

Religion and Science

REL 120 • Spring 2017
Manly 207 • TR 2:00-3:15

Dr. Eleanor Finnegan
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Office Hours: W 12:00-1:00 & by appointment

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Course Description

This course is a broad, interdisciplinary introduction to the ways in which “science” and “religion” have been defined. In particular, we will focus on the ways that these concepts have been co-constructed, focusing on their varied relationships throughout history. We will look at uses of the terms in the history of science, the impact of the scientific revolution on understandings of nature and gender, the shifting significance of science and religion from scientists and philosophers who advocate for science as religion, and the use of the natural sciences (in particular cognitive science) in religious studies. We will analyze the varied ways (including in contemporary debates) in which these terms are used and the values implicit within these uses.

There are no prerequisites for this class.

Course Goals:

1. Students will gain a basic understanding of the varied ways in which the terms “science” and “religion” have been constructed throughout history.
2. Students will learn to apply the methods, conceptual tools and sources of data in the field of religious studies.
3. Students will critically analyze the varied ways in which these two terms are used and the values implicit within these uses.
4. Student will gain an introduction to the ways in which natural sciences and humanities have been used to study religion and sciences.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Analyze critically the varied definitions of the science and religion throughout history, in particular focusing on the ways in which they are co-constructed.
2. Compare and contrast the ways in which scholarship or theories from the natural sciences or religious studies have been used to study religion and science respectively.
3. Analyze discourses about science and religion, and the assumptions and agendas they reveal, using social theory.
4. Analyze the ways in which science and religion are constructed around the issue of evolution at particular points in history.
5. Relate the issues of categorization and co-construction to larger questions in the academic study of religion.

Required Texts

- There are no required texts to buy.
- All readings will be available on Blackboard.

Assignments

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments must be submitted through Blackboard before the beginning of class on the date that they are due. Late assignments will be marked off one letter grade for each class that they are late.

Extensions will be granted under extraordinary circumstances and with the prior approval of the instructor. The late penalty will be waived if the student misses class due to documented illness, serious family emergencies, or severe weather.

1. **Notebook –Jan. 31 and Apr. 18.** Each student will keep a notebook to use in the course. Each entry in your notebook must contain two parts: (1) summaries of the weekly readings and (2) a post class analysis on the relationships between class, the readings, and/or the discussions. The analysis is not to be a summary of the events of class. Instead, they are an opportunity to analyze more deeply issues from the course, so these reflections can reflect on readings and discussions from other class periods. I will collect your notebooks at the beginning of class for a and at the end of the semester for the final submission. (8% for the check and 12% for final submission) (20% total)
2. **In-class assignments/participation** - Students will be required to participate in and submit work that is done as a part of class. This involves being present in class, as well as timely, thorough and thoughtful reading of each day's assignments. Readings should be completed by the beginning of class on the day that they are listed. If a student fails to come to class prepared or to participate during class, this grade will suffer. **If a number of students are not prepared for class there will be pop quizzes throughout the semester.** (12%)
3. **Four group projects – Jan. 24, Feb. 23, Mar. 23, and Apr. 6.** There will be four group projects. Instructions for each of these projects will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class. (12% each) (48% total)
4. **Media Analysis - various dates.** In the place of a final exam, you will write a final analysis paper of 800-1000 words in which you will analyze a piece of media on religion and science using theoretical ideas from class. Instructions will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class. You will also engage in peer editing your work and your classmate's. (20%)
 - **Draft - Apr. 20**
 - **Final - May 3 by 10:30 am**

Grading

Final grades are calculated as follows:

A+: 100; A: 99-93; A-: 92-90; B+: 89-87; B: 86-82; B-: 82-80; C+: 79-77; C: 76-72; C-: 71-70; D+: 69-65; D: 64-60; F: 59-0

Attendance:

All students are required to participate fully in class. This involves being present in class, as well as timely, thorough, and thoughtful reading of each day's assignments. Come to class with the correct

reading and ready to ask and answer questions. Failure to come prepared, coming late, leaving early or being disruptive will count as an absence. Absences will negatively impact your participation grade.

Severe Weather:

This course will follow The University of Alabama's policies concerning severe weather, which can be found at <http://uanews.ua.edu/weather/>. In case of an emergency, I will use email to provide additional course information.

Consultations:

Students are encouraged to contact and meet with me for assistance or to ask questions. The best way to reach me is by email or in my office during my office hours. Please speak with me in advance if you are having trouble completing the course requirements or if you anticipate a problem, such as routine absences. Not all situations can be accommodated, but contacting me before a problem arises increases the chances that it can be addressed in a way that is fair to your classmates and beneficial to you.

