

# PHL 225- Science, Religion, and the Human Experience

Instructor: Jon Brammer  
Room: D-102  
Office Hours: M-F by appointment

Time: W- 6:00 to 8:45 PM  
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## Course description:

This course is designed around a core question: how do scientific and religious epistemologies and beliefs shape human experience? In modern times, the cultural forces of scientific inquiry and religious tradition have been at odds over explanations of the world and how humans interact with it. This has become increasingly evident in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as interactions between social, political and religious agendas have become more strained. This course will examine the complex dynamic between the scientific worldview and religious alternatives. Can they be reconciled? Should they be? Specific areas to be studied include, but are not limited to, the nature of scientific and religious dialogue, the role of religion and spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, human experience as a classroom of inquiry, the psychology of spirituality, empirical studies of religious practices, and the development of secular ethics.

## Learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate understanding of foundational questions/criticisms of both scientific inquiry and religious worldviews
- Analyze the consequences of applying different worldviews to historical and modern human concerns
- Demonstrate understanding of the complexity of current social issues and their connection to science and religion
- Develop an understanding of personal viewpoints on the impact of technology and the human experience.
- Use critical thinking strategies to analyze and synthesize information from a variety of sources (i.e. primary texts, secondary texts, multi-media presentations, experiential learning, etc...)

## Required texts:

*Religion and Science: The Basics*, by Philip Clayton (ISBN 978-0415598569)

*Letters to Vanessa*, by Jeremy Hayward (ISBN 978-1570620775)

*The Cosmic Serpent*, by Joseph Narby (ISBN 978-0874779646)

*Worldviews*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, by Ninian Smart (ISBN 978-01302098015)

## Attendance, grading, and due dates:

Attendance- I will be checking attendance for the first couple of meetings, but after that, it is up to you to attend regularly. Because most of the main themes in the course will be discussed in class, it is to your advantage to attend regularly. We will also be doing in-class writings on a regular basis that I will use to determine discussion grades. The class meets only once per week, so one missed class will probably not result in any kind of huge deficit, but excessive absences (two or more) will most likely impact your work negatively. If you miss a session, please check our Blackboard site if you want copies of lecture slides, handouts, etc.

Grading- The grading for this course is flexible and will be decided during the first day of class. The categories below indicate all the aspects on which you will be assessed. The weight that is assigned to each one is up to the

class as a whole. There are only a few limitations: 1) no category can be worth less than 100 points, 2) fractional totals or those not rounded to the nearest ten points are not acceptable, 3) in-class writings and discussion can't be more than 200 points, 4) the total number of points must equal 1000. Please remember that if one category is given fewer points, then another category must be weighted more heavily.

Research project (personal experimentation) -----	300	points
Mid-term and final exams -----	250	points
Study question or event responses (4) -----	250	points
In-class writings and discussion -----	200	points

Letter grades are then generated at the end of the term based on a percentage scale. Grades with an attached "+" or "-" will be given for those point totals which fall within the top or bottom 2% of each grade category (there is no "A+"). For example, a student with 830 points would receive a straight "B" grade. A different student, who had accumulated only 810 points, would receive a "B-" (810= the lowest 2% of the "B" category or .81x1000=810).

A=	900-1000 points
B=	800-899 points
C=	700-799 points
D=	600-699 points
F=	below 600 points

**Due dates-** Due dates are included in the syllabus and are not generally flexible. Late papers will *not* be accepted unless a student is experiencing/has experienced an *extreme* situation. In such cases, please speak to me privately *before* the fact, if possible.

### **Writing papers:**

*Write papers for this class as if you were submitting them for an English course. Grammatically sound language and an academic tone will be expected on all out-of-class assignments. Any exceptions to that will be made explicit when writing tasks are assigned.*

*MLA format- All out of class assignments must be typed and double-spaced with realistic margins according to MLA format.* I will outline this format in class prior to your first written assignment. Any up-to-date English/writing reference will have a section on how to use this set of writing conventions. These are two of the best online resources to use:

*The Purdue Online Writing Lab:* <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>  
*University of North Carolina:* <http://www2.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/>

*Paper submission-* All out of class assignments will be submitted through Blackboard.

