

ML/SF 513 Spiritualities of Knowing: Science, Religion, Cosmos - Fall 2021

Mondays, 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm CT

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Co-sponsored by the Zygon Center for Religion and Science

Dr. Benjamin M. Stewart, instructor

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email is preferred mode of initial contact; Zoom, phone, in-person etc always available to arrange

Class meetings via Zoom – recurring class meeting link [here](#)

Meeting ID: 894 0896 1155 / Passcode: 143176

One tap mobile: +13126266799,,89408961155#,,, *143176# US (Chicago)

This course explores spiritualities of knowing: what are the various ways that human beings seek knowledge and wisdom, and what are the spiritual dimensions of these practices? How do religions cultivate – or suppress – forms of knowing? Co-sponsored by the Zygon Center for Religion and Science (ZCRS)

Course Rationale and Description - Why do we offer this course? Which of LSTC's degree program learning outcomes does it address?

- **Spiritual formation:** *develops capacities to a) describe the spiritual experiences and practice, religious traditions, shared by others; b) interpret human life through narratives and concepts of religious heritages and other ways of knowing; c) guide and support communal participation in activities that renew relationships, justice, truth, and wholeness*
- **History and theology:** *develops capacities to reflect and illuminate the connection between Christian traditions and contemporary knowledge and experience*
- **Ministerial leadership:** *develops capacities to integrate a variety of pedagogical approaches creatively and effectively, instruct to a variety of learning styles and intelligences, assess and adjust teaching and learning to serve complex and evolving contexts*

Course Learning Outcomes - What *difference* will this course make to students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices? *Course members will be able to...*

- *...appreciatively describe typologies of knowledges (various aesthetic, religious, embodied, scientific, logical, etc. ways of knowing), and the conceptual limitations of such typologies*
- *...interpret various ways of knowing in literature, religion, research, and daily life*
- *...reflectively practice different ways of knowing as spiritual practice*
- *...formulate a critically appreciative account of religious ways of knowing and spiritual dimensions of scientific practice*

Strategies for Learning - How shall we go about achieving these outcomes?

- Six guest presenters reflect on the spirituality of their practices of knowing
- Four core texts – each with captivating poetics and a distinctive voice – explore the spiritual dimensions of knowledge of self, society, and cosmos
- Other supplemental sources – poems, musical works, objects of study and contemplation, academic sources, personal experience, religious artifacts and practices – serve as conversation partners for the course
- Weekly practice of diverse ways of knowing
- Each seminar member leads one seminar discussion module

- Meeting via Zoom:
 - allows for facial expression communication (without masks); greater COVID safety; inhibits some body language; loss of more casual interactions
 - in order to be more actively present to each other in seminar setting, please remain engaged with video (camera on) on during seminar sessions (feel free to log off video for short-term emergencies/necessities, of course; please talk to the instructor if it would be good for you to be absent from the visual stream for longer periods)
 - we'll largely make use of spoken conversation in the seminar, so we'll use the hand-raise function (your actual hand in the screen or the "hand raise" zoom function); and typically rely on the Zoom chat function only for chat-specific activities, not for a parallel seminar conversation.
 - Sharing slides/screen during seminar leadership is encouraged. Please make the slides available for the entire seminar via the course Brightspace slide bank.
- Weekly seminar discussions. Generally, the first half of each seminar session includes presentation from instructor and/or engagement with guests; second half of meeting includes student-led seminar discussion on the week's readings
- A final paper (or equivalent social media project, blog postings, or podcast episode, or other creative expression) that appreciatively and reflectively illuminates intersections of scientific and religious ways of knowing, with a summary/illustration presented to the class

Assignment overview

- Weekly participation in seminar, informed by course readings – 20%
- Leadership of one 30 minute seminar discussion module (sign-up [here](#)) – 10%
- Two short conversation/coaching sessions with instructor (sign up [here](#)) – 20%
 - Sessions aren't evaluated for grade – engaged participation earns full credit
- Final paper/project – 25%
 - Due 6 December (okay to revise until 10 December)
 - A final paper (or equivalent social media project, blog postings, or podcast episode, or other creative expression) that appreciatively and reflectively illuminates intersections of scientific and religious ways of knowing, with a summary/illustration presented to the class
- Weekly 1-1.5 page reflection on readings – 25%
 - email copy to instructor by the beginning of the seminar, and have a copy ready to consult/read during the seminar (not required on week of discussion leadership)
 - Some possible prompts:
 - What ways of knowing are being evoked in this text?
 - What spiritual or emotional dispositions are related to these ways of knowing?
 - How do these ways of knowing involve or depend on embodied practices, other people, and the wider elements of creation? (How is it not only "in your head"?)
 - What experience from your week (or from some other time in your life) would you like to place in reflective conversation with the ways of knowing addressed in our reading?

