

**ST 4320: Orthodox Christianity and Modern Science:
A Dialogue with the Western Scholastic Tradition**

PAOI - Graduate Theological Union

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Spring 2015
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Description

This course explores the nature of the relationship between modern science and Orthodox Christian theology, with particular emphasis given to recent advances in fundamental physics and cosmology. In dialogue with the western scholastic tradition, we will not only engage in comparison and contrast; we will also examine the extent to which both traditions can be correlated as mutually supportive, complementary approaches that together enable unique solutions to problems not easily attended to by either tradition exclusively.

Despite the increasing breadth and depth of scholarship exploring an integrative relationship of Christian theology and modern science, the waters remain stubbornly turbulent. Whatever the particular countercurrent —political, theological, ideological, scientific, or some combination of these—the trajectories leading to fundamental disengagement can all be traced back to a common first principle: The dualistic separation of faith and reason. The western scholastic tradition has carefully defined specific bridges spanning this dualism, and in recent history these bridges have served as a foundation for the Roman Catholic integration of science and Christian theology.

By contrast, the Orthodox theological tradition has characterized faith and reason not as a metaphysical dualism of mutual exclusion determined by the *particular object of experience* (Divine or Natural), but rather as a duality of mutual implication in *every act of experience*—i.e., a duality without reduction to dualism. This course will explore the ways in which the Orthodox understanding of the relationship between faith and reason, and its unique emphasis of experience in the integration of faith and reason, can be fruitfully applied to the current science and religion debate in complementary relation to the western scholastic approach—particularly with respect to the unique problems raised by modern physics and cosmology.

Required Texts

- Efstymios Nicolaidis, *Science and Eastern Orthodoxy: From the Greek Fathers to the Age of Globalization* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).
- Erich Przywara, S.J., *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm* (Eerdmans, 2014).
- John Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (St. Vladimir's Univ. Press, 1974).
- Ian Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues - Gifford Lectures Series* (Harper, 1997).
- Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (eds.) *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (Eerdmans, 2004)
- In addition to the above volumes, there will be a selection of articles and book chapters provided to students electronically.

Course Requirements

Our work together will primarily entail lecture and discussion, so careful attention to the readings and consistent participation will be crucial for a lively course.

Each student will be asked to facilitate a discussion session for one of the scheduled readings, which you will choose in advance. This includes a 1-2 page critical reflection of the reading, with a small selection of discussion questions, to be distributed to the class.

At the end of the course, you will submit a 20 page final paper that will focus on a particular thesis of interest derived from the readings and discussion. This paper should include both an analytical component—i.e., wherein you accurately explicate the thesis or argument—and a critical/synthetic component, wherein you evaluate the thesis and relate it to your own thinking on the topic.

Grading

Class participation:	20%
Discussion facilitation	20%
Paper::	60%

Reading and Lecture Schedule

To be distributed in class.