- Acceptable file formats for attachments are.doc, .docx, .txt, .rtf, .pdf and .odt.
- Apple product users should note that the default ".pages" file format needs to be changed in order to make your document readable across platforms.
- Making documents accessible through cloud storage sites is not an alternative; *I will not log in to Google Docs or other similar sites to read papers.*

*Returned Papers-* All graded copies of papers will usually be returned one week after the due date. Sometimes that doesn't happen due to circumstances beyond my control, so please be patient. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the rubrics for every assignment so that you have a good understanding of the assessed categories for future assignments.

*Computers- All papers should be proofed thoroughly by a human.* Computer spell-checks and grammar checks are notoriously fallible. You can also take advantage of the writing tutors in TASC/Writing Center by making a face-to-face appointment or submitting a paper via e-mail at [TRWritingCenter@trcc.commnet.edu](mailto:TRWritingCenter@trcc.commnet.edu)

### General campus policies:

*Plagiarism-* Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's words or ideas in your writing. *Conscious plagiarism is an unacceptable academic behavior that will result in a "0" for the plagiarized assignment, with no re-write possibilities. Any repeat offense will result in a failing grade in the course.* Plagiarism by omission or "unconscious" plagiarism will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. To review definitions of plagiarism and strategies of how to avoid it, I recommend these resources:

Purdue OWL Plagiarism Tutorial: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>  
University of Southern Mississippi: <http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php>

*Cancelled classes-* There is a possibility that class might be cancelled unexpectedly due to weather or another unforeseen circumstance. In such cases, check the college web site for official closing notifications. I will also post updates on Blackboard and/or through e-mail. *All electronic correspondence of that nature will be done through your official campus e-mail; I strongly recommend that you set that up to forward to another address if you don't check your campus e-mail frequently.*

*Digication-* All students are required to maintain an online learning portfolio in Digication that uses the college template. Through this electronic tool students will have the opportunity to monitor their own growth in college-wide learning. The student will keep his/her learning portfolio and may continue to use the Digication account after graduation. A Three Rivers General Education Assessment Team will select and review random works to improve the college experience for all. Student work reviewed for assessment purposes will not include names and all student work will remain private and anonymous for college improvement purposes. Students will have the ability to integrate learning from the classroom, college, and life in general, which will provide additional learning opportunities. If desired, students will have the option to create multiple portfolios.

*Withdrawal policy-* A student who finds it necessary to discontinue a course once class has met must provide written notice to the registrar. Withdrawal forms are available at the Registrar's office. No punitive "W" grades are assigned to any withdrawal requested before the unrestricted withdrawal deadline for the semester. Withdrawal requests received after this deadline must bear the signature of the instructor. No withdrawals are permitted after the last class preceding the final exam. Those who do not obtain an official withdrawal, but simply stop attending classes, run the risk of receiving an "F" grade for the course

*Students with disabilities-* Three Rivers Community College welcomes students with disabilities. In accordance with federal law, students with documented disabilities may request reasonable accommodations. Students are required to submit a Self-Disclosure Form, provide documentation, and meet with a Disability Service Provider. Services for students with disabilities are coordinated through the Counseling Center. Please note that accommodations cannot be provided until you provide written authorization from a DSP, before the start of the semester, if possible.

Matt Liscum, Counselor, (860) 215-9265, Room A113 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learning Disabilities</li><li>• ADD/ADHD</li><li>• Autism Spectrum</li><li>• Mental Health Disabilities</li></ul>	Elizabeth Willcox, Advisor, (860) 215-9289, Room A113 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical Disabilities</li><li>• Mobility Disabilities</li><li>• Sensory Disability</li></ul>
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*Title IX information-* BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHTER EDUCATION AND CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES POLICY REGARDING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT REPORTING, SUPPORT SERVICES AND PROCESSES POLICY; Statement of Policy for Public Act No. 14-11: An Act Concerning Sexual Assault, Stalking and Intimate Partner Violence on Campus:

“The Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) in conjunction with the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) is committed to insuring that each member of every BOR governed college and university community has the opportunity to participate fully in the process of education free from acts of sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence and stalking. It is the intent of the BOR and each of its colleges or universities to provide safety, privacy and support to victims of sexual misconduct and intimate partner violence.”

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS TITLE IX STATEMENT OF POLICY:

“Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs and activities in federally funded schools at all levels. If any part of a school district or college receives any Federal funds for any purpose, all of the operations of the district or college are covered by Title IX.

