TEXAS
The University of Texas at Austin

UGS 303: God and Science (68034)

Fall 2026

Class Meets:	TTh, 9:30–11:00 AM
Classroom:	BUR 108
Instructor:	Robert G. Ingram
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Office hours:	MW, 8:00–9:30 AM & and by appointment

Overview

How does belief in God shape the way one views the natural world? This course considers the relationship of thinking about God and thinking about nature from classical antiquity until the early twentieth century. It addresses the history, key themes, principles, terminologies and methodologies of multiple humanities disciplines regarding the relationship of religion to science in the Western world. It is a subject which has vexed scholars for nearly a century and a half and is one that can only properly be addressed from multiple perspectives. Since the nineteenth century, some scholars have conceived of religion and science as inherently antagonistic forces—the story they told was of science's gradual—indeed, inevitable—victory over religion. Others countered that religion and science were often allies. Still others have contended that the relationship between religion and science cannot adequately be described in terms either of conflict or harmony. Their relations were, instead, complex and can only be appreciated properly when considered in their contingent historical contexts. Students who take this course will decide for themselves how thinking about God and thinking about the natural world have related to one another in Western thought. They will do so by reading and critically engaging with works from philosophy, theology natural science, psychology and history.

Required Materials

The required readings are all available in a 2-volume reader packet. You can purchase your packet at Jenn's Copies (2518 Guadalupe Street), or place an online order for either in-person store pickup or USPS shipping. Here is the online store course packet link.

Students will not need laptops, tablets or phones during class times. Unless otherwise specified, computers, tablet devices and phones are not permitted in the classroom.

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COURSE OUTLINE

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics and essential information will be on the Canvas website. Check Canvas regularly. Changes to the schedule may be made at my discretion if circumstances require. I will announce any such changes in class and will also communicate them via a Canvas announcement. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced, and I will do my best to ensure that you are notified of changes with as much advance notice as possible.

25 AUGUST — INTRODUCTION

27 AUGUST — PLATO [27 pages]

- Plato, *Timaeus*, in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800: A Primary Sources Reader*, ed. Malcolm Oster (2002), pp. 1–8.
- Plato, 'Plato's Cosmological Argument', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, eds. Linda Zagzebski & Timothy D. Miller (Oxford, 2009), pp. 57–61.
- Plato, 'The Cave', in *Selected Myths*, ed. Catalin Partenie (Oxford, 2004), pp. 51–58.

1 SEPTEMBER — ARISTOTLE [15 pages]

- Aristotle, *Physics* and *On the Heavens*, in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 8–15.
- Aristotle, 'The Eternality of Motion and the Unmoved Mover', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 62–65.
- Aristotle, 'The Final Cause', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 198–200.

3 SEPTEMBER — SCIENCE AND THE EARLY CHURCH [26 pages]

- Selections from *The Bible*, in *Faith and Reason*, ed. Paul Helm (Oxford, 1999), pp. 50–52.
- Justin Martyr, 'How Justin Found Philosophy', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 481–486.
- Tertullian, 'Prescriptions against the Heretics', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 487–489.
- Clement of Alexandria, 'In What Respect Philosophy Contributes to the Comprehension', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 490–491.
- Origen, *Christianity and Plato*, in *Faith and Reason*, ed. Helm, pp. 58–60.

- Augustine of Hippo [selections], in *Faith and Reason*, ed. Helm, pp. 65–73.

8 SEPTEMBER — SCIENCE AND THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH [46 pages]

- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Questions on God*, eds. Brian Davies and Brian Leftow (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 20–27, 92–104, 113–137.
- READING QUIZ #1: IN CLASS

10 SEPTEMBER — REVOLUTION IN RELIGION [19 pages]

- Martin Luther, *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, in *Readings in Western Civilization*, eds. George H. Knoles and Rixford K. Snyder (Philadelphia, 1968), pp. 375–383.
- John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, in *Readings in Western Civilization*, eds. Knoles and Snyder, pp. 383–394.

