

## Issues in Science and Religion

REL 2163, Ref.# 2357

J 313, MW 11-12:15

**Course Description:** The course will explore Eastern and Western religious conceptions of the natural world and relate them to scientific ways of knowing. This includes a survey of major scientific discoveries and theories that both challenge and inform religious belief, including ecology, cosmology, evolution, psychology, and global change. It also includes an overview of the ecumenical dimensions of Eastern and Western spiritual experience and expression. Emphasis is placed on integrating and harmonizing scientific and religious understandings to develop a meaningful, contemporary worldview.

**Course Requirements:** Attendance and participation (15% and no more than 1 unexcused absence and 2 tardies); two essay exams (30%); two papers (50%); and one presentations (5%). This is a Writing-across-the-Curriculum course that requires a minimum of 4,000 words of writing. If used to meet AA Gordon Rule requirements for general education, a minimum grade of “C” is also required.

### Required Reading:

Ian Barbour *When Science Meets Religion*, David Abram *The Spell of the Sensuous*. Various handouts and handouts/websites as assigned. All additional course materials must be returned to professor at semester’s end.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students will develop an understanding of the science-religion dialogue while examining and formulating their own perspectives. Along with a formal paper and presentation regarding those perspectives, students will learn to discuss passionately many of the issues that concern the science and religion dialogue while doing so in a tolerant manner. Besides gaining familiarity with major names and concepts involved in the dialogue, students will become versed in the great variety of ideas regarding stewardship and the sacred in nature.

### Topic Schedule:

**Week One:** Course introductions and handouts regarding traditional perspectives of the science-religion dialogue as well as the role of nature in that dialogue. Excerpts from Mindwalk.

**Week Two:** Barbour, Chapter 1: Four views of science and religion. From Scientific Materialism to a Theology of Nature. The notion of ultimate reality as coincidentia oppositorum—or, the planned randomness. Barbour, Chapter 2: Astronomy and Creation. From chaos and chance to the anthropic principle. Does Science have a new creation story? What is it and how is it being formulated?

**Week Three:** Barbour, Chapter 3: The implication of Quantum Physics. From determinism to Eastern mysticism. Handout from Capra. Excerpts from What the Bleep Do We Know? “Gaia, Physics, and Chi: Paths toward Integrated Knowing.”

**Week Four:** Barbour, Chapter 4: Evolution and continuing creation. From Darwin to process philosophy. Handout from Murphy. Can evolution be sacred? Where does chance meet plan?

**Week Five:** Barbour, Chapter 5: Genetics, neuroscience, and human nature. Materialism, dualism, the brain and the spirit. Barbour, Chapter 6: God and Nature. Naturalism to Complementary languages. What can we know and what can we say about ultimate reality. Is nature divine?

**Week Six:** Barbour, Chapter 6 continued: God as self organizing process to Great Nest of Being  
Film: Keeping the Earth—scientists, theologians, and environmentalists discuss the relationship between science, religion, and nature. Handout from Reuther.

**Week Seven:** Excerpts from Mindwalk. Handout on Biophilia (our place in the cosmos) and **Student presentations.**

**Week Eight:** Review and **Midterm Exam.**

**Week Nine:** Abram, Chapter 1: The ecology of magic. Setting the framework. Handout from Roszak.

**Week Ten:** Abram, Chapter 2: Philosophy on the way to ecology—phenomenology and the participatory universe.

**Week Eleven:** Abram, Chapter 3: The Flesh of Language. Toward an ecology of language, how the land mirrors our language. Handout from Armstrong.

**Week Twelve:** Abram, Chapter 4: Animism and the alphabet. Rediscovering the magic in the vocal. Writing as dogma. How can we re-enchant our understanding of nature.

**Week Thirteen:** Abram, Chapter 5: In the landscape of language. Redefining the communal, participatory mode of aboriginal experience in a living contemporary context. What can ancient say to us?

**Week Fourteen:** Abram, Chapter 6: Time, Space, and the Eclipse of the Earth. How and why linear thinking has misunderstood and demeaned the holistic aboriginal experience. Abram, Chapter 7: The forgetting and remembering of the air. Rediscovering the ancient awe and reverence of the spiritual in the natural.

**Week Fifteen:** Student presentations.

**Week Sixteen:** Review, **Final Exam, and Paper Due.**

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**Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Academic Integrity** Students are responsible for adherence to all college policies and procedures, including those related to academic freedom, cheating, classroom conduct, and other items included in the *OWC Catalog and Student Handbook*. Students should be familiar with the rights and responsibilities detailed on pages 25-29 of the *2006-07 OWC Catalog and Student Handbook*. Plagiarism, cheating or any other form of academic dishonesty is a serious breach of student responsibilities and may trigger consequences which range from a failing grade to formal disciplinary action.

**Special Needs** If you have special needs for which accommodations may be appropriate to assist you in this class, please contact the Office of Services for Students with Special Needs in Building C-1 on the Niceville Campus, or call 729-6079 (TDD 1-800-955-8771 or Voice 1-800-955-8770).

**Incomplete Grades** An incomplete grade (“I”) may be awarded when the student is unable to finish the required work because of unforeseen extenuating circumstances such as illness or TDY assignment. To receive an “I” grade, the student must have successfully completed a significant portion of the required coursework and be able to finish the remaining work without attending class. An “I” grade will automatically convert to a grade of “F” if the student does not complete the remainder of the coursework by the established deadline.

**Cell phones** Cell phones, pages and other such electronic devices must be turned off during class time. Communication by electronic device during class is prohibited unless expressly designated as part of the learning activities. Where emergency or employment situations require access to electronic communication services, arrangements may be made in advance with the instructor.

**Children Attending Classes** (The full “Children on Campus” Policy Statement appears on page 31 of the 2006-07 catalog) As a courtesy to other students and the learning process, students may not bring children with them to class sessions. Health and safety concerns prohibit children from accompanying adult students in any lab, shop, office or classroom or other college facility where potential hazards exist. If a child-related emergency means you must miss class, contact the instructor as soon as possible to determine your options.

**Class attendance** Class attendance is an integral part of the learning process for this course. Students are expected to attend class regularly. As a courtesy, students with excessive absences (including tardies) may be withdrawn from the class.

### **Changes to Course Policies**

In the event of unusual or extraordinary circumstances, the schedule, requirements, and procedures in this course are subject to change. If the college closes for inclement weather or other emergency, the date for any exams, presentations or assignments due during the closure period will be postponed. A revised schedule will be available at the first regular class meeting held once the college re-opens. If changes to graded activities are required, students will not be penalized as a result of the adjustments, but will be responsible for meeting revised deadlines and course requirements.