Title IX protects students, employees, applicants for admission and employment, and other persons from all forms of sex discrimination, including discrimination based on gender identity or failure to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity. All students (as well as other persons) at recipient institutions are protected by Title IX – regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, part-or full-time status, disability, race, or national origin-in all aspects of a recipient’s educational programs and activities.”

If any student experiences sexual misconduct or harassment, and/or racial or ethnic discrimination on Three Rivers Community College Campus, or fears for their safety from a threat while on campus, please contact Vicki Baker, Title IX Coordinator: 860-215-9208; [vbaker@trcc.commnet.edu](mailto:vbaker@trcc.commnet.edu); room E-110

#### **Revisions to syllabus:**

The information contained in the syllabus is subject to revision at my discretion. I will inform the class of any changes that are made. If you miss a class, contact me or talk to a classmate upon your return to verify that you have the most up-to-date information.



## **Reading and assignment schedule- spring 2018**

### **Week 1- 1/17**

- Introduction to the course, active reading strategies, writing responses to study questions, exploring epistemology, course themes and ground rules; origins of belief

### **Week 2- 1/24**

- Foundational assumptions of science; assumptions of religious worldviews; epistemology overview
  - Clayton- chapter 1- pp. 1-13
  - Smart- chapter 2- pp. 33-54
  - Hayward- letters 1 and 2

### **Week 3- 1/31**

- Historical debates- age of worldviews, Enlightenment ideas
  - Clayton- chapter 2- pp. 15-30
  - Smart- introduction and chapter one- pp 1-32
  - SR- Barbour typology; Gould; Schwartz
- **Research project possible topics listing due by the end of the week**

### **Week 4- 2/7**

- Historical debates- Copernicus, Darwin, Scopes and the Kansas textbook discussion
  - Smart- chapter 5- pp. 87-98
  - Hayward- letters 3 and 4
- **Study Question Response #1 due by the end of the week**

### **Week 5- 2/14**

- Core issues with science and religion- cosmology and cosmogony
  - Clayton- chapter 4- pp. 66-81
  - Smart- chapter 4- pp. 71-82
  - Hayward- letter 5

### **Week 6- 2/21**

- Core issues with science and religion- morality and its underpinnings
  - Clayton- chapter- 7- pp. 121-131
  - Smart- chapter 6- pp 104-116
- **Study Question Response #2 due by the end of the week**

### **Week 7- 2/28**

- Core issues with science and religion- materialism and spirituality; midterm topics
  - Clayton- chapter 30- pp. 43-61
  - Smart- chapter 3- pp. 55-65
  - SR- Tillich and Fromm

### **Week 8- 3/7**

- Take midterm exam

### **Week 9- 3/14**

- No class meeting- spring break
- Work on updates to research project

**Week 10- 3/21**

- Modern issues in science and religion- 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century thinkers and the global village
  - Smart- chapter 9- pp. 145-155
  - Clayton- chapter 9- pp. 152-167
  - Hayward- letters 7 and 8
- **Research project check-in**

**Week 11- 3/28**

- Modern issues in science and religion- bioethical frontiers
  - Clayton- chapter 8- pp. 136-144
  - Narby- chapters 1-4
  - SR- Meilaender, Song, LeFleur, Singer
- **Study question response #3 due by the end of the week**

**Week 12- 4/4**

- Modern issues in science and religion- culture wars, new literalism, and neo-atheists; the evolving religious marketplace
  - Narby- chapters 5-8
  - Hayward- letters 9 and 11
  - SR- Sagan, Harris, Dawkins

**Week 13- 4/11**

- Modern issues in science and religion- empirical studies of religious experience
  - Narby- chapters 9-11
  - SR- Zajonc, Wallace
- **Study question response #4 due by the end of the week**

**Week 14- 4/18**

- Film viewing
- Hayward- letters 12 and 14
- SR- Shermer

**Week 15- 4/25**

- Film viewing
- Hayward- letter 18

**Week 16- 5/2**

- Presentations
- **Final research project due by end of the week**

**Week 17- 5/9**

- Take final exam

**Any and all remaining work must be submitted by Friday, 5/11/2018 at 3pm in order to be considered for final grading!**