Academic Misconduct

All Students are expected to know and follow the Code of Academic Conduct, which reads as follows: ***All students in attendance at the University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student.***

The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

Disability Accommodations

If you have a disability that requires special arrangements, you are encouraged to register with the Office of Disabilities Services, 348-4285. Once you have registered, please make an appointment with me to discuss your required accommodations.

Courtesy

Please silence or turn off all cell phones upon entering class. You may take notes on a laptop computer, although I reserve the right to ask you to turn off the computer if circumstances warrant - i.e. you are playing games, emailing, using Facebook, or something else instead of taking notes. I reserve the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive (e.g. talking, reading a book for another class, etc.) or disrespectful behavior to leave the class. If disturbances or obstructions to the teaching/learning environment are more serious, students will be subject to disciplinary sanctions outlined in the Code of Student Conduct.

UAct Ethical Community Statement

The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (www.ua.edu/uact) provides a list of reporting channels that can be used to report incidences of illegal discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, sexual violence, retaliation, threat assessment or fraud.

Tentative Course Schedule

Readings should be completed by the beginning of class on the day that they are listed. Please bring the reading or your reading notes to class on the due date. This schedule is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard.

Thursday, 1/12	Introduction to the course and each other
Tuesday, 1/17 Reading:	What's in a Name? McCutcheon, "What's in a Name?" Hackett, "Is Gator Football a Religion?"
Thursday, 1/19 Reading:	History of Science Russell, "The Conflict of Science and Religion" Wilson, "Historiography of Science and Religion"
Tuesday, 1/24 Reading: Assignment:	History of Religion Ernst, "Approaching Islam in Terms of Religion" Group project #1
Thursday, 1/26 Reading:	Essentialism McCutcheon, "Essentials of Religion" RM, "Edward Burnett Tylor" RM, "James G. Frazer"
Tuesday, 1/31 Reading: Assignment:	Premodern science Grant, "Aristotle and Aristotelianism" Lindberg, "Medieval Science and Religion" Notebook check
Thursday, 2/2 Reading:	Functionalism McCutcheon, "The Functions of Religion" RM, "Emile Durkheim"
Tuesday, 2/7 Reading:	Is there Medieval Muslim science? Dhanani, "Islam" Francis, "Magic and Divination in the Medieval Islamic Middle East"
Thursday, 2/9 Reading: Assignment:	Resemblance definition McCutcheon, "The Resemblance among Religions" Make sure you have your definitions with you
Tuesday, 2/14 Reading:	Scientific Revolution Merchant, Death of Nature pt 1
Thursday, 2/16 Reading:	Gender and Environment Merchant, Death of Nature pt 2

Tuesday, 2/21
Reading: Scientific Revolution and Religion
Brooke, "Natural Theology"
White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis"

Thursday, 2/23
Reading: None
Assignment: Group Project #2

Tuesday, 2/28
Reading: Darwin
Darwin, On the Origins of Species sections
Moore, "Charles Darwin"

Thursday, 3/2
Reading: Darwin shapes the field of Religious Studies
Pals, "Animism and Magic: E.B. Tylor and J. G. Frazer"

Week 8
Tuesday, 3/7
Reading: Religion, Science, and Colonization
Gottschalk, Religion, Science, and Empire pt 1

Thursday, 3/9
Reading: Religion, Science, and Colonization
Gottschalk, Religion, Science, and Empire pt 2

Monday, 3/13 - Friday, 3/17
Spring Break

Tuesday, 3/21
Reading: The Issue of Magic
Smith, "Trading Places"

Thursday, 3/23
Assignment: Group Project #3

Tuesday, 3/28
Reading: Religion in the Public Sphere
To Be Announced

Thursday, 3/30
Assignment: NO CLASS
Work on group project #4

Tuesday, 4/4
Reading: Religious Studies and Science and the Production of Knowledge
McCutcheon, Religion and Classification
Weldon, "The Social Construction of Science"

Thursday, 4/6
Reading: Religion and Science in the media
None
Assignment: Group Project #4

Tuesday, 4/11
Reading: Naturalism/Cognitive Science
RM, "Pascal Boyer"
Guthrie, "The Need for Anthropomorphism"

Thursday, 4/13	Cognitive Science and Durkheim
Reading:	Pals, "Society as Sacred: Emile Durkheim"
Tuesday, 4/18	Cognitive Science and Durkheim
Reading:	Paulson, "To Understand Religion, Think Football"
Assignment:	Notebook final submission
Thursday, 4/20	
Reading:	None
Assignment:	Media Analysis Draft
Tuesday, 4/25	Peer Editing
Reading:	None
Thursday, 4/27	Summary and Conclusion
Reading:	None
Wednesday, 5/3	Media Analysis due by 10:30 am on Blackboard