



School of Theology and Christian Ministry

Theology 3005 / Christian Faith & the Natural Sciences

Three Units

Fall 2024

MWF 12:15 – 1:10 p.m.

Taylor Hall 312

Final Exam: Wednesday, December 18, 10:30 – 1:00 p.m.

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Smee Hall, Office 205	
Meetings by appointment only	
Course Textbooks: Falk, Darrel. <i>On the (Divine) Origin of Our Species</i> Falk, D. and Wood, Todd. <i>The Fool and the Heretic</i> Haught, John. <i>Science and Faith: A New Introduction</i> Johnson, Elizabeth. <i>Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit</i> Lodahl, Michael. <i>Renewal in Love: Living Holy Lives in God's Good Creation</i> Other assorted handout materials at no cost to students.	

PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

General Education Mission

PLNU provides a foundational course of study in the liberal arts informed by the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In keeping with the Wesleyan tradition, the curriculum equips students with a broad range of knowledge and skills within and across disciplines to enrich major study, lifelong learning, and vocational service as Christ-like participants in the world's diverse societies and culture.

Course Description:

Catalogue description: This course explores central Christian convictions, e.g., the doctrines of creation, providence, the incarnation and the resurrection of the body, in careful and respectful dialogue with the natural sciences, especially cosmology and biological evolution.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to

- Interpret relevant biblical texts carefully and responsibly;
- Analyze the critical elements in the Christian doctrines of creation, providence, Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology; and
- Appraise the significance of scientific discoveries, concepts, and theories for Christian theology, the above doctrines in particular.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

- 1) Regular, faithful attendance to class and active participation in class discussions based on faithful reading of the assigned material. Students should be prepared to be quizzed on the assigned reading on any given day of class.
- 2) Three relatively brief (*minimum* of 1000 words per paper) reflection papers during the semester as scheduled. These papers will give you the opportunity to reflect upon any idea, concept, or controversy encountered in class reading or during class discussion.

These papers should demonstrate active engagement with the pertinent reading and your own thinking in relationship / response to the material. In each paper you should strive to bring the ideas of the natural sciences as discussed in the assigned reading and in class into creative conversation with pertinent ideas / doctrines of the Christian faith. ***It is expected that there will be at least two quotations from the assigned readings relevant to your paper, properly annotated.*** Failure to include such will automatically result in the loss of 10 percentage points under the ‘Content’ category for grading. (See below.) These papers should be college-level examples of good grammar, spelling, punctuation, and reflection.

For these papers, I will provide a brief list of prompts that you may choose from, or simply use as a general guide. Do not feel constrained by these prompts. You may want to go in a different direction for your paper(s).

Here is the general rubric I will utilize for grading student reflection papers in this course:

- Content / Concepts / Clarity 50%
- Organization / Effective Usage of Paragraphs / Flow of Ideas 15%
- Proper Spelling 10%
- Proper Grammar / Punctuation / Capitalization Use 25%

- 3) A class questionnaire during scheduled final exam period. This will include also a general education “signature assignment” which will entail your writing a brief essay in response to a prompt you will be provided.

Assessment and Grading

Final Grade will be determined on the basis of:

Class attendance / participation, including any quizzes (30%); three reflection papers (21% each); final course questionnaire / brief essay (7%) .

Final letter grades will be based on the following:

A	B	C	D	F
A 94-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F Less than 60
A- 90-93	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

In final computation of semester grade, I will round up from .5 to the next point.

Important Points Regarding Your Writing for this Class:

Please keep in mind that grammar, spelling, and punctuation all play a critical role in your professor's evaluation of all your papers. Please avail yourselves of the services of a competent, trustworthy proofreader or the university’s Writing Center (more information about the Center

below). I make no apologies for this. This is a liberal arts institution, which means I reserve the right to be equally concerned with your spelling, grammar, and punctuation as I am with your ideas. Indeed, your ideas are severely compromised when expressed poorly in writing. I take this seriously.

