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Philosophy/Religious Studies 3320
CREATION AND EVOLUTION
Fall 2009

On what grounds do people speak of “creation”? Is it a phenomenon—an experience—an explanatory principle? Is it implied necessarily by the idea of “God”? Are “creation” and “God” essentially religious ideas, and if so, what kind of validity might they have? Are they mythical ideas? Are they metaphysical ideas? Can they be scientific ideas?

On what grounds do people speak of “evolution”? Is it a phenomenon—an experience—an explanatory principle? Is it an essentially scientific idea, and if so, what exactly is the sort of validity it can have? Is it a metaphysical idea? Is it a mythical idea? Can it be a religious idea?

Are the principles of creation and evolution compatible?

The primary purpose of this course is to analyze the ideas of creation and evolution and to gain insight into the applications of these two cosmological principles and possible relations between them. An associated purpose is to develop our skills of analysis, articulation, and critical reasoning.

Grades for the course will be based on class participation and homework (20%), a 10-page constructive essay or critical review (30%), a take-home midterm exam (25%), and a take-home final exam (25%).

The required books, available in the bookstore, are:

Dawkins, Richard. *The Blind Watchmaker*. New York: Norton, 1996.
Hyers, Conrad. *The Meaning of Creation*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1984.
Manson, Neil, ed. *God and Design*. London: Routledge, 2003.
Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre. *The Phenomenon of Man*. New York: HarperCollins, 1965.

Other required readings may be in e-mails or handouts.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

Aug. 26 Introduction to the class. What do we mean by “creation” and “evolution”?

Aug. 31 Ancient conceptions of creation and evolution.
READ: Handout

Sept. 2 Plato's creationism: *Timaeus*.
READ: Handout

Sept. 7 Aristotle's view of causes and divine action: *Physics* and *Metaphysics*.
READ: Handout

Sept. 9 The atomist alternative: Epicurus and Lucretius.
READ: Handout

Sept. 14 Abrahamic monotheism and the debate about Neoplatonic emanationism: Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Rushd.
READ: Handout

Sept. 16 The modern scientific revolution and the debate about final causes.
READ: Handout

Sept. 21 Darwin: *Origin of Species* selections.
READ: Handout

Sept. 23 Darwin: *Descent of Man* selections.
READ: Handout

Sept. 28 Dawkins on evolutionary biology.
READ: *Blind Watchmaker*, Chaps. 1-2

Sept. 30 Dawkins
READ: *Blind Watchmaker*, Chap. 3

Oct. 5 Dawkins
READ: *Blind Watchmaker*, Chap. 4

Oct. 7 Dawkins
READ: *Blind Watchmaker*, Chap. 7

Oct. 12 Responses to Darwin.
READ: Handout

Oct. 13 SUMMERS LECTURE
Margaret A. Holmes (Memphis Theological Seminary)
"Race and the Cosmos: An Invitation to View the World Differently"
11:30 a.m., Recital Hall

Oct. 14 Hyers & scientific creationism
READ: Hyers, Prologue and Chap. 1

MID-TERM EXAM DUE OCT. 16.

Oct. 19 MIDTERM BREAK

Oct. 21 Hyers on reading Genesis.
READ: Hyers, Chaps. 2-3

Oct. 26 Hyers, cont.
READ: Hyers, Chaps. 4-5

Oct. 28 Hyers' speculative synthesis.
READ: Hyers, Chap. 8

Nov. 2 Teilhard de Chardin's speculative synthesis.
READ: Teilhard, Book 1

Nov. 4 Teilhard, cont.
READ: Teilhard, Book 2

Nov. 9 Teilhard
READ: Teilhard, Book 3

Nov. 11 Teilhard, cont.
READ: Teilhard, Book 4

Nov. 16 The Intelligent Design (ID) debate
READ: Behe, "The Modern Intelligent Design Hypothesis," in Manson, Chap. 15

Nov. 18 ID, cont.
READ: Ruse, "Modern Biologists and the Argument from Design," in Manson,
Chap. 17

Nov. 23 ID, cont.
READ: Collins, "Evidence for Fine Tuning," and McGrew et al., "Probabilities and
the Fine-Tuning Argument," in Manson, Chaps. 9-10

CONSTRUCTIVE ESSAY DUE NOV. 23

Nov. 25 THANKSGIVING VACATION

Nov. 30 ID, cont.
READ: Sober, "The Design Argument," in Manson, Chap. 1

Dec. 2 Conclusion.

Final exam and final revision of term paper due December 12.

THE COSMOLOGICOJOURNAL
due every Monday, except when announced otherwise

Explain in 2 pages what you are concluding or suspecting about cosmology—that is, about how our world is most basically organized or sustained—with particular reference to information and ideas that have come up in class readings and discussions in the preceding week. You may embrace, you may reject, you may express suspicion or indifference, but you must work out **what you think about that**, “that” being some part of what’s most recently transpired in our class.

Your cosmologicojournal entries will be graded unsatisfactory (-), satisfactory (✓), or very good (+) depending on the attentiveness and thoughtfulness they show. The Notebook as a whole will get a letter grade. I’ll give you an advisory on this at midterm.

