

**Religion 306:**  
Topics in American Religion: Creationism and Intelligent Design  
Drs. Fritz Detwiler and Melissa Stewart  
Spring Semester 2007  
M 3:00-5:20

**Course Description:**

An investigation into the historical and contemporary debates surrounding creation, intelligent design, and evolutionary science emphasizing the religious issues in the debate.

**Course Objectives:**

- Students will be able to identify and define key ideas, people, and organizations related to the history of the creationism / intelligent design debate.
- Students will be able to represent ideas from both sides of the debate and recognize nuances within the debate.
- Students will be prepared to provide an overview of their assigned readings for that day.
- Students will demonstrate critical thinking by fact-finding, presenting author assumptions, and reconstructing the logic of the arguments from the readings.

**Course Requirements:**

- **Weekly focus questions:** one page, 250 word responses to the reading based on questions provided by the instructors.

Assessment criteria:

Identification of issue or problem

Identification and definition of key concepts

Information in support of your argument

Logical development of your argument

- **Midterm:** define 10-12 terms (people, terms, organizations) and then choose 4 and integrate them into an historical and/or theological essay with respect to where they fit into the course and their significance. (750 word essay in addition to definitions)

Clarity of definitions

Precision of definitions

Integration of definitions into argument

Point of View or thesis

Accuracy

Logical development of your argument

- **Final:** Debate among class members over the class content. The debate format will include opening statements (powerpoint with bulleted points and visual representation of the argument with flow charts), responses (assessed on the degree to which you respond to the opposing points raised by the other side), and final arguments. You will need to include standing court precedents.

Following directions

Clarity of position

Transitions or connections between points of your argument

Logical development of your argument

Identifying assumptions in your opponents' argument

Specific responses to opponents' argument

Extra Credit: Finding logical holes in your opponents' argument

### **Disabilities:**

If you have a documented disability, you may qualify for specific academic services. Speak with me or with any of the Academic Services staff in Jones 205, extension 4413. Documentation of the disability is required.

### **Important Issues:**

- **Faith Issues:** While this course makes no presuppositions about your faith-perspectives, it does insist that the variety of confessional stances be respected. You are not asked to 'believe' all materials presented, but you are expected you know the theories and to be able to engage them critically.
- **Academic Honesty:** You are allowed, even encouraged, to form study groups. However, all work turned in (papers, quizzes, exams) **MUST** be your own work. College rules on plagiarism will apply to all of your written work, and any violation is a serious offense. Plagiarism includes copying another student's work in any capacity; and copying an author's work without proper citation. This later category includes directly quoting a work without reference, and inappropriately paraphrasing (simply changing a few words rather than presenting the thoughts of the author in your own words). Please consult the College Handbook and the instructor if you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism. Ignorance of the rules is no excuse. For the first offense, you will receive a zero for that assignment. Any second offense will be reported to the authorities, a letter will go into your permanent file, and you will fail the course. No exceptions.
- **Inclusive Language:** It is standard practice in academia to use language that does not exclude women. Therefore, please use words like "humankind" instead of "mankind;" "he and she" instead of "he;" etc. Not only is this language inclusive, it is also more precise. Students (and instructors) will be asked to correct their language.
- The instructors reserve the right to modify the syllabus.

**Course Texts:**

- Davis, Percival and Dean H. Kenyon, *Of Pandas and People: The Central Question of Biological Origins*. Second Edition. Dallas, TX: Haughton Publishing Company, 1993.
- Miller, Kenneth, R. *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1999.
- Numbers, Ronald L. *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*. Expanded Edition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

**Grade Distribution:**

- Class preparation (25%) – 250 word responses due at the beginning of class. Late papers not accepted. No less than 10 responses are required through the semester.
- Class participation (25%) – verbal contributions based on reading materials and in response to each other. Students will gather in groups of 2-3 to share their preparation responses and then report to the larger class on issues of commonality and difference.
- Midterm (25%) – due at the beginning of class Monday, March 5.
- Final (25%) – debate on Monday, April 23, 3-5 pm.

**Course Assignments and Readings:**

To be completed prior to class.

Date	Topics	Readings
Jan 8	Darwin and Fundamentalism Quest: What is Darwinism and what was its impact on American religion?	N, Chps 1-3
22	Early Expressions of Creationism (Scopes Trial) ( <i>Inherit the Wind</i> ) Quest: How did William Jennings Bryan's testimony fit in to the debate current at that time among creationists?	N, Chps 4-6
29	The Deluge in Evangelicalism Quest: What were the essential conflicts between science and creationism and how were they reflected through American and British evangelicals?	N, Chps 7-9, Det 2
Feb 5	Institutional Developments (Epperson v Arkansas) Quest: Describe the institutional developments within the creationist camp and the way in which their assumptions were reflected in their institutional missions and focuses?	N, Chps 10-12
12	Science and Creationism (Kanawha County) Quest: How did creationism/intelligent design become institutionalized and along what lines?:	N, Chps 13-15
19	Intelligent Design and Global Creationism (Jim Spence) Quest: How did the issue become globalized and with what intended results?	N, Chps 16-18

Mar 5	Edwards v Aguillard; Kitzmiller v. Dover; Georgia Textbook	Midterm
12	Of Pandas and People Quest: What are the assumptions that ground the book?	D Over – Chp 2
19	Of Pandas and People (Creationist) Quest: How are the authors' assumptions integrated into the presentation of the argument?	D Chps 3-4
26	Of Pandas and People Quest: How are the authors' assumptions integrated into the presentation of the argument?	D Chps 5-6
Apr 2	Finding Darwin's God Quest: What are the issues and assumptions that ground the book?	M Chps 1-3
9	Finding Darwin's God Quest: How are the issues and assumptions of the author integrated into the reading?	M Chps 4-6
16	Finding Darwin's God Quest: How are the issues and assumptions of the author integrated into the reading?	M Chps 7-9
23	Final Exam -- Debate	

**Rubric for Class Preparation Question Responses:**

Identification of issue or problem		
2	Clearly and precisely identifies issue or problem	
1	Lacks either clarity or precision	
0	Does not identify issue or problem	
Key concepts: identification		
2	Two or three most significant concepts	
1	Some main concepts	
0	Does not identify any main concepts	
Key concepts: definition		
2	Provides clear definition of main concepts identified	
1	Provides definition of main concepts identified	
0	Does not provide definitions	
Supporting Information:		
2	Specific	
1	General	
0	Lacks	
Logic of argument:		
2	Clearly developed argument	
1	Developed argument	
0	No argument	
Score		