COURSE SYLLABUS ~ FALL 2017  
Course Number 32932 ~ IDS 477

Magic, Science, & Religion

Instructors:

Don Smith (Physics), & Eric D. Mortensen (Religious Studies)

Class Time: Tuesdays and Fridays 2:30-3:45 PM.  
Classroom: Frank Family Science Center, room 102.

Instructor Contact Information:

Eric: e-mail: ericdmort@yahoo.com  Office: Dana 212. Office Phone: 336.316.2357.  
Eric’s Office Hours: TBD.  

Don: e-mail: dsmith4@guilford.edu  Office: FFSC 234B. Office Phone: 336.316.2162.  
Don’s Office Hours: T8:30-12:30, F10:00-13:00.

Tibetan thangkha painting of the human anatomy, from the Blue Beryl Treatise  
by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653-1705), a monk and regent following the 5th Dalai Lama
Course Description:

In this class we will examine different modalities of thought, from science, to magic, to religion, among others. Are science and religion asking similar or different questions about the world? Is science a belief system? How can we ask religious or theological questions in a “Western” academic empirical context? To what extent are differing truth claims each possibly true? Issues we will examine in class include the definitions of magic vs empiricism, reason vs revelation, biology vs theology on the issue of creation, the scope of rationality, religious pluralism and relativism, physics and the ultimate nature of reality, the role of belief in human inquiry, “worldviews” vs individual experience, the notion of perspective, sympathy in causality, and the historical relationship between magic and religion. We will read the works of several major thinkers who have explored the dynamic relationships between magic, science, and religion, and we will write about our inquiry as we begin to formulate and articulate ways in which we can fruitfully engage these differing modes of understanding. This is an advanced 400-level class that fulfills the IDS requirement, and at least some previous advanced experience in religious studies, philosophy, and/or science is strongly recommended as a prerequisite for the course, as is a love for interdisciplinary inquiry. Enrollment is limited to Seniors (Juniors must receive instructors’ permission).

Some Notes on this Course & this Syllabus:

This course syllabus (and all other syllabi at Guilford) can be considered to be limited contracts. You are responsible for having read the syllabus carefully. If you have any questions about anything inside the syllabus, it is your responsibility to ask the instructors, in this case Don or Eric, to clarify that which you do not understand. When in doubt about anything in the course, refer first to the syllabus. In other words, questions about how long the final paper should be, or about whether you should format the final paper as double or one-and-a-half spaced, are answered in the syllabus, and thus are included in the genre of “information you are expected to know.” Please remember that you are responsible for having completed the reading assignments prior to class on the day they are listed in the syllabus. If you have any questions about the readings, or about the subjects the readings address, it is wise to write up the questions and bring them with you to class. For the first half of the semester, the homework emphasis will be on reading. For the second half of the course, the emphasis will be on both reading and the composition of a research paper. In class we will discuss assigned readings, and eventually, your research papers.

The other two most important things you should remember include issues of attendance and timeliness of handing in assignments. More than four unexcused absences will equate to an automatic failing grade, yet perfect or near-perfect attendance will be rewarded. Thus, attendance is an extremely important aspect of the course. Please note that the syllabus explicitly asks you to hand in all assignments in class. Late assignments are marked down a full grade for every day late, including if you turn in the assignment after class on the same day that it is due. Our best advice is to plan ahead. The Internet always goes down just before a major assignment is due. Don’t wait until the last minute!

Availability of Student Accommodations:

Guilford complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing a process for disclosing disabilities and arranging for reasonable accommodations. The policy can be found online at https://intranet.guilford.edu/?page_id=3763. Students who require accommodations must complete a disabilities disclosure form and submit it to the Dean for Campus Life. The disability services committee will decide which accommodations are granted, and the student will then meet with the appropriate specialist. It is the student’s choice to disclose difference/disability information to individual instructors. However, only students who provide their instructors with an Accommodations Agreement can receive accommodations. If you have any questions about this information, please do not hesitate to speak with us about it before or after class, or during our office hours. All disability information is treated confidentially and is not a part of your academic record.
Honor Code:

This course, and all other courses at Guilford, requires the students to abide by the Honor Code, which appears in the college catalog under chapter XII: “Academic Regulations & Procedures.” The catalog policy can be found online at https://intranet.guilford.edu/?page_id=4014. All students are expected to be familiar with this policy, which includes explanations for plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and unauthorized use of materials. Chapter XII of the catalog reads: “The academic honor code is violated when anyone claims credit, implicitly or explicitly, for work and ideas that are not her or his own.” All students in this course are required to read the honor code section of the catalog. If you have any questions about the honor code, please feel free to speak with us.