GUIDELINES FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE ESSAY

1. Definition of the problem. By the end of your introductory paragraph, the reader should know what issue you are addressing in your paper. It should be an issue that you care about and that is worth everyone’s wrestling with. It could be an issue like (for example) how it is or isn’t possible to conceive of God acting in the world, or what difference evolutionary theory makes to our conception of history, or how metaphysical ideas about the structure of reality relate to scientific research, or what difference the creation idea makes to our social thinking or our appreciation of nonhuman beings.
2. Explanation of the problem. Show why the answer to the question you are posing is not obvious and straightforward. Usually this involves setting forth conflicting points of view on it, and especially the view that stands as a strong objection to the one you are going to defend. You want to show, as best you can, the *plausibility* of the conflicting views, and especially of the one hostile to your own.
3. Solution of the problem. Now explain the right way to think about the issue and the reasons that should decide us in favor of this way. Here you may or may not be helped by readings you have done, but in any case, *you* are taking responsibility here for the solution. Remember to be reasonable. Don’t preach. Don’t dogmatize. Don’t simply report opinions. Don’t be merely facetious. This is a philosophy assignment. A good philosophical essay probes for convincing justifications.
4. Defense of the solution. Since you did such a good job of presenting an objection to your own view in step #2, now you need to handle the objection. Show the mistake in it, or show how to interpret that point in such a way that it harmonizes with your view. Possibly you were able to do this in step #3, but in most cases it will be worthwhile to write an extra paragraph or two just for this purpose.
5. Enjoy. What could be more rewarding than seeing your own thought take shape on a vitally important question? If you turn in your essay on time you will certainly have the opportunity to rewrite it, so don’t be too anxious to make it perfect on your first go-round.

Care about it, but don't worry about it. The best reasoning often comes out in response to questions and challenges from the reader.

GUIDELINES FOR THE CRITICAL REVIEW OPTION

Much of what is said above applies to this sort of paper too—it's an alternate way of reaching the goal of philosophical insight.

1. Choose a philosophical or theological work that promises to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the concept of creation and/or the concept of evolution.
2. The goal of your review is to advance our understanding by improving our understanding of a specific thinker's arguments. Your review must, therefore, carefully establish what a thinker's reasoning is on a given problem, and also evaluate that reasoning.
 - a. In the part of the review that is devoted to making your author's own case, you have to decide what's most relevant. Don't try to explain more than you *can* explain sufficiently. Be sure to pay attention to the author's *reasoning*, not merely her or his opinions.
 - b. In the evaluative part of your review, do not merely agree or disagree with your author. Offer reasons of your own for thinking that the author's treatment of the given problem is right or wrong, adequate or inadequate. You can be a good philosophical partner to the author and be creative and honest at the same time.

SOME TOPIC AREAS TO CONSIDER

The natures of philosophy, theology, myth, and science and how they relate

The strengths and weaknesses of different cosmological models; of different models of God as creator; of different conceptions of divine providence; of different models of evolution

The issue of natural theology (is "nature" revelatory of the divine?)

A purpose-driven world? How we can or cannot think of nature teleologically

How the idea or experience of evil affects cosmology

How to conceive eternity and time and their relationship

Ethical and political implications of cosmology

How any of these issues are handled interestingly in a certain tradition (e.g. in papal encyclicals in the Roman Catholic tradition)

A SHORT SELECTION OF INTERESTING BOOKS ON CREATION AND EVOLUTION
(from a vast literature)

- Barbour, Ian. *Religion in an Age of Science*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990. A well-respected analytical overview of the issues in the science-religion relationship. A bit dry, but so useful that it's indispensable.
- Behe, Michael J. *Darwin's Black Box*. New York: Free Press, 1996. One of the seminal works in Intelligent Design thinking. See also William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999).
- Darwin, Charles. *The Origin of Species*. New York: Modern Library, 1998. A wonderfully readable and rewarding book. See also his *Descent of Man* (New York: Collier, 1901). An extremely useful collection of texts by Darwin, his followers, and his critics is *Darwin in the Norton Critical Editions*, ed. Philip Appleman, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 2001).
- Dennett, Daniel. *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. An ingenious gung-ho philosophical evolutionist.
- Gilkey, Langdon. *Creationism on Trial: Evolution and God at Little Rock*. Minneapolis: Winston, 1985. Gilkey was an expert theological witness in a trial on an Arkansas creationism law. A good read and a powerful statement of a "liberal" theological position, with interesting cultural analysis to boot.
- Griffin, David Ray. *Religion and Scientific Naturalism: Overcoming the Conflicts*. Albany: State U. of New York Press, 2000. Brings process metaphysics to bear on the religion-and-science questions. Rejects supernaturalism.
- Haight, John F. *God After Darwin. A Theology of Evolution*. Boulder: Westview, 2000. Good recent example of a theologian taking evolution onboard.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987. The "Critique of Teleological Judgment" half of this book is not fun to read, but it may contain the most powerful available explanation of the relations between religious, metaphysical, and scientific kinds of understanding.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *God in Creation*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985. One of the most erudite and influential Christian theologians writing today.
- McMullin, Ernan, ed. *Evolution and Creation*. Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame, 1985. One of the best anthologies.
- Pennock, Robert T. *Tower of Babel: The Evidence Against the New Creationism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1999. Much-cited compilation of rebuttals to creationist arguments against evolution.

