper, corner stapled, with no folders or binders.

10% Class Participation.

20% Course Notebook (2000 words). Students will be asked to write a short reflection after each day of the intensive on how their understanding of the issues has developed, and questions that have arisen for them. The notebook is due at the Institute on Monday 18th February.

50% Essay (3000 words). What is the relationship between theology and economics? The essay is due at the Institute on Monday 26th March.

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100%

Course Calendar and Readings

Items in the marked * in the list below are essential reading. A course booklet comprising the required sections of the main references will be provided to students as many of the works are not readily available in Australian libraries. Some, but not all of the items are available from the university library.

A few useful web sites are:


A useful book on assignment writing is

**Meeting 1 - Monday AM - Science and Religion**

- Typologies of the relationship between science and religion. Conflict vs vindication vs harmonization.
- History of the engagement of science with theology.
- Perspectives from the sociology of science.
- Practical issues in integrative work

Science and Theology:


Sociology of Knowledge:


**Meeting 2 - Monday PM - Economics and Theology**

- History of the relationship between economics and theology.

- Comparative studies of the engagement with Islam and Judaism

Introductory theology textbook:


Introductory economics textbooks:


Histories of Economic Thought:


Theology and Economics:


Church Statements:


Comparisons with Islam and Judaism:


**Meeting 3 - Tuesday AM  Discussion of Projects & Case Study- Globalization**


Theology:


**Meeting 4 - Tuesday PM - Case Study Globalization (cont’d)**

See above for readings

**Meeting 5 - Wednesday AM - Case Study - Environment**

Economics:


Theology:


**Meeting 6 - Wednesday PM  Case Study - Finance**

Economics:


Theology:


**Optional Course Dinner 7pm Wednesday**

**Meeting 7 - Thursday AM  Case Study -- Church Involvement in Welfare and the Labour Market**

Economics:


Theology:


**Meeting 8 - Thursday PM - Case Study - Economics Models of the Church**

Economics:


Theology:


**Meeting 9 - Friday AM - Consonance and Dissonance between Economic and Theological Perspectives.**
Study of the different positions that have been adopted on economics and theology, and relating them to the science and religion typologies

What does a study of economics contribute to the science/religion debate

General Works on the Relationship between Economics and Theology:


Different Approaches to the Relationship between Economics and Theology:


**Meeting 10 - Friday PM - Conclusion**

Importance of hermeneutical issues.

Practical Issues in Integrative Work

Hermeneutical Issues:


Practical Issues:


