PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE AND RELIGION 2: LIFE AND MIND

THET11046

MSc/PGPilp/PGCert

Course Organiser: Dr. Sarah Lane Ritchie
Course Lecturers: Dr. James Collin
Prof. John Evans
Dr. Graeme Finlay
Dr. Michael Fuller
Dr. David Grummet
Prof. Michela Massimi
Dr. Orestis Palermos

Course Secretary: Dr. Jessica Wilkinson
Learning Technologist: Ms. Natalie Chisholm

COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This is a level 11 course for students seeking an advanced introduction to contemporary issues in the intersection of science and religion. This course will provide students with the necessary background to complete the online MSc programme in Philosophy, Science and Religion. Students will gain an understanding of the relevant science – including evolutionary biology and psychology – and the relationship of these with issues in theology and religious belief – including the doctrine of creation, the existence of the soul, and life after death.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course students should:

1. Be able to demonstrate a good understanding of the key areas in the current science-religion interface—including cosmology, evolution, and the neurosciences—and will be able to engage with them philosophically.
2. Be able to demonstrate strong analytical skills and philosophical acumen in approaching debates between science and theology.
3. Be able to engage critically with key textual sources in the field.
4. Be able to engage constructively in cross-disciplinary conversations.
5. Have demonstrated an openness to personal growth through a commitment to dialogue across intellectual and cultural boundaries.

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS

Courses will primarily be assessed through the submission of a summative essay on a question of your choice (to be discussed in advance with the course organizer) of no more than 2500 words. This will account for 85% of the student’s course mark. The remaining 15% of the final course mark will be determined by the student’s postings on the course discussion board. (Details on discussion board participation and assessment can be found under the "Assessment" tab on the course page on Learn. Additional guidance will be offered by one of the instructors on the discussion board itself.) There is also the option to submit a non-graded, optional formative essay for additional feedback. The deadline for the formative essay is Thursday 7 March, 2019. Feedback will be provided within 15 working days. The deadline for the summative essay is Tuesday 23rd April at 12 noon. Feedback will be provided within 15 working days.

For details of grading criteria, details on word count and referencing, penalties for exceeding the word count or for late submissions, and many other issues please consult the Programme Handbook, available on the Philosophy Hub Page. It is recommended that all students read the Programme Handbook carefully.

SYLLABUS

MODULE 1: SCIENCE FROM A HUMAN PERSPECTIVE

In this module we consider two key issues in the philosophy of science: the demarcation between science and pseudoscience, and scientific perspectivism. There are clear instances of genuine science and clear instances of quackery, but is it possible to provide criteria to
distinguish between science and pseudoscience, and what are the epistemological implications of this distinction? Science aims at objectivity, but it is conducted by cognitively limited human beings. How can we best make sense of the idea that scientific representation and explanation is perspectival in nature?

WEEK 1 (14-20 JANUARY)
Science and Pseudoscience – Orestis Palermos


*Further Reading*


WEEK 2 (21-27 JANUARY)
Scientific Perspectivalism – Michela Massimi


*Further Reading:*


**MODULE 2: RELIGION AND EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY**

In this module we explore the relationship between evolutionary biology and religion. What is evolutionary biology, what is the evidence for the central claims of neo-Darwinian biology, and how has it changed in recent times? How have theologians reacted to and appropriated evolutionary thought? What exactly is supposed to be the conflict between evolution and
religion, and does evolution, as some have claimed, rationally undermine atheism rather than theism?

WEEK 3 (28 JANUARY - 3 FEBRUARY)
Our Evolutionary History – Graeme Finlay


*Further Reading:*


Finlay, Graeme (2013), *Human Evolution: Genes, Genealogies and Phylogenies*. CUP.


WEEK 4 (4-10 FEBRUARY)
Evolution and Scripture (John Walton)


*Further Reading:*

de Pomerai, D. and Harris, M. (2017), ‘Creationism and evolutionary biology – science or pseudoscience?’, in *Philosophy, Science and Religion for Everyone*
WEEK 5 (11-17 FEBRUARY)
Evolution and Atheism – Jamie Collin


Further Reading:

Nagel, Thomas (2012), Mind and Cosmos. OUP.

WEEK 6 (18-24 FEBRUARY) (FLEXIBLE LEARNING WEEK - NO ASSIGNED MATERIAL)

WEEK 7 (25 FEBRUARY - 3 MARCH)
Teilhard de Chardin – David Grumett


Further Reading:


MODULE 3: RELIGION AND THE HUMAN SCIENCES
In this module we consider how developments in the human sciences can help us to understand both religion and the relationship between science and religion. What does sociological research tell us about the interaction between science and religion? One of the goals of cognitive science is to study the way we form beliefs. What can cognitive science tell us about the formation of religious beliefs and attitudes? Do developments in cognitive science show that the mind is or supervenes upon the brain and other physical structures? Does cognitive science, in other words, undermine any reason to think we have immaterial souls? And, if so, what are the implications for theological doctrines involving life after death?

WEEK 8 (4-10 MARCH)
Social Science and the Relationship between Science and Religion – John Evans


Further Reading:


WEEK 9 (11-17 MARCH)
The Cognitive Science of Religion – Michael Fuller


Further Reading:


WEEK 10 (18-24 MARCH)
Do You Have a Soul? – Jamie Collin


*Further Reading:*


WEEK 11 (25-31 MARCH)

Transhumanism – Mikael Leidenhag

Further reading:


WEEK 12 (1-7 APRIL)
Are You Made in the Image of God? – Jamie Collin


*Further readings:*


Michael Fuller, Dirk Evers, Anne Runehov, Knut-Willy Sæther (eds.) (2017), *Issues in Science and Theology: Are We Special?*. Springer.