

Syllabus: REL 3530 Bible and Science

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Course: REL3530-101_BIBLE AND SCIENCE (FALL 2013)

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Course Title

REL 3530: Bible and Science

Contact Information

Professor: Dr. Rodney K. Duke



[Personal Web Page](#)

Contact Info.:

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(I check email once a day -- and often not on weekends. If you need a response in less than 24 hours, call or come by.)

NO ASSIGNMENTS ACCEPTED BY EMAIL.

Office hours: (tentative)

MWF 10-11 am.

TR: 8-9 am, 10:45-11:45 am.

Appointments may be arranged to fit your schedule. Call me or email.

Please let me know in advance, when you are planning to come by so that I can put it on my calendar.

General Description and Course Goals

General Description

In this course, students will be asked to examine and evaluate various positions on the relationship between the Bible and science and to draw their own conclusions. Driving the class will be the issue of whether science and biblical interpretation are in complete conflict, are independent but supplementary ways of knowing, or are in some ways integrative. Students will: explore the historical development of modern science in the Western world and the interactions that development has had with biblical interpretations, identify the primary issues that one confronts in the interpretation of the Bible, and examine some of the key issues of the current debate/discussion concerning biblical teaching and contemporary science.

The course will be taught in a seminar format -- not primarily lecture -- with an emphasis on outside preparation for in-class interaction through presentations, discussion, and debates.

Course Goals

Successful students should be able to:

- Synthesize and teach the theses and arguments in thesis-oriented books and articles relating to the Bible and/or science.
 - Demonstrate skills for writing short, summary and evaluative papers directed toward instructing their peers.
 - Lead discussions and debates clearly and respectfully.
- Evaluate Bible/science issues and arguments from different perspectives.
 - Provide supportive arguments for theses from opposing perspectives.
- Reconstruct and evaluate historical contexts involving the relationship between the Bible and science in the Western world.
 - Identify and refute some popular historical “myths” about the historical relationships between science and religion.
- Demonstrate the ability to address various issues and methods involved in biblical interpretation.
 - Explain to one’s peers the steps of successful communication and demonstrate their relevance for biblical interpretation.
 - Identify the various contexts of a biblical text and create steps for analyzing it carefully.
- Explain and critique the methods of scientific explanation, evaluating their strengths and limitations.
- Ultimately, present and defend the student’s thesis for the “proper” relationship between scientific explanation and biblical interpretation/application.

Expectations and Instructional Methods

This course will be in a **seminar-like format** in which you will be responsible for learning outside of class and working with your fellow students in the class to refine your learning. However, unlike most seminars, there will be no major research papers to write and present. There will be daily assignments consisting of readings and reflective questions. You will be asked to write brief responses summarizing and assessing these readings, responses that will be used to generate class discussion. For this class to be successful, it is expected that students will: take responsibility for their own learning, practice working together as a community of learners, and will participate in leading discussions and debate respectfully with one another. My role will primarily be that of guide and tutor.

Personal note: I see teaching in part as enabling students to become self-learners. I want to ensure that a passing grade means that students have gained not just discipline-specific knowledge and skills, but also transferable learning skills.

Methods of Evaluation & Determination of Grade

Pre-class Assignments and Quizzes (40%)

1. There will be various pre-class assignments that will usually require readings and written responses or notes for each class. These will be assigned at each class for the next class. The weight of the grade will be on the student demonstrating preparation, with points being added or subtracted on the basis of the quality of thought and clarity of communication. Check each assignment to see if it is to be submitted in class or online. (Grading rubrics will be provided.)
2. Unit Learning Reflection Papers. Two to three times during the semester, at the end of a unit of work, I may ask students to look over their reflection journals and to write a brief reflection paper on their learning process and progress.
3. In-class quizzes over the main points of the assignments may be given.

Post-class Reflection Journals (15%)

1. Post-class reflection/response journal entries on a main learning experience of each class. Soon after each class period, and before the next, each student is to write out a one paragraph (or longer) reaction to that day's class in which the student identifies one main learning point that was new, significant, or challenging and explains why it is significant. Do NOT give a summary of class notes or feeling statements. I want a reflection on learning. (These daily entries will be graded primarily on thoughtfulness.)

Attendance & Participation (15%)

Attendance and active participation are expected. (See: [Expectations and Instructional Methods](#).)

Participation will be evaluated by the instructor on the basis of the quality of the student's in-class oral and written interaction.

Final Examination (30%)

The students will be given the final examination questions in advance of the final, so that they may be well prepared. The main purpose of the final examination is to help the students to pull together the individual aspects of the course, identify the major themes, and see the big picture.

Absentee Policy

Up to three reasonable absences may be excused (e.g. due to extreme illness, roads closed, etc. – “reasonable” to be determined by me). To obtain an excused absence, submit a written explanation by the following class period. More than one unexcused absence will each result in a deduction of 2% from the final grade!

Additional Course Policies

1. Class notes: Class notes must be kept separate from assignments that are submitted in order to receive credit for the assignment.
2. Individual work: Although group study and discussion of assignments is encouraged, an individual's written work must be self-composed to receive credit.
3. Academic Integrity: Standards and procedures of the [Academic Integrity Code](#) will be upheld.
4. Final Exam: All students are expected to take the final examination on the date posted in the school calendar and not make arrangements for leaving town earlier.
5. Electronic Devices: Devices used for entertainment are to be turned off during class meetings and put out of sight. Communications devices in the possession of students are to be turned off during class, except for: 1) laptops being used for class functions, 2) medically necessary devices, 3) approved emergency communications devices operated by authorized personnel, and, 4) cell phones registered with APPSTATE-ALERT, which must be placed in vibrate or silent mode during class period and **put out of sight**. Failure to comply may result in: a warning, dismissal from class for the day of the infraction, a reduction in the grade for the class, or further sanctions as called for in section IV of the Academic Integrity Code.

Required Texts

Bible. (A modern translation. Not a paraphrase. I'll mainly use NIV.)

For purchase at the ASU Bookstore:

Barbour, Ian G. *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners?* San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2000.

Ferngren, Gary B. (ed.). *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University, 2002.

Mitchell, Lynn E. and Kirk Blackard. *Reconciling the Bible and Science: A Primer on the Two Books of God*. [self], 2009.

Philosophy of Education

“Now it is not difficult to see that one must not make amusement the object of the education of the young; for amusement does not go with learning--learning is a painful process.” (Aristotle, Politics, VIII.4:4. 1339a 26) wink

Actually, I am here to serve you, and to help you to make the most of your educational opportunity at ASU -- not to make learning painful. Biblical literature is a fascinating and wonderful field of study! It will be work for the both of us, but, hopefully, enjoyable and fruitful work.

I believe that the role of a teacher is to cause learning to take place. Therefore, I design assignments for which students must read, think, and then write out their thoughts and observations. This course will have such assignments for almost every class. Also, I realize that most students, soon after a course has ended, tend to forget many of the facts that they have learned. However, students will retain more in terms of theory and skills that they have practiced. Therefore, I have designed courses to be focus on general learning skills and not just on discipline-specific knowledge.

Please, always feel free to let me know how I can be of help.

Dr. Rodney Duke

Additional Departmental and University Policies

For departmental and/or university wide policies regarding: cell phones, disability services, religious observances, academic integrity, General Education, and student engagement with courses (course workload expectations), see [General Classroom Policies](#) and [Syllabi Policy](#).