15 SEPTEMBER — COPERNICUS AND THE COPERNICANS [25 pages]

- Nicolaus Copernicus, *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* (1543), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800: A Primary Sources Reader*, ed. Malcolm Oster (2002), pp. 27–35.
- Johannes Kepler, from *Mysterium Cosmographicum* (1596) in Werner Heisenberg, *The Physicist's Conception of Nature*, trans. A.J. Pomerans (London, 1958), pp. 73–83.
- Johannes Kepler, *Astronomia Nova* (1609) and *The Harmonies of the World* (1619), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 54–62.

17 SEPTEMBER — THE GALILEO AFFAIR: PART I [40 pages]

- Galileo, *Letter to Don Benedetto Castelli*, in idem, *Selected Writings*, eds. and trans. William R. Shea and Mark Davies (Oxford, 2012), pp. 55–60.
- Galileo, *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina* (1615) in *Selected Writings*, pp. 61–94.

21 SEPTEMBER — THE GALILEO AFFAIR: PART II [19 pages]

- Cardinal Bellarmine to Paolo Foscarini, 12 April 1615, in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 71–73.
- Galileo, *The Assayer* (1623), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 73–75.
- MS G3 in the Archive of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith [c. 1624], in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 75–77.
- Galileo, *Dialogue concerning the Two Chief World Systems, Ptolemaic and Copernican* (1632), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 77–82.

- Tommasso Campanella, *Civitas Solis* (*City of the Sun*) (1623), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 82–85.

24 SEPTEMBER — CATHOLICISM, PROTESTANTISM AND EARLY MODERN SCIENCE [20 pages]

- William Gilbert, *De Magnete* (1600), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 136–139.
- William Harvey, *De Motu Cordis et Sanguinis* (1628), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 139–142.
- Francis Bacon [selections], in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 142–148.
- John Wilkins, *A Discourse concerning a New Planet* (1640), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 62–65.
- READING QUIZ #2: IN CLASS

29 SEPTEMBER — RENÉ DESCARTES AND THE MECHANICAL PHILOSOPHY [28 pages]

- René Descartes [selections], in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 112–133.
- René Descartes, 'Descartes's Ontological Argument', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 84–89.

1 OCTOBER — BLAISE PASCAL AND THE LIMITS OF DOUBT [27 pages]

- Blaise Pascal, *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. Honor Levi (Oxford, 1995), pp. 49–51, 57–73, 152–158.

6 OCTOBER — SPINOZA, GOD AND THE BIBLE [43 pages]

- Benedict Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton, 1994), pp. 6–47.

8 OCTOBER — MIDTERM EXAMINATION: IN CLASS

13 OCTOBER — JOHN LOCKE, EMPIRICISM AND FAITH [18 pages]

- John Locke, 'Faith, Reason and Enthusiasm', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 504–514.
- John Locke, 'Discourse on Miracles', in *Writings of Religion*, ed. Victor Nuovo (Oxford, 2002), pp. 44–51.

15 OCTOBER — PHYSICO-THEOLOGY [23 pages]

- Robert Boyle, 'Some Physico-Theological Considerations about the Possibility of the Resurrection', 1675', in *Selected Philosophical Papers of Robert Boyle*, ed. M.A. Stewart (Indianapolis, 1991), pp. 192–208.

- Edmond Halley, 'Some Consideration about the Cause of the Universal Deluge', (1694), *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 33 (1724–1725), pp. 118–123.

20 OCTOBER — ISAAC NEWTON AND THE GOD OF DOMINION [24 pages]

- Isaac Newton, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Andrew Janikak (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 59–78.
- Isaac Newton, 'General Scholium' in *The mathematical principles of natural philosophy*, trans. and ed. Andrew Motte (London, 1729), II, pp. 387–393.

22 OCTOBER — NEWTONIANISM [20 pages]

- Richard Bentley, *A Confutation of Atheism from the Origin and Frame of the World* (1693), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 184–189.
- Isaac Newton to Richard Bentley, 11 February [1693], in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 189–190.
- John Ray, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation* (1691), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 190–194.
- Leibniz-Clarke Controversy, in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 198–200.
- READING QUIZ #3: IN CLASS

27 OCTOBER — DAVID HUME, MIRACLES AND THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION [20 pages]

- David Hume, 'Critique of the Cosmological Argument', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 76–78.
- David Hume, 'Origin of Religion', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 177–182.
- David Hume, 'Of Miracles', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 572–582.

