

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Spring 2010**
Instructor: J. Schaefer
Course #: THEO 4430/5430
Section: 101/101
Course Title: **Theology and the Natural Sciences**

Description:

Are the natural sciences and theology adversaries, battling one another for supremacy? Or, are they allies in search of truth in its various dimensions? If neither adversaries nor allies, do they have very little in common, one dealing with “how” and the other with “why”? Do the disciplines share similarities in methods and issues at their boundaries that make dialogue both possible as well as desirable? Can theology and the natural sciences be integrated in ways that avoid confusing and conflating them?

Students will answer these questions in Theology 4430 by becoming informed about ways in which the Abrahamic religions and the natural sciences are perceived in relation to one another and by thinking deeply about how these disciplines can be constructively interfaced on issues addressed from different perspectives (e.g., the universe, humans, Earth). Toward this end, students will critically assess the following: (1) the history of the religion-science relationship with a focus on Galileo; (2) contemporary ways of thinking about the relationship between theology and the natural sciences; (3) characteristics of these disciplines that distinguish them while recognizing their contributions to understanding more comprehensively some issues at their boundaries; (4) examples of current theological reflections on issues informed by astronomy, evolutionary and molecular biology, and neuroscience; and (5) documents issued by the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church.

Required texts:

- Dava Sobel, *Galileo's Daughter* (Penguin 2000)
- John E. Haught, *Science & Religion: From Conflict to Conversation* (Paulist 1995)
- Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (USCC 1993)
- Koenig, *The Healing Power of Faith* (Simon & Schuster 1999)

Optional texts:

- Ian Barbour, *Science and Religion: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (Harper 1997)