

**Georgetown University
Graduate Liberal Studies Program**

SYLLABUS

**WORLD WAR I AND THE DEATH OF GOD
LSHV 478 (Spring 2015)
Tuesday 6:30-9:30 PM
MAG 101**

Charles A. O'Connor III, JD, DLS
email: coconnor@mckennalong.com
home number: 202-291-2226

I. Course Description and Goals

Today's "new atheists" claim that science is the only reliable source of genuine truth, that reality is only mindless matter lacking meaning or purpose, and that the idea of God is intellectually indefensible self-delusion. This course examines the historical and intellectual bases of this theory of knowledge and its scientific cosmology, often called, respectively, scientism and materialism. Using Alfred North Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* as our guide, we will trace the historical development of scientism and materialism from the birth of modern science during the Enlightenment to the catastrophe of World War I. Next, we will examine the war's impact on Western culture and the rise of materialism to its dominant position within the modern academic and secular intellectual establishment. This examination will require a close interdisciplinary look at postwar theology, philosophy, literature, and art and at selected writings of some prominent materialists like Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Stephen Hawking.

The course aims to provide (a) the critical tools for evaluating the materialists' claims of truth for their worldview as well as the current debate between science and religion, and (b) a broad understanding of the effect of World War I on Western culture, especially as it bears upon the science-religion debate.

II. Course Texts

Required:

Dawkins, Richard. *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), ISBN-13 978-0-393-31570-7
Haight, John F. *Is Nature Enough? Meaning and Truth in the Age of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ISBN: 13-978-0-521-60993-7
O'Connor III, Charles A. *The Great War and the Death of God* (New Academia Publishing, 2014), ISBN 978-0-989-9169-9-8
Whitehead, Alfred North. *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1953), ISBN: 0-684-83639-4

Optional (choose one of the following):

Graves, Robert. *Good-Bye to All That* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998), ISBN: 0-385-09330-6.
Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribner, 2012), ISBN: 978-4516-5816-3.
_____. *The Sun Also Rise* (New York: Scribner, 2006), ISBN: 13-978-0-7432-9733-2.
Remarque, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), ISBN: 0-449-21394-3.
Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway* (San Diego: Harvest/HBJ Book, 1981), ISBN: 0-15-662870-8.

Supplemental (via PDF or electronic reserve) – see listings below in Weekly Schedule

III. Weekly Schedule:

1. Introduction: God, Science, and Neo-Darwinian Materialism. Course overview and review of terminology. The role of science in materialism's current challenge to monotheism.
Readings: Whitehead, Chapter 12; Haught, Chapters 1-2; Dawkins, Preface (pp.ix-xxi); O'Connor, Chapter 1.
Supplemental: Hawking and Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (selections). (Total pages: 79)
2. Enlightenment Science: The Disappearing Observer and Hume's Critique of Induction. The origin, reasoning, and philosophic underpinnings of modern science. Descartes' dualism of mind and matter; Locke's primary and secondary qualities; Hume's critique and Kant's rebuttal.
Readings: Whitehead, Chapters 1-3; O'Connor, Chapter 2 (pp. 15-25).
Supplemental: Hume, *Skeptical Doubts concerning the Operations of the Understanding* (selections). (Total pages: 78)
3. Critical Intelligence and Process Thought. Whitehead on science, cognition, organism, process, and romantic poetry.
Readings: Whitehead, Chapter 5-6; Haught, Chapters 3-7; O'Connor, Chapter 2 (pp. 30-36).
Supplemental: Schleiermacher, *The Nature of Religion* (selections); Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey* and "The Tables Turned." (Total pages: 146)
4. The Chaotic Nineteenth Century: Honest Doubt, Darwin, and *Fin De Siècle* Culture. Paley's divine watchmaker, Darwin's natural selection, and the crisis of faith.
Readings: Haught, Chapter 6; Dawkins, Chapter 1; O'Connor, Chapter 2 (pp. 37-44), Chapter 3 (pp. 45-51).
Supplemental: Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (selections); Arnold, *Dover Beach*; Hopkins, "The Windhover" and "I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark, Not Day"; Hardy, "Hap," "The Darkling Thrush," and "Channel Firing." (Total pages: 54)
Viewing: selected paintings by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Pablo Picasso, and Umberto Boccioni