29 OCTOBER — GENESIS AND GEOLOGY [26 pages]

- James Hutton, *Abstract of a Dissertation.....concerning the system of the earth, its duration and stability* (1785), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 205–208.
- James Hutton, *Theory of the Earth* (1795), in *Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, pp. 209–212.
- William Buckland, *Vindiciae Geologicae* (Oxford, 1820), Dedication, pp. 22–38.

3 NOVEMBER — CHARLES DARWIN [29 pages]

- Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, in *Readings in Western Civilization*, eds. Knoles and Snyder, pp. 692–697.
- Charles Darwin, *Evolutionary Writings*, ed. James A. Secord (Oxford, 2008), pp. 383–397, 408–415.

5 NOVEMBER — NO CLASS MEETING

- Listen to Darwin (BBC *In Our Time*)

10 NOVEMBER — DARWINIANISM [33 pages]

- Charles Darwin, *Evolutionary Writings*, ed. James A. Secord (Oxford, 2008), pp. 212–230.
- T.H. Huxley, 'Science and Culture' and 'Agnosticism and Christianity' in *Norton Anthology of English Literature: Part II* (2012), pp. 1449–1462.
- READING QUIZ #4: IN CLASS

12 NOVEMBER — DOUBT, DISBELIEF & SUSPICION [23 pages]

- William K. Clifford, 'The Ethics of Belief', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 544–548.
- Karl Marx, 'The Opium of the Masses', in *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion. Second Edition*, ed. Kelly James Clark (Peterborough, 2008), pp. 263–264.
- Ludwig Feuerbach, 'The Essence of Religion in General', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 183–186.
- Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Religion as Resentment', in *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Clark, pp. 265–272.
- Sigmund Freud, 'The Future of an Illusion' in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 187–190.

17 NOVEMBER — CATHOLICISM [49 pages]

- John Henry Newman, 'Natural Religion', in *Theology: The Basic Readings*, ed. Alister McGrath (Oxford, 2018), pp. 58–60.
- John Henry Newman, 'The argument from conscience', in *The Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction with Readings*, ed. Stuart Brown (2001), pp. 143–146.
- Pope Leo XIII, *Encyclical Letter of Letter of...Leo XIII....On the Study of Holy Scripture [Providentissimus Deus, 18 Nov 1893]* (New York, 1894), pp. 5–46.

19 NOVEMBER	FUNDAMENTALISM [27 pages] ➢ James Orr, 'Science and Christian Faith', *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, ed. R.A. Torrey (1910–15), I, pp. 334–347. ➢ Henry H. Beach, 'The Decadence of Darwinism', *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, ed. Torrey, IV, pp. 59–71. ➢ READING QUIZ #5: IN CLASS
1 DECEMBER	WILLIAM JAMES: THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE [32 pages] ➢ William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. Matthew Bradley (Oxford, 2012), pp. 368–399.
3 DECEMBER	WILLIAM JAMES AND THE NATURE OF BELIEF [10 pages] ➢ William James, 'The Will to Believe', in *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary*, pp. 549–558.
TBD	FINAL EXAMINATION*

* The University publishes the Final Exam Schedule after the 20th class day. All classes default into a final exam time based on the class meeting time. *The assigned final exam time may differ from the default, though.* The default exam time for this class is Monday, 14 December, 8:00–10:00 AM.

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Assignments & Grading

Assignments

The following table represents how you will demonstrate your learning and how we will assess the degree to which you have done so.

Assignments	% of Total Grade
Attendance	5%
Participation	15%
In-class reading quizzes (5)	25%
Midterm Examination	25%
Final Examination	30%

Absences

This course meets in-person, so that in-person attendance to class is required. You may have two unexcused absences without any penalty, but starting with the third class missed your grade will be affected. Starting with the third unexcused absence, each unexcused absence reduces your attendance grade by 2/3: an A– becomes a B, and so on. Please follow the guidelines on the Class Absence Notification Requests website for documenting your excused absences.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence for a religious holy day as far in advance as possible of the date of observance. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence. For questions regarding religious accommodations, please contact the Office of the Dean of Students.