Assessment - How shall we know if we--students and instructors--have been successful in achieving the outcomes?

- Course member learning is assessed through written papers, discussions, leadership of a seminar module, and attendance/participation
- Weekly 1-1.5 page (double spaced) reflection on the readings – reflections that may be used for seminar discussion. Each week, ask yourself, “what is this author/knower trying to share with me about knowledge of the cosmos?”
- Course practices are assessed by regular brief anonymous polling, two anonymous course evaluations (at weeks 3 & 7), and two brief coaching sessions with the instructor

Required texts

- Prescod-Weinstein, *The Disordered Cosmos: A Journey into Dark Matter, Spacetime, and Dreams Deferred*
- Gibling, *From the Beginning to Baptism: scientific and sacred stories of water, oil, and fire*
- Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder*
- Either:
 - Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* (Maria Boulding translation)
 - OR
 - Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (Oxford World’s Classics version)

13 Sept 2021 – Session 1

- **Course introductions or orientation**
- *How has your own unfolding understanding of the physical world been a spiritual and/ or religious process?*

20 Sept 2021 – Session 2

Read for class

- **Stenmark, Mikael. “Ch 14: Ways of Relating Science and Religion,”** in *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*, ed. by Harrison, 278–95. ([JKM Link](#) – click through to Ch 14) (direct [non-JKM pdf](#) of chapter)
- **Prescod-Weinstein, *Disordered Cosmos*, p 1-90**
 - Intro: “In the Beginning”
 - Phase 1: Just Physics

27 Sept 2021 – Session 3

Read for class

- **Wall Kimmerer, Robin.** “The Intelligence of Plants.” *On Being with Krista Tippett*. 25 Feb 2016, [Transcript and audio](#).
- **Prescod-Weinstein, *Disordered Cosmos*, p 91-210**
 - Phase 2: Physics and the Chosen Few
 - Phase 3: The Trouble with Physicists

Anonymous course evaluation 1

4 Oct 2021 – Session 4

Elonda Clay, seminar guest

Read for class

- [Excerpts from Barbara Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos: An Invitation to View the World Differently*](#)
- **Prescod-Weinstein, *Disordered Cosmos*, p 211-282**
 - Phase 4: All Our Galactic Relations
 - Afterword: “Dear Mama”

11 Oct 2021 – Session 5

Dr. Joseph Graves, seminar guest

Read for class

- **Graves, Joseph.** [Excerpts from *The Emperor’s New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium*](#) (pardon the e-highlighting)
- **Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, p. 3-78**
 - Introduction: From Wonder to Wisdom
 - Ch 2: Revolution and Evolution: Ancient Near Eastern Backgrounds to Creation
 - Ch 3: The Cosmic Temple: Cosmogony According to Gen 1.1-2.3

18 Oct 2021 – Session 6

Dr. Meredith Hope, seminar guest

Read for class

- **Hope, Meredith.** [“Empowering Youth to Thrive With, Through, and By Faith.”](#) *The Thrive Center for Human Development*, February 25, 2021. Popular level blog post w/ many scientific links
- **Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, p. 79-176**
 - Ch 4: The Ground of Being: The Drama of Dirt in Genesis 2:4b-3:24
 - Ch 5: Behemoth and the *Beagle*: Creation According to Job 38-41
 - Ch 6: The Passion of the Creator: The Manifold Nature of Nature in Psalm 104
 - Ch 7: Wisdom’s World: Cosmos as Playhouse in Proverbs 8:22-31

25 Oct 2021 – Session 7

Dr. William Brown, seminar guest

Read for class

- **Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, p. 177-240**
 - Ch 8: The Dying Cosmos: Qoheleth’s Misanthropic Principle
 - Ch 9: The Fabric of the Cosmos: The Emergence of New Creation in ‘Second Isaiah’
 - Ch 10: The God Allusion: Creation as Consciousness-Raiser

Anonymous course evaluation 2

1 Nov 2021 – Session 8

Dr. Helen De Cruz, seminar guest

Rev. Susan Briehl, seminar guest

Read for class

- **Briehl, Susan & Robert Buckley Farlee, [Holy God, Holy and Glorious](#)** (hymn text)
 - *You can also listen to a choral version [here](#)*
- **De Cruz, Helen.** [“The Necessity of Awe.”](#) Aeon, 10 July 2020 (public scholarship)
- **ELW Thanksgiving at the Table [Form IX](#)** (prayer)
- **Gibler, *From the Beginning to Baptism*, p. ix – xxviii, 1-74**
 - “Forward” (David Power)
 - “Introduction”
 - Ch 1: Water
 - Ch 2: Oil

8 Nov 2021 – Session 9

Dr. Linda Gibler, seminar guest

Read for class

- Gibler, *From the Beginning to Baptism*, p. 75-130
 - Ch 3: Fire
 - Ch 4: Cosmocentric Sacramentality

15 Nov 2021 – Session 10

Jason DeRose, seminar guest

Begin reading for class, either:

- Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* OR
- Julian of Norwich, *Revelations*

Read for class, either (public discourse via Augustine or Julian):

- Hockenbery, Jennifer. ["Supremacist Thinking, Epistemological Despair, and Christian Hope."](#) (On Augustine & White Supremacy) *Dialog* 60, no. 1 (2021): 28–34.

