2014

364-01 Religion in an Age of Science

Waleed El-Ansary

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THEO 364: Religion in an Age of Science

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Fall 2014
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Course Description and Objectives:

This course treats the relation between religion and science not only in the contemporary West, but also globally and over time. Beginning with ancient Egypt and Greece, the course turns to the relation between religion and science in the Far East, India and the Islamic world. Attention is then turned to the West during the Renaissance and the special significance of alchemy and the hermetical tradition. The Scientific Revolution in the 17th century and the biological revolution in the 19th century are then treated in as much as they have affected the relation between science and religion. The course ends by examining the status of this issue and various currents of thought regarding it in the contemporary world.

The goal of the course is to deal with the religion/science question not only from the contemporary Western point of view, but also historically and globally with the aim of casting further light on current debates with the help of the teachings of traditions other than that of the West and also with the aid of the earlier epochs of the Western tradition itself.

Course Requirements:

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<td>Midterm</td>
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<td>Final</td>
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<td>Paper</td>
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The mid-term and final exams will consist of essay questions in which there is a range of choice, e.g. choose three of four questions.

Undergraduate students are expected to write a term paper of ten pages on a subject of their choice which must be approved by the instructor in advance of its completion. Graduate students must write a research paper of some twenty five pages on a subject of their choice which they must treat in depth.
Course Outline:

1. Introduction - Discussion of subject matter; methodology; sources
2. Nature as subject of science and religion
3. Religion, philosophy and science in ancient Egypt and Greece
4. The study of nature and the spiritual life in the Far East and India
5. Islamic perspectives on the relationship between science and religion
6. Alchemy in the East and the West
7. The Hermetic tradition in the West and science in the Renaissance
8. The scientific revolution and the Western religious tradition
9. History as reality – evolution and its religious and philosophical implications
10. The breakdown of classical physics and the search for new models
11. Matter and physis
12. Cosmic history – Traditional and scientific views
13. Ecology – the earth as a living being
14. Modern science and the sacred – consciousness and knowledge of the world; harmony, the scientific and religious dimensions
15. The rediscovery of nature as subject of religion; the oriental traditions and Western science

Required Reading:

R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, The Temple in Man, Inner Traditions.
S. H. Nasr, The Need for a Sacred Science, SUNY.
G. Zukav, The Dancing Wu Li Masters, Bantam Books.

Recommended Reading:

F. Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy, Humanities.
H. Smith, Beyond the Post–Modern Mind, Crossroad.
Selected Bibliography

Koyre, A., From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe, Baltimore, 1957.
Smith, W., The Quantum Enigma, Peru (ILL.) 1984.