

FTS 100-034

Science and Religion

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Class meets: MWRF 9:00-9:50 in Beck 213
Website: moodle.gac.edu
Office Hours: MW 11:30-1:30

Overview

This seminar introduces students to critical thinking and a discussion of values, and develops oral and written communication skills, through an investigation of the tension between science and religion. Science and religion are often portrayed as antagonistic toward each other. The class will begin by looking at what religion and science are and what roles they play in human experience. We will examine some of the ways in which science and religion establish knowledge, paying particular attention to what is knowable in either. Although the evolution vs creation debate will not be the focus of the class, the conflict between these ideas will be examined from the perspectives of both science and religion. Throughout the course, we will look for ways in which science and religion have influenced each other.

Course Materials

A. Lundsford, *The Everyday Writer*, 4th Ed. This is an easy to use reference book for writing in a variety of styles. It is required for all FTS courses, and it will be used in some of your future courses at Gustavus.

Other material will be distributed through Moodle.

Dynamics of the Course

Think of this course as a journey. While this course has a destination, defined through a set of specific goals (discussed below), there are many ways in which we can reach that destination. There are a series of planned readings and exercises, although it is expected that the course I have set can be altered to better suit the needs and desires of the participants. To that end, you will have opportunities suggest topics that fall within the scope of the science and religion dialogue. Please feel free to discuss your ideas with me and with your classmates. *This is your class as much as it is mine.*

Goals of the Course

FTS—an Education Centered on "Values"

Put simply, values are what we use, either individually or more broadly as societies, to make decisions that matter. Our values are what we rely on to choose what we consider the proper course through life.

FTS promotes both an empathetic examination of the values of others and the development and articulation of one's own values as part of a liberal arts education that encourages responsible use of knowledge. Indeed, a focus on values permeates the FTS Program, shaping the Program's goals in writing, oral communication, critical thinking, and advising.

The FTS program contributes to the larger goal of inculcating in first-year students the skills of the liberal arts for acquiring, interpreting, communicating, and evaluating knowledge. The first three allow students to develop the skills necessary for academic and civil life: improved critical thinking, writing, and oral communication. They attempt to encourage students to be active in their own education. The final offers students help in finding coherence among potentially chaotic sets of curricular choices: an emphasis on values and improved first-year advising.

1) Critical thinking: Participation in the First-Term Seminar will develop in students the habits of critical thinking that are central to the liberal arts: the ability to identify and question underlying assumptions, to consider a number of contexts in which statements are made, to analyze implications, to propose alternative perspectives.

2) Writing: First Term Seminars offer students intensive practice in the primary medium for intellectual discourse, writing. Students engage in brief formal writing exercises (usually from three to five separate assignments), which develop useful writing processes for such tasks as summary, analysis, reasoning, persuasion, and library research. First Term Seminars also qualify as WRITI (Writing Intensive) courses.

3) Oral communication: First-Term Seminars offer all students a small, discussion-oriented class and acquaint them with college as a place for active participation in discussion. Students will also make brief formal presentations.

4) Academic Advising: First-Term Seminars serve as first-year advising groups. Faculty will help students plan coherent general education programs, advise them in exploring possible majors, and direct them to advisors in their proposed majors as necessary. First-Term Seminars could also appropriately encourage students to see that the College has concern for more than required courses and grades by engaging the class in discussion of campus events and issues.

Student Responsibility

One part of the FTS program description deserves special attention: "[Goals 1-3] attempt to encourage students to be active in their own education." In particular, notice the "to encourage students to be active in their own education" part. If you've read this far, that is the third time it has appeared. One of the differences between your college experience and your previous educational experiences is the responsibility born by each party. Your teachers here are less likely to simply disseminate facts that you must regurgitate on an exam later; Rather, they are guides who will provide opportunities for you to expand your understanding of the world in which we live. *Gustavus faculty provide the opportunities for you to learn, but you must take advantage of those opportunities.*

Academic honesty

As a community of scholars, the faculty and students of Gustavus Adolphus College have formulated an academic honesty policy and honor code system, which is printed in the Academic Bulletin and in the Gustavus Guide.

(Academic Information and Policies, General Catalog)

The Honor Code at Gustavus is an expression of the importance with which we view academic integrity. Each faculty member is required to implement the Honor Code, and to define what is (or is not) authorized aid. It is the student's responsibility to ask clarifying questions when there is confusion regarding academic honesty. In this class, it is assumed that students are honest about their work. It is also understood that sometimes the boundaries can seem "fuzzy." If you find yourself in a situation where you are unclear about attributions or the use of sources, please ask. The consequences of a poor decision are severe. In the professional realm, issues of plagiarism and/or fabrication have ruined careers. Don't let it ruin your academic career because of a misunderstanding of what is appropriate.

The first instance of cheating on an assignment or exam will result in a score of zero for that assignment or exam, and the Dean of Faculty will be informed of the incident. The second instance will result in a grade of F for the course.

To impress of the importance of these two items (student responsibility and academic honesty), I require that you sign the following pledge and return the signed page to me at the beginning of class on Tuesday, September 4.