OR

- Oakes, Kaya. ["Why We Became Mystics: What Julian of Norwich can Teach us about Oneness with God,"](#) (on Mysticism and the Pandemic) *America*, January 2021, 28-36.

29 Nov 2021 – Session 11

Dr. Gayle Woloschak, seminar guest

Complete for Class

- Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* OR
- Julian of Norwich, *Revelations*

6 Dec 2021 – Session 12

No assigned reading for this week

Presentations of final projects in class

ACADEMIC POLICIES AT LSTC

LSTC academic policies may be found in the *2021-2022 Catalog* and in the *2021-2022 LSTC All Students Handbook* and its academic supplements for LSTC's respective degree programs (located on *MyLSTC*, under Student Services, Topics). Please consult these resources for further details about the academic policies below.

Course delivery during Covid-19. All LSTC courses have a remote option, either synchronous by Zoom or asynchronous. Students who are in a high-risk category according to the CDC or who are feeling ill or exhibiting symptoms should attend remotely. Students, instructors, TAs, and guest presenters attending LSTC classes in-person need to be masked, as the classroom is a public space. All classrooms are set up for social distancing of 6 feet separation, and maximum Covid-19 capacities will be observed. The maximum Covid-19 capacity for LSTC classrooms is posted on the outside window of each classroom.

Attendance reports. At the outset of a course, faculty members are required to report students who do not attend the beginning class period. Faculty members also are required to submit reports of a second unexcused absence to the Registrar. The Registrar is required to forward this report to the Financial Aid Office.

Pass/Fail option. The default for grading at LSTC is letter grades. Unless a student is on academic probation, an MA, MAM or MDiv student may request to be granted a Pass/Fail grade (P/F) instead of a letter grade in any course. Students who wish to be evaluated on this basis must complete a form no later than the Monday after the Reading Break through the Registrar's Office. Advanced Studies students are not eligible to take classes Pass/Fail.

Academic honor system. Instructors expect that students will follow guidelines and standards for participation in the classroom and the completion of assignments. Instructors expect that students will present their own original work for evaluation, providing written acknowledgement of sources used in the writing of papers and examinations (e.g., whether hard copy texts or the internet) through footnotes, endnotes, and other kinds of acknowledgement appropriate to the subject being reported. Presenting another's work, from whatever the source (e.g., the Internet, a peer, or hard copy texts) as if it is one's own is called plagiarism, and it is considered a serious offense in the academic community. Students needing help with learning about methods for proper citations are encouraged to consult the latest edition of Kate Turabian's *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* and to seek expert personal assistance that is available at the Language Resource and Writing Center (LRWC) or from a research librarian.

Extensions. Being granted an extension in order to complete course requirements after a course has ended is a privilege, not a right. Professors are under no obligation to grant extensions, but may choose instead to assign a grade based on the quantity and quality of work submitted by course deadlines. To request an extension, students must fill out a Petition for Extension form and have it signed by their instructor, advisor, and degree program director. After each term, instructors are required either to assign a grade based on work submitted or to sign a Petition for Extension filled out by the student. Students may negotiate a deadline up until July 15 (for Fall and January-Term courses) or up until November 15 (for Spring and Summer courses), after which the extension (EX) will be recorded as a No Credit (NC) which counts the same as an F in the GPA calculations.

Disability policy and accommodation requests. LSTC is committed to assist students living with a disability to engage in academic and campus life as fully as possible. Accommodations refer to the modifications that are needed to minimize the discriminatory effect of a person's physical, emotional, or learning disability insofar as the provision of the adjustment not cause undue burden on the setting or the institution. It is the responsibility of students with disabilities to identify themselves and request accommodations by contacting the Dean of Student Services, who will begin the process of seeking appropriate accommodations.

Inclusive language. As a diverse community of people preparing for Christian leadership, LSTC acknowledges that language has the power to convey facts, attitudes, and values. Recognizing that we all suffer when exclusive, prejudicial, and/or ethnocentric language is used, LSTC calls on its faculty, staff, and students, in written and spoken communication, to use inclusive language that affirms the full humanity of all people. Resources to assist the LSTC community are available through the Pastor to the Community/Director of Worship and the JKM Library. For questions related to inclusive language in academic writing students are encouraged to consult with their academic advisor or may access resources through the LWRC.