Office Hours:

Our office hours this semester are stated on page one of this syllabus. If you would like to meet with either of us but are unable to make it to our scheduled office hours, please let us know (via email or telephone) and we can schedule a different time to meet. Don’s schedule is available via his web page (see page one). Please see when he has nothing scheduled and suggest one of those times for a meeting. All office hours will be held in our offices: for Eric – Dana Auditorium, room 209; and for Don – Frank Family Science Center, room 234B. Our office telephone numbers: Eric – 336.316.2357 (or campus x-2357); and Don – 336.316.2162 (campus x-2162).

Le Salon de Lizzie

This section may be revised once class starts and we determine Lizzie’s availability. Elizabeth Ruprecht, your trusty teaching assistant for this course, will be hosting weekly gatherings to discuss the readings and issues pertinent to the course. Lizzie’s “salons” will transpire at 8:00 pm on Sunday evenings in the Floyd Religious Studies Room in Dana Auditorium (Dana 216). Attendance at Lizzie’s Salon is not required, but Lizzie is a veteran of coursework with both Don and Eric, and will undoubtedly be a spectacular resource for you as you think about your research papers. Please remember to dress appropriately for the occasion. Of course, Lizzie will also be available to work with any student in the class by appointment.

Workload:

Guilford students are expected to work a minimum of twelve hours each week for each four-credit course, including in-class time. This leaves nine and a half hours of homework each week for our class, minimum. If you aim for at least two hours or so of focused work each night for five nights of the week, you should do quite well in the course. Please note that this is an advanced course.
Requirements and Assignments:

1.) Attendance and Participation.

Students are required to attend all classes and participate in all class discussions. **It is required that the assigned readings be completed prior to class on the day they are included in the syllabus.** You are expected to arrive in class prepared, familiar with and able to talk about the content of the assigned readings. Students more than 10 minutes late will receive a half-absence, and students more than 20 minutes late will receive a full absence. As this is an advanced class, the reading load is significant. Please plan accordingly, as failure to complete the assigned readings will reflect poorly on your participation grade for the class.

“Participation,” in the context of this course, means active and engaged listening as much as it means talking. Nevertheless, it is crucial that you add your voice to class discussions if you are to receive an excellent participation grade. Perfect attendance will be awarded with a 3% bonus toward your final grade, and with a 2% bonus for students with only a single absence. Five absences will result in an automatic failing grade. An excused absence means that you either provide documentation from a medical professional explaining your absence, or that you receive our advance permission to miss class. **Your participation will count for 30% of your grade.**

2.) Explorations in Perspectives, the “Tinker Creek” Short Paper.

One of the readings we will explore early in the semester is Annie Dillard’s work: *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek.* We will spend a class period outside in the Guilford woods discussing and wondering about issues of “perspective.” Following the reading and trip to the woods, each student will be required to submit a three (3) page essay about their own personal experiences with different perspectives. The essays will be due via Canvas before class on Friday, September 8th. We will discuss this assignment in detail in class before the assignment is due. **This required essay will count for 10% of your grade for the class.**
3.) Preflight Quizzes.

Most class periods will be preceded by an online “preflight quiz,” which asks students to spend up to twenty minutes responding to several questions and exercises that will demonstrate comprehension of the assigned readings. These assignments are a requirement of the course, but will be graded only by participation and not by the accuracy of answers. Don & Eric will read the posted answers from each student prior to each class period. Submission of answers to the preflight quizzes must be completed by 10:00 pm the day before class. Submissions will be time-tagged, and late submissions will not count. The preflight quizzes will be done through Google Forms, and we will go over the system together in class. Preflight quizzes will count for 20% of your total grade for the course.

4.) Twelve-Page Paper.

