

PHILOSOPHY 290-1 (GRADUATE SEMINAR)  
SCIENCE AND RELIGION  
PROFESSOR LARA BUCHAK

### **Course Description**

This course will explore the relationship between science and religion. If we take current science seriously, what room, if any, is left for religion? We will look at the assumptions behind doing science and the assumptions behind practicing religion, and examine whether these conflict. We will also examine whether evolutionary theory leaves room for the existence of a God who intervenes; whether the “fine-tuning” of the physical constants is evidence for God’s existence and whether the Anthropic Principle constitutes a good reply to the fine-tuning argument; and whether one can survive one’s own death. Finally, we will examine what faith is and the relationship between faith, religious belief, and evidence.

This course is intended for graduate students in philosophy, but advanced undergraduates may enroll with permission. No background in philosophy of religion or philosophy of science is required.

### **Assignments**

*Presentation:* Each student must prepare a short presentation on the readings for one week. You should consider yourself an expert on that week’s reading, and be prepared to respond to other students’ questions and help clarify the discussion.

*Paper:* Each student will write a paper of length and quality appropriate for a graduate student in philosophy. Please consult with me about your topic before you begin writing. Papers are due on Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup>.

Graduate students please note: this course may fill any of the “area requirements,” depending on the content of your paper.

### **Syllabus**

#### 1. INTRODUCTION (1/25)

#### 2. SCIENCE AND RELIGION (2/1)

John Worrall (2004). “Science Discredits Religion.” In Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion.

Del Ratzsch (2004). “The Demise of Religion: Greatly Exaggerated Reports from the Science/Religion ‘Wars’.” In Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion.

John Worrall (2004). “Reply to Ratzsch.” In Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion.

Del Ratzsch (2004). “Reply to Worrall.” In Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion.

#### 3. RELIGION AND THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD (2/8)

Bas van Fraassen (1994). “Science, Materialism, and False Consciousness.”

Alvin Plantinga (1996). “Science: Augustinian or Duhemian.” In *Faith and Philosophy* 13(3): 368-394.

#### 4. SCIENCE AND SECULARISM (2/15)

Bas van Fraassen (2002). "What is Science – and what is it to be Secular?" Chapter 5 of The Empirical Stance.

5. EVOLUTION, NATURALISM, AND THEISM (2/22)

Elliott Sober (2011). "Evolution without Naturalism." Forthcoming in Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion, vol. 3.

6. FINE-TUNING ARGUMENTS (3/1)

Elliott Sober (2009). "Absence of evidence and evidence of absence: evidential transitivity in connection with fossils, fishing, fine-tuning, and firing squads." In *Philosophical Studies* 143: 63-90.

Background Reading: Robin Collins (2008). "The Fine-Tuning Argument." Readings in the Philosophy of Religion, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. Kelly James Clark. Broadview University Press.

7. PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION (3/8)

Readings TBA.

8. NATURALISTIC RELIGION (3/15)

Mark Johnston (2009). Saving God: Religion after Idolatry. Princeton University Press. Selections.

3/22 - SPRING BREAK

9. PERSONAL IDENTITY AND SURVIVING DEATH (3/29)

Mark Johnston (2010). Surviving Death. Princeton University Press. Selections.

Background Reading: Peterson, Reichenbach, Hasker, Basinger (2009). "Life After Death: Are There Reasons for Hope?" Chapter 11 of Reason and Religious Belief.

10. WHAT IS RELIGION? (4/5)

Tomis Kapitan (2009). "Evaluating Religion." In Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion, vol 2.

J.L. Shellenberg (2009). "The Evolutionary Answer to the Problem of Faith and Reason." In Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion, vol 2.

11. RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND OBJECTIVE REASON (4/12)

Alvin Plantinga (2000). Warranted Christian Belief. Oxford University Press. Selections.

Wainwright, William (1995). Reason and the Heart. Cornell University Press. Ch 2 and 4. (pg. 76-83 optional)

Background Reading: Alvin Plantinga (1991). "The Prospects for Natural Theology." *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 5, Philosophy of Religion (1991), pp. 287-315.

12. FAITH AND BELIEF (4/19)

Alexander R. Pruss (2002). "Christian Faith and Belief." In *Faith and Philosophy* 19(3): 291-303.

Lara Buchak (2011). "Can it be Rational to Have Faith?" Chapter 12 in Probability in the Philosophy of Religion. Oxford University Press. Forthcoming.

13. PRESENTATION OF STUDENT PAPERS (4/26)