+/– Grading Policy

Plus and minus grades will be used for final course grades.

Grading Scale

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A–	90 – 93%		C–	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B–	80 – 83%		D–	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

Participation Rubric

A	Has completed the required readings before class and shows up to class with questions about the readings in mind. Engages others about ideas and respects the opinions of others. Consistently elevates the level of discussion.
B	Has not fully completed the required readings before class and does not always come to class with questions about the reading in mind. Is a passive participant, waiting for others to raise interesting issues. Does not adequately listen to other participants or relate their own comments to the direction of the conversation.
C	Attends regularly but is an infrequent, unwilling and mostly unprepared participant in discussion.
D–F	Fails to attend class regularly and is unprepared for discussion.

Examination Rubric: Essays and Short Answers

	A	B	C	D–F
Completeness	Shows a thorough understanding of the question. Addresses all aspects of the question completely.	Presents a general understanding of the question. Completely addresses most aspects of the question or address all aspects incompletely.	Shows a limited understanding of the question. Does not address most aspects of the question.	Does not answer the specific central question.
Analysis	Analyses, evaluates, compares and/or contrasts issues and events with depth.	Analyses or evaluates issues and events, but not in any depth.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating accurate, relevant facts.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating vague, irrelevant, and/or inaccurate facts.
Evidence	Incorporates pertinent and detailed information from both class discussions and assigned readings.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details but does not support all aspects of the task evenly.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details, but omits concrete examples, includes inaccurate information and/or does not support all aspects of the task.	Does not incorporate information from pertinent class discussion and/or assigned readings.
Writing	Presents all information clearly and concisely, in an organized manner.	Presents information fairly and evenly and may have minor organization problems.	Lacks focus, somewhat interfering with comprehension.	Organizational problems prevent comprehension.

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Course Requirements

Classroom Expectations

Students are expected to behave respectfully and professionally in class. Please see Section 11-400 of the Institutional Rules in the General Information Catalog.

Academic Integrity

All allegations of academic misconduct will be referred by faculty to the Office of the Dean of Students. Students who violate University rules on academic misconduct are subject to the student conduct process. A student found responsible for academic misconduct may be assigned both a status sanction and a grade impact for the course. The grade impact could range from a zero on the assignment in question up to a failing grade in the course. A status sanction can include a written warning, probation, deferred suspension, suspension, or expulsion from the University. To learn more about academic integrity standards, tips for avoiding a potential academic misconduct violation, and the overall conduct process, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website.

Disability & Access

If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations, please contat Disability and Access (D&A). Cotnact and more details are available on D&A's website.

If you are already registered with D&A, please share your accommodation letter with me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss how your approved accommodations will be implemented in this course.

Artificial Intelligence

In accordance with the University's Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities, Chapter 11, students accept the responsibility to always uphold academic integrity and an honor code reflective of a scholarly community devoted to academic and personal success. All members of the University community are fully accountable and responsible for any output they produce as part of academic work. They are also responsible for following the guidance specified in the Texas Statement on Academic Integrity and avoiding prohibited uses of generative AI tools outlined in the Information Security Office's guidance on Acceptable Use of Generative AI Tools. In this course, generative AI is prohibited.

HOP 2–9970 Classroom Recording

HOP 2–9970 prohibits students from recording class instruction (audio or video) unless a student obtains the instructor's permission or Disability & Access has approved audio recording as an accommodation.

Communication

Please email me through Canvas. You are responsible for ensuring that the primary email address you have recorded with the university is the one you will check for course communications because that is the email address that Canvas uses.

University Policies & Resources

For a list of important university policies and helpful resources that you may need as you engage with and navigate your courses and the university, see the University Policies and Resources Students Canvas page. The page includes the language of the University Honor Code, Title IX legal requirements for Texas employees, and information about how to receive support through the office of Disability & Access.