A Twelve-Page Paper, on a topic of your choice relating to the course, will be due via Canvas BEFORE CLASS on Tuesday, December 5th. Late papers will be penalized a full letter grade for each day they are late. Please plan accordingly. This paper must be a full twelve pages (not including bibliography), in 10 point font, 1½-spaced, in Times New Roman font, with one inch margins, page numbers, footnote citations, and be carefully edited. Don & Eric will be available to work with you during the process of choosing a topic if you are having difficulty doing so on your own. You may write on any subject you wish relating to the issues surrounding the academic study of magic, science, & religion, subject to instructor approval, however, topics must address at least two different modalities or paradigms of thought. We will discuss paper topic proposals in much more detail in class. You are required to use at least seven sources for the paper, at least four of which must be readings above and beyond those assigned for the course. This assignment will be broken up into several parts, including a Paper Proposal, an Abstract, and a Final Paper:

1. Paper Proposal. A paper topic proposal will be due before class on Tuesday, October 10th. This Proposal must include a one to two page topic proposal that includes your proposed thesis, some important questions you intend to address in your paper, any notes on the methodology you plan to employ in your paper, and as much detail as you can hypothesize about the argument you intend to put forward in your essay. The two or more modalities of thought you intend to address should be explicitly articulated in the proposal. Thus, please begin thinking about your topics from the outset of the course.

2. Abstract. On Tuesday, November 14, each student is required to submit a 400-500 word abstract of her or his paper. The idea behind this stage of the assignment is twofold. First, research papers take time to create. Students will need to identify sources and read them with care long before the final paper is due. Thus, the abstract is the place to demonstrate that you are delving deeply into your research well before Thanksgiving. Second, an abstract is a condensed articulation of what your paper is about. The abstract should demonstrate a clear sense of your main arguments, counterarguments, and findings. Abstracts must be submitted via Canvas prior to class on Tuesday, November 14.

3. Final Papers. On Tuesday, April 20, final versions of the papers will be due, in class. This Twelve-Page Paper will count for 40% of your grade for the course, divided up as follows: Paper Proposal = 10%, Abstract = 5%, Final Research Paper (final draft) = 25% (10% + 5% + 25% = 40% total).

Evaluation of Work and Grading:

Your final grade will be calculated using the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>30% (Note: Five absences = automatic failing grade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tinker Creek” Perspectives Short Paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preflight Quizzes</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelve-Page Paper</td>
<td>40% (Proposal = 10%; Abstract=5%, Final Version = 25%)</td>
</tr>
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NOTE: There will be no final exam in this course.

What’s In A Grade?:

A An “A” grade signifies truly outstanding work. In order to receive an “A” grade you are expected to demonstrate through your writing and the Preflight Quizzes that you have completed all the assigned reading and understood the issues in the course with sophistication and depth. Attendance is important, and all assignments should be completed and turned in on time. However, an “A” grade also indicates more than simply jumping through all of the right hoops; an “A” grade means that you have been engaged with the material in the course throughout the semester, and have spent considerable energy on the production of excellent and insightful writing.

B A grade of “B” indicates solid work throughout the semester, and the demonstration of a lucid understanding of the readings. Writing is also important to a “B” grade. It is expected that assignments be completed on time and that your writing illustrates a nuanced understanding of the issues we will address this semester. A “B” grade is a good grade, and demonstrates work beyond an satisfactory or adequate level.

C A grade of “C” demonstrates that you have completed most of the assignments in a timely fashion, and that your attendance is satisfactory. Please note that assignments are down-graded one full letter grade for every day late. A “C” grade means that your writing, while satisfactory, needs considerable improvement, and that your articulation of the details and general dynamics of your own arguments or your analyses of other authors’ works is lacking. Whereas a “C” grade means that your work is in need of improvement, it may also indicate that you have demonstrated certain strengths in class.

D A grade of “D” is a passing grade. Nevertheless, a “D” grade means that you have failed to complete the assignments on time, and/or that you have serious attendance and participation problems. Further,
although it is not, strictly speaking, a failing grade, a “D” demonstrates inadequate work, serious flaws in the analysis of the readings, and/or poor writing. Demonstration of interest in the material and at least a very basic effort to complete the assignments differentiates a “D” grade from a failing “F” grade.

F Let’s not let this happen. A failing “F” grade will stem from terrible class participation coupled with a failure to complete assignments (including doing the reading!). Please note that six absences equates to an AUTOMATIC failing grade.

Plus and Minus Grades: Grades will be subject to possible +’s and –’s, such as B+, C-, A-, etc. In the above description of grading, the term “full letter grade” means, for example, the difference between a “B” and a “C,” or between an “A-” and a “B-.”

