

OSTS Lecture, Winter 2026, 1st Term
January 5th to February 2nd

Course H ***A Christian Response to Scientific Materialism***

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Descriptor

In popular consciousness and for the average churchgoer, science and theology, and more broadly, faith and reason, are perceived as being at odds with each other. This course will confront this misconception. It will equip Christians to respond to the challenges posed by scientific materialism and challenge non-believers' preconceived notions.

Outline

Week 1: Introduction

In this first lecture, we will define scientific materialism (SM) and present a brief historical picture of its evolution from the pre-Socratic materialists to modern-day atheism. We will situate SM within the broader belief systems of philosophical naturalism and atheism while outlining distinctions between the three. SM asserts that everything must be explained by its most basic physical components, including simple ones, such as subatomic particles, or incredibly complex ones, like cells and brains. We will also outline a few of the responses from Christian theism that challenge SM, which will be the subject matter of the four following weeks. In order to respond to scientific materialism, we must show ways that point beyond material and physical reality.

Week 2: Science and Theology Part I

In this lecture, we will give a brief overview of the relationship between science and theology. We will look at the different approaches each takes and how different understandings challenge SM. We will also talk about the idea of intelligibility, which is fundamental to both disciplines.

Week 3: Science and Theology Part II

This lecture will examine the theological concept of Creation. We will also look into the concept of evolution and its various definitions. From there, we will examine the relationship between the two as it pertains to evolutionary biology. We will look at a series of different theistic models that relate creation and evolution and serve as a response to the scientific materialist view of evolution.

Week 4: Arguments for God's Existence Part I

In this lecture, we will examine the cosmological and teleological arguments as they pertain to physics. We will examine the various types of these arguments in brief. We will then focus our attention on what is known as the Kalam Cosmological Argument and the argument from the fine-tuning of the laws of physics. Both of these arguments intersect science, philosophy, and theology, which present a significant challenge to SM.

Week 5: Arguments for God's Existence Part II

This week we examine two further arguments for God's existence. The first one is a variant of the teleological argument and pertains to the origin of life. The second one pertains to the existence of the soul and consciousness. These two arguments have also presented a significant challenge to SM.

Bibliography

Barbour, Ian G. *Myths, Models and Paradigms: The Nature of Scientific and Religious Language*. London: SCM, 1974.

———. *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997.

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Bio

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Dr. Scott D. G. Ventureyra is an author, theologian, and philosopher. He completed his PhD in philosophical theology at Carleton University/Dominican University College in Ottawa. He has published in the domains of philosophical theology, systematic theology, natural theology, and the philosophy of religion. He has also done research in the areas of philosophy of mind and consciousness studies.