Ridley, Mark. *Evolution*. 3rd ed. Malden: Blackwell, 2004. A standard textbook on evolutionary theory.

Ruse, Michael. *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian? The Relationship between Science and Religion*. New York: Cambridge U. Press, 2001. Balanced analysis of issues.

Sedley, David. *Creationism and Its Critics in Antiquity*. Berkeley: U. of California Press, 2007. A historically and philosophically fascinating study of how the options were seen by classic Western thinkers.

Southgate, Christopher. *The Groaning of Creation. God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008. Very much in touch with recent philosophy as well as theology.

Swimme, Brian & Thomas Berry. *The Universe Story. From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992. Interesting attempt to remythologize the history of the universe incorporating evolutionary knowledge.

A DIRECTORY OF WEB RESOURCES

http://users.tamuk.edu/kfjab02/Biology/EVOLUTION/b4355ce_internet.htm

SOME COURSE RULES

1. ***Class attendance.*** Being in class, being engaged with the work of the class, and behaving courteously are all expected. One discourtesy to avoid is coming into class late. Better late than never, definitely; but lateness counts as half an absence.

One percent of the course grade will be lost for each absence from class ***for any reason***, beginning with the third absence. (For example, someone who totaled 7 absences would thereby lose 5% of the course grade, or half a letter grade.) The reason for this: our in-class work is a crucial and irreplaceable part of the substance of the course.

2. ***Hardcopy required.*** Unless I've expressly stated otherwise, or unless I grant you permission in extraordinary circumstances, I expect every out-of-class writing assignment to be submitted by its deadline in a printed-out version rather than electronically. This makes a big difference in the effectiveness and efficiency with which I can respond to your writing performance as well as your ideas. Do, however, save copies of all your work, electronically if possible.

3. ***Late papers.*** Written assignments turned in late will lose a letter grade or equivalent. No work of any kind will be accepted after the last day of final examinations. Exceptions to this policy will be granted only to the victims of unforeseeable and uncontrollable circumstances.

4. ***Academic honor.*** All members of the Millsaps community are pledged to uphold academic honor, the core of which is refraining from giving or receiving unauthorized aid on any assignment. I particularly caution against ***plagiarism***, that is, using the words or ideas of others without acknowledgement. Plagiarized work means a mandatory referral to the Honor Council and may result in expulsion from the class.

5. ***Incompletes.*** An "Incomplete" grade for the course will be given only to students who, due to unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances, find themselves unable to complete course requirements during the term and can reasonably be expected to complete them within a few weeks after the term's end. The "Incomplete" must be requested and appropriately justified *before* the end of final examinations.

6. ***Disabilities.*** Students with documented disabilities should discuss their needs with the instructor at the beginning of the semester.

ACADEMIC HONOR CODE of MILLSAPS COLLEGE

Millsaps College is an academic community dedicated to the pursuit of scholarly inquiry and intellectual growth. The foundation of this community is a spirit of personal honesty and mutual trust. Through their Honor Code, the students of Millsaps College affirm their adherence to these basic ethical principles.

An Honor Code is not simply a set of rules and procedures governing students' academic conduct. It is an opportunity to put personal responsibility and integrity into action. When students agree to abide by an Honor Code, they liberate themselves to pursue their academic goals in an atmosphere of mutual confidence and respect.

The success of the Code depends on the support of each member of the community. Students and faculty alike commit themselves in their work to the principles of academic honesty. When they become aware of infractions, both students and faculty are obligated to report them to the Honor Council, which is responsible for enforcement.

The pledge signed by all students upon entering the College is as follows:

As a Millsaps College student, I hereby affirm that I understand the Honor Code and am aware of its implications and of my responsibility to the Code. In the interests of expanding the atmosphere of respect and trust in the College, I promise to uphold the Honor Code and I will not tolerate dishonest behavior in myself or in others.

Each examination, quiz, or other assignment that is to be graded will carry the written pledge: "**I hereby certify that I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment. (Signature)**" The abbreviation "Pledged" followed by the student's signature has the same meaning and may be acceptable on assignments other than final examinations.

It is the responsibility of students and faculty to report offenses to the Honor Code Council in the form of a written report. This account must be signed, the accusation explained in as much detail as possible, and submitted to the Dean of the College.

The Honor Council, 2009-2010

Students:

Brooke Furrh, Chair
Amanda Smith, Vice Chair
Oliver Galicki, Sergeant at Arms
Lamees El-Sadek
Mark Herndon
Sameer Goel

Faculty:

Dr. Rachel Heard, Faculty Secretary
Ms. Ashleigh Powers
Dr. Susan Taylor