{{“The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious.” - Albert Einstein.}}

Woodcut from Camille Flammarion’s _L’atmosphère: météorologie populaire_ (Paris, 1888), p. 163

**Paper Text:**

(available in the bookstore)

There will only be one book required to purchase: Annie Dillard’s _Pilgrim at Tinker Creek_. This book will be available in the bookstore. This is the first book we read in the course, the first weekend after class begins, so do not delay in purchasing this book. The other readings will be made available as PDF files on Canvas.

**Assigned Readings:**

(Full listing of bibliographical information, alphabetical by last name, of all readings available on Canvas.)

Jim Baggott: *Beyond Measure: Modern Physics, Philosophy, and the Meaning of Quantum Theory*. Oxford:


R. Feynman “The Uncertainty of Science” (pp. 13-27), Aristotle, “The Science of Nature” & “Moving Things” (pp. 29-44), & G. Kane “Why Physics is the Easiest Science: Effective Theories” (pp. 441-457) in *What’s the Matter: Readings in Physics*.


Alan Lightman “Metaphor in Science” (pp. 459-473), Max Planck, “Extending the Theories of Physics” (pp. 235-250) in *What`s the Matter: Readings in Physics*


The Story of Manu and the Flood.

The Book of Genesis. [Not on Canvas.]

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**Course Schedule:**

**Friday, August 25**
**Introduction. Opening discussion & review of the syllabus.**

**Tuesday, August 29**
Watch: Bull Durham speech (1:09-1:55) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mn5crhTusSA
Prepare: Your own “I Believe” speech (one minute)

**Friday, Sep 1**
Read: Annie Dillard. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. Chapters (ch. 1-8)

**Tuesday, Sep 5**
**Class Outside:** A Walk in the Guilford Woods, rain (or snow) or shine.
Class will meet on time by the bench at the Lake on campus.
Please dress for the weather.

Read: Annie Dillard. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. (ch. 10-15)

**Friday, Sep 8**th


**Assignment:** *Explorations in Perspectives, the “Tinker Creek” Short Paper*. Papers must be submitted digitally to Don & Eric by uploading them to the course Canvas page prior to class.

**Tuesday, Sep 12**th


Read: R. Feynman “The Uncertainty of Science” (pp. 13-27), Aristotle, “The Science of Nature” & “Moving Things” (pp. 29-44), & G. Kane “Why Physics is the Easiest Science: Effective Theories” (pp. 441-457) in *What’s the Matter: Readings in Physics*.

**Friday, Sep 15**th


**Tuesday, Sep 19**th


Read: Alan Lightman “Metaphor in Science” (pp. 459-473), Max Planck, Extending the Theories of Physics” (pp. 235-250) in *What’s the Matter: Readings in Physics*.

**Friday, Sep 22**nd


**Tuesday, Sep 26**th

Read: A. Eddington. Selections from *The Nature of Reality* and *Science and the Unseen World*.


**Friday, Sep 29**th

Read: *The Book of Genesis*. Chap 1-9. Any version(s) is fine.

Read: *The Story of Manu & The Flood*.


**Tuesday, Oct 3rd**


**Friday, Oct 6th**


**Tuesday, Oct 10th**

Assignment: Paper proposals due on Canvas prior to class.


**Friday, Oct 13th**


**Tuesday, Oct 17th**

Fall Break. No Class.

**Friday, Oct 20th**

Fall Break. No Class.

**Tuesday, Oct 24th**


**Friday, Oct 27th**


**Tuesday, Oct 31st**


**Friday, Nov 3rd**


**Tuesday, Nov 7th**


**Friday, Nov 10th**


**Tuesday, Nov 14th**

Assignment: Abstracts, due on Canvas before class


**Friday, Nov 17th**


**Tuesday, Nov 21st**


Read: Margaret Morrison, "Emergence, Reduction, and Theoretical Principles: Rethinking Fundamentalism,” Philosophy of Science. 73 (December 2006): 876–8


**Friday, Nov 24th**

THANKSGIVING BREAK. NO CLASS.
Tuesday, Nov 28th


Friday, Dec 1st


Watch: [http://www.ted.com/talks/frans_de_waal_do_animals_have_morals](http://www.ted.com/talks/frans_de_waal_do_animals_have_morals)

Tuesday, Dec 5th
Assignment: Final Twelve-Page Research Paper, due on Canvas.

Exploration of projects

Friday, Dec 8th
Last class. Concluding discussion.


NOTE: There is no final exam for this course.