HPS 0620 Science and Religion – Spring 2015
A University Honors College Course

University of Pittsburgh

History and Philosophy of Science

Dr. Jason M. Rampelt

This course will introduce you to the vast and variegated ways in which the natural sciences and Christianity have interacted in Western history. As an honors course, you will not only become versed in the main landmarks and debates within this history, but also gain proficiency in interpreting the primary source texts which scholars use to write it. This will include an introduction to using archival material, weekly recitations with the professor where readings are closely examined, and practice in guided writing assignments where students will be encouraged to pursue their choice of topics.

Our subject will begin with an examination of the relations between religion and natural philosophy in the ancient world, broadening the question to one of worldviews at large. From there, we will follow the particularly Christian side of this question as it was considered in the medieval church. Special attention will be given to the early-modern period when natural philosophy began to take on many of the features we associate with the natural sciences today. This longer view provides a more balanced background for assessing some of the more controversial issues which are typically connected with ‘Science and Religion’, namely, Natural Theology, Darwinism, and Cosmology. We will consider these topics both in their historic forms in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and as those concepts have been modified and re-presented in their most recent forms. Regular attention will be given to rising news items relevant to our topics.

Classes meet three times per week. 3 credits.
Lectures: M W F 11:00-11:50AM, CL 230
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