5. World War I: Cultural Breakdown and Cosmic Alienation. The surprise, experience, and toll of war; the distrust of reason, doubt of the transcendent, and rise of science.
Readings: O'Connor, Chapter 3.
Supplemental: Brooke, "Peace" and "The Soldier"; Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est"; Yeats, "The Second Coming"; Eliot, *The Wasteland*. (Total pages: 58)
Viewing: selected paintings by Christopher Nevinston, Fernand Léger, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and Otto Dix.
6. Postwar Theology and Modern Science. Karl Barth and Protestant neo-orthodoxy, Paul Tillich and Christian existentialism, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Catholic evolutionary thought, and American fundamentalism and Darwinism.
Readings: O'Connor, Chapter 4.
Supplemental: Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (selections); Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (selections); and Teilhard, *Science and Christ* (selections); *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, 400 F. Supp. 2d 707, 716-47, 765-66 (M.D. Pa. 2005). (Total pages: 124)
7. Postwar Philosophy: Wittgenstein and Logical Positivism; Husserl and Heidegger. The respective roles of philosophy and science, and the critique of metaphysics.
Readings: O'Connor, Chapter 5.
Supplemental: Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (selections); Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences* (selections); Heidegger, *What Is Metaphysics?* (selections). (Total pages: 52)
8. Existentialism in Philosophy and Literature: Sartre's and Hemingway's Worldviews. Review of existentialism and student discussion of Ernest Hemingway.
Readings: O'Connor, Chapter 5. Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun Also Rises*.
Supplemental: Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (selections) and *Nausea* (selections). (Total pages: 28 + optional book)
9. Postwar literature: The War and Its Effect. Coping with the war and its aftermath, and student discussion of Robert Graves, Erich Maria Remarque, Virginia Woolf.
Reading: O'Connor, Chapter 6. Graves, *Goodbye to All That*; Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*; and Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*.
Supplemental: Hemingway, *In Our Time* (selections). (Total pages: 37 + optional book)
10. Postwar Art: Artistic Response to War. The personal reaction of soldier-artists, the chaotic revolt of Dadaists, and the psychic retreat of Surrealists.
Reading: O'Connor, Chapter 7. (Total pages: 40)
Viewing: Work by Otto Dix, Marcel Duchamp, Kurt Schwitters, George Grosz, and Max Ernst.
11. The Case for Scientific Materialism: Monod, Dawkins, and Dennett. A critical review of the materialist worldview.
Reading: Dawkins, Chapters 2, 5-6, 8-11; O'Connor, Chapter 8.

Supplemental: Monod, *Chance and Necessity* (selections); Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (selections); and Stace, "Man against the Darkness." (Total pages: 350).

12. The Theological Response: John F. Haught. A critical review of Haught's response to scientific materialism.

Reading: Haught, *Is Nature Enough?*, Chapters 8-12. (Total pages: 85)

13. The Materialist World View in Perspective: Science and Religion. Discussion of the respective roles of science and religion – conflicting, contrasting, or complementary.

Reading: Whitehead, Chapters 9, 11-13; O'Connor, Chapter 9.

Supplemental: Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos* (selections). (Total pages: 69)

IV. Expectations and Requirements

Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate actively in class discussions, especially with respect to their chosen optional book. In addition, students are expected to submit a short (5-6 page) midterm paper and a long (15-18 page) final paper. The short paper will address a topic provided in class and the long paper a topic chosen by the student concerning the general subject matter of the course, subject to prior approval. These papers should follow the citation format the Turabian (Chicago) Manual for Writers, 8th Edition, should be carefully proofread, and should be submitted on time.

The course grade will be computed as follows: participation – 20%; midterm paper – 30%; final paper – 50%.

V. Academic Standards and Disability Notice

Students are responsible for upholding the Georgetown University Honor System and adhering to the academic standards included in the following Honor Code Pledge:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

If you believe you have a disability, you should contact the Academic Resource Center – Suite 335, Leavey Center (arc@Georgetown.edu) – for further information. This office is responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policy.