

Science, Superstition and Religion

Start date 2nd February 2018**End date** 4th February 2018**Venue** Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge**Tutor** Alexander Carter**Course code** 1718NRX041**Director of Programmes**

Emma Jennings

**For further information on this
course, please contact**Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr
clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk or 01223 746237**To book** See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Dr. Alex Carter was awarded his PhD in Philosophy by the University of Essex in 2015. Before this, Alex studied Philosophy & Ancient History at the University of Wales, Swansea and Philosophy at the University of Bristol. Alex has taught on a range of subjects including Ethics, History of Philosophy and Philosophy of Religion. He has worked at the Institute of Continuing Education since 2015 as Academic Director for Philosophy and as a Panel Tutor.

Alex's teaching method invites students to feel the "pain of the problem", i.e. to recognise the very real ways in which philosophical problems affect our lives. Accordingly, Alex is most keen to offer his support to philosophical projects that, not only inform contemporary debates, but actively affect change. Alex's ongoing research interests include the theology of Simone Weil and Ludwig Wittgenstein's ethical philosophy.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	The Role of the Philosopher in the “Science vs. Religion” debate
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Old Friends: Science & Religion in the Early Modern Era
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	The Three Blows
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Apologetics
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Non-Apologetics
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	New Friends? Science & Religion in the Postmodern Era
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Wittgensteinian Fideism and Other Alternatives to Theistic Religion
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

This course aims to dispel some of the misconceptions concerning the perceived 'conflict' between scientific beliefs and religious beliefs. By confronting dogmatism and superstitions on both sides of the debate, we will come to a better understanding of what precisely is at stake between the two. At the same time we shall illuminate a central aspect of both science and religion, namely a great wonder *that there is a world at all*.

Content:

Our opening session concerns the role that is played by philosophers in seeking to untangle the various disagreements and conflicts that arise between Science and Religion. How are we to understand this disagreement ("interpreter")? What are each side seeking ("negotiator")? What, precisely, are they arguing *about* ("lawyer")? Which side, if any, is correct ("judge")? Historically, both Natural Science and Theology fall under the purview of Philosophy. For this reason, we shall explore how the relationship between Science and Religion developed, from "friendship" to "enmity". In subsequent sessions we will discuss the most famous philosophical argument against the existence of God, the 'problem of evil'. Our main aim in doing so, however, will be to consider Kierkegaard's non-theistic, religious assertion that 'God does not exist, He is eternal'. Are disagreements about the *existence* of God, therefore mistaken? In our final sessions, we will critically examine two contemporary philosophical attempts to show that there is "logical space" for religious belief(s): i) Alvin Plantinga's authoritative defence of religion against atheism and ii) Wittgenstein's so-called 'Fideistic' defence of religious belief.

Presentation of the course:

The course will be comprised of formal lectures incorporating interactive presentations and discussion sessions. At the end of each session, and throughout, students will be invited to reflect, comment and pass judgement on the ideas introduced.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

- appreciate a broader spectrum of philosophical approaches to religious belief, beyond theism and atheism alone.
- understand more clearly the interplay between scientific evidence and religious attitudes.
- apply philosophical methods to a range of topics.
- critically assess philosophical writings, old and new.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
M. M. Adams & R. M. Adams	<i>The Problem of Evil</i>	OUP, 1990
Robert L. Arrington & Mark Addis	<i>Wittgenstein and Philosophy of Religion</i>	Psychology Press, 2004
T. Carroll	<i>Wittgenstein Within the Philosophy of Religion</i>	Springer, 2014
D. Z. Phillips	<i>The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God</i>	Fortress Press, 2005
Alvin Plantinga	<i>Where the Conflict Really Lies: science, religion and naturalism</i>	OUP, 2011
Ludwig Wittgenstein (Ed. Rush Rhees)	<i>Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough</i>	Brynmill, 1991

Website addresses

- Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* - <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/cartes1641.pdf>
- Spinoza's *Ethics* - <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/spinoza1665part1.pdf>

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 08 December 2017