

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Two crucial forces, science and religion, helped shape Western civilization and continue to interact in our daily lives. What is the nature of their relationship? When do they conflict, and how do they influence each other in pursuit of knowledge and truth?

Contrary to prevailing notions that they must perpetually clash, science and theology have actually been partners in an age-old adventure. This course covers both the historical sweep and philosophical flashpoints of this epic interaction.

Professor Lawrence M. Principe unfolds a surprisingly cooperative dynamic in which theologians and natural scientists share methods, ideas, aspirations, and a tradition of disputational dialogue.

St. Augustine warned that it is dangerous for religious people to ignore science: "Many non-Christians are well versed in natural knowledge, so they can detect vast ignorance in such a Christian and laugh it to scorn." He added that interpretation of biblical passages must be informed by the current state of demonstrable knowledge.

On the other hand, Sir Isaac Newton freely discusses the attributes and activities of God in *Principia Mathematica*, which sets forth his theory of gravity and laws of motion.

These examples represent the traditional relationship of science and religion that is too often obscured by the divisive, hot-headed rhetoric and the gross oversimplifications we often see in today's headlines. Long before the shouting and the sloganeering, scientists and theologians pursued a unity of truth, and most theologians have agreed with the advice of Galileo's colleague, Cardinal Baronio, that the Bible "tells us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go."

Once we understand this, we have a new perspective on many present-day controversies. The current antievolution furor, for example, centers on the fixation that Genesis 1 should be taken literally, an issue that had been resolved by theologians long ago. Professor Principe deems it "astonishingly trivial" and guides you through far more interesting arguments of advanced theology about powers and limits of human knowledge—the difficulty of identifying causation, and the means by which God acts in the world. He shows how science gives theologians powerful tools for enriching, not contradicting, their understanding of ultimate truths.

The Search for Answers

You will explore questions that are important to all religions, but the focus is on interactions in the "Latin West" where modern science largely took root. This includes formerly Latin-speaking Western European and Mediterranean regions, and the offspring of European culture, North America. The course spotlights the predominant religion of these lands: Christianity.

Our search is punctuated by Professor Principe's wit and passion. In a review of one of his previous courses, *AudioFile* magazine acclaimed him as "clearly a master of his subject. Equally

clear is his passion for teaching it." With fluency in three ancient languages, Professor Principe is a student's living link to the primary sources he has read and studied in their original languages. Through his reading of such texts as the original minutes of the Inquisition, for example, he is able to grant you the rare opportunity to read between the lines of what was written. In addition, the professor holds faculty appointments in three diverse fields—history of science, philosophy, and chemistry—which allow him to synthesize materials across disciplines and convey the big picture with stunning clarity. His lectures are colored with the passion of someone who has devoted a lifetime to exploring the interaction of science and religion.

Moving from the early centuries of the Christian era and the Middle Ages to our own day, he exposes the truth about the Galileo Affair and provides a revealing picture of the circuslike Scopes Trial.

You will share St. Augustine's profound ideas about reason and faith. Follow St. Thomas Aquinas's exploration of miracles—the need to identify them is one example of how scientific and theological inquiry overlap. Meet a 19th-century writer whose anti-Catholic diatribe spread myths that persist today.

Learn about the courage (and stubbornness) of Galileo, the unexpected rationality of his accusers, the inspiration of Darwin's natural selection, and the religious implications of Lemaître's Big Bang.

As Professor Principe claims, the solution to this modern conflict is easy—it is the study of history. Such study will equip you to join that partnership with a vocabulary of ideas and a clear, historical perspective on the science/religion relationship. These tools will help you participate more effectively in a dialogue that is as immediate and thought-provoking today as it was hundreds of years ago.