On my honor, I pledge that I will not give, receive, or tolerate others' use of unauthorized aid in completing my work.

signature

date

printed name

student ID

Help for Students Whose First Language is Not English

Support for English Language Learners and Multilingual students is available via the College's ELL Support staff person, Andrew Grace (*agrace@gustavus.edu* or x7395). He can meet with individual students for tutoring in writing, consulting about academic tasks, and helping them connect with the College's support systems. The ELL Support person can also consult with faculty members who have ELL and multilingual students enrolled in their classes. The College's ELL staff person can provide students with a letter to a professor that explains and supports academic accommodations (e.g. additional time on tests, additional revisions for papers). Professors make decisions based on those recommendations at their own discretion. In addition, ELL and multilingual students can seek help from peer tutors in the Writing Center.

Questions about these policies can be directed to Dean Paula O'Loughlin (*poloughl@gustavus.edu* or x7541) or Dean Darrin Good (*dgood@gustavus.edu* or x7541).

Disability Services

Gustavus Adolphus College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or you think you may have a disability of any nature) and, as a result, need reasonable academic accommodation to participate in class, take tests or benefit from the College's services, then you should speak with the Disability Services Coordinator, for a confidential discussion of your needs and appropriate plans. Course requirements cannot be waived, but reasonable accommodations may be provided based on disability documentation and course outcomes. Accommodations cannot be made retroactively; therefore, to maximize your academic success at Gustavus, please contact Disability Services as early as possible. Disability Services (<https://gustavus.edu/advising/disability/>) is located in the Advising and Counseling Center.

Disability Services Coordinator Laurie Bickett (*lbickett@gustavus.edu* or x6286) can provide further information.

Course Road Map

As stated above, there is a planned series of readings, videos, and podcasts that cover subjects I think are interesting. If someone suggests something more thought provoking, the order can change. The following general topics are planned in the order listed:

Ways of Knowing:

- in religion
- in Science
- formal logic and reasoning

Limits of knowledge:

- Boundries of Scientific Inquiry
- Doubt in religion and philosophy
- "Things that can't be proven" but are true
- Mysticism

Case study: Evolution

- Classic debate
- New conversations

Student Presentations

Major Assignments and grades

- **Weekly Learning Reflection:** Essentially a journal that reflects upon the readings, videos, podcasts, presentation, and/or discussions. These will be due on every Monday at the beginning of class. As the weeks progress, it should also incorporate connections that you make to earlier material or experiences. In other words, you should reflect on the whole experience (including other classes). (20% of final grade)
- **Research paper:** This will consists of several assignments, each of which will be graded. Notes you collect on sources you might use, a thesis document with claims you will make about the thesis and evidence you will use to support those claims, a functional outline, and a full draft will be assigned in an order that stress the process of writing. (20% of final grade)
- **In-class Presentations:** This might be a misnomer. You will be responsible for engaging the class on the topic of your research paper. The two requirements are: 1) You must somehow engage the class on the topic for a full 25 minutes; 2) You must have at least 5 minutes of public speaking. This last requirement could be fulfilled by giving a short presentation that provides background for a discussion that you lead (for example). I'm very open to creative ideas here, but talk with me about it ahead of time. (20% of final grade).
- **Short Papers:** There will be several short papers assigned throughout the course. Two short critiques of Nobel Conference lectures, a book review, critiques of peer work, etc. (15% of the overall grade)
- **Exams:** There will be two exams - a midterm exam on October 17 and a final exam on December 18 (from 3:30 - 5:30). These exams will be a mixture of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. They will be designed to test to skills we are developing, not just the content we are studying. In other words, some questions may be designed to

test critical thinking while others might test reading comprehension. (10% and 15%, respectively, of final grade)

Important Dates

There are several important dates around which you should plan. These dates will be highlighted on the Moodle class calendar. More dates will be added as assignments become due, so it would be a good idea to check the calendar frequently.

September:

- 11 (Tuesday): Wes Moore Public lecture (7 - 9pm)
- 13 (Thursday): Guest lecture: Josh Brown (philosophy department)
- 14 (Friday): Counseling services and Academic advising
- 19 (Wednesday): Library trip
- 28 (Friday): Peer Assistants ("making the most of college")
- 27 (Thursday): Tracy Kidder public lecture (evening)
- 28 (Friday): Topic for major research paper must be approved.

October:

- 2-3 (Tuesday and Wednesday): Nobel Conference...you must attend at least two lectures.
- 10 (Wednesday): Writing Center
- 12 (Friday): Diversity Center
- 17 (Wednesday): Midterm exam
- 19 (Friday): Notes on sources for research paper due
- 19 (Friday): Center for Servant Leadership
- 22-23 (Monday and Tuesday): Reading Days
- 24 and 25 (Wednesday and Thursday): 1-on-1 advising for registration...no class
- 26 (Friday): Book Review Draft Due
- 26 (Friday): Center for International and Cultural Education (Study abroad)
- 30 (Tuesday): International Education

November:

- 2 (Friday): Revised notes on sources due AND Peer review of Book review draft due
- 9 (Friday): Final Draft of Book Review and Thesis, claims, and evidence assignment due.
- 9 (Friday): SART (student assault response team)
- 12-14 (Monday and Thursday) 1-on-1 meetings for Thesis, claims, and evidence. (no class)
- 16 (Friday): Well being (Dean of Student's office)
- 19 (Monday): 1st draft of a functional outline for the research paper.
- 21 - 25 (Wednesday - Sunday) Thanksgiving Recess
- 26 - 30 (all week): In-class presentations
- 30 (Friday): 2nd Functional Draft of research paper.

December:

- 3 - 7 (all week): In-class presentations
- 12 (Wednesday): Final Paper Due
- 13 (Thursday): Last class day
- 18 (Tues): Final exam (3:30 - 5:30)