- To help you in the endeavor of writing a good paper for this class and other classes, please give careful attention to the handout ('Writing Tips') from the professor regarding common errors in student writing. Peruse this document carefully; you shall be held responsible for its contents in your professor's reading of *all* of your assigned papers. Indeed, it is one of your first attendance / participation assignments for this course.
- No papers will be accepted after the date of the final day of classes (prior to finals week). *Do not waste your breath or my time by asking for extra credit opportunities beyond that point.* It is remarkable how often students clamor for some way to raise their grade after the semester has ended. Please note, again, that the only written work I will accept after the last day of classes is work that actually has a due date after that last day.

Final Examination Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Traditional Undergraduate Records: Final Exam Schedules](#) site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

Content Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In Christian Tradition, all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics include critical biblical studies, discussion of creation / evolution, questions regarding whether or not souls exist, the age of our universe, the possibility the we live in a multiverse, our planet's ecological fragility, and potentially many more. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually, spiritually, or theologically challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the areas of Christian theology in relation to the natural sciences' interpretations of the world, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Incompletes and Late Assignments

All assignments are to be submitted/turned in by the date and time specified in the syllabus. Incompletes will only be assigned in extremely unusual circumstances.

Spiritual Care

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.]

PLNU Recording Notification

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

You are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc) to generate ideas, but you are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course. If you have any doubts about using AI, please gain permission from the instructor.

As I read your reflection papers, I will be especially observant of ideas and prose that sound foreign or impersonal. Your reflection papers really ought to *reflect* your own thinking and experiences.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. The EAC makes accommodations available to professors at the student's request.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any special accommodations.

Language and Belonging

The PLNU School of Theology and Christian Ministry is committed to the full equality and dignity of all people. Recognizing that human beings have often used language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women and other marginalized peoples, the department strongly urges students, faculty and staff to avoid sexist and racist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions and especially in their writings.

Further, Loma faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin.

Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced a bias incident regarding language, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you have (or someone you know has) experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/title-ix.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

Loma Writing Center

The Loma Writing Center exists to help all members of the PLNU community cultivate transferable writing skills to engage their academic, professional, personal, and spiritual communities. We work toward this goal by conducting one-on-one consultation sessions, supporting writing education across the PLNU community, and participating in ongoing writing center research.

Getting feedback from the Loma Writing Center while you're in the process of working on an assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a writer. You are encouraged to talk with a trained writing consultant about getting started on an assignment, organizing your ideas, finding and citing sources, revising, editing for grammar and polishing final drafts, and more. For information about how to make in-person or online appointments, see

[Loma Writing Center webpage](#) or visit the Loma Writer Center on the first floor of the Ryan Library, room 221.

- Appointment Calendar: <https://plnu.mywconline.com/>
- Website: <https://www.pointloma.edu/centers-institutes/loma-writing-center>
- Email: writingcenter@pointloma.edu

Course Calendar:

9/4 – Introduction to the course: 1 Corinthians 8 and the ‘Wesleyan quadrilateral’

9/6 – Karen Strand Winslow essay, “The Earth is Not a Planet”

9/9 – Lodahl notes on Genesis 1-2 handout; LDS, Christian Science, and Islamic interpretations

9/11 – *The Fool and the Heretic*, 9-52

9/13 – *F&H* 53-99

9/16 – *F&H* 101-149

9/18 – *F&H* 151-196

9/20 – excerpt from Lodahl, *All Things Necessary to Our Salvation*

9/23 – Lodahl, *Renewal in Love* 17-49

9/25 – Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, chapters 1-2

9/27 – Johnson, chapters 3-4

9/30 – Johnson, chapters 5-6 *Monday evening extra-credit possibility* with panel on creation care

10/2 – Haught, *Science and Faith: A New Introduction*, Introduction and chapter 1

10/4 – Haught, chapter 2. **First reflection paper due by midnight, October 4.**

10/7 – Haught, chapter 3

10/9 – Haught, chapter 4

10/11 – Haught, chapter 5

10/14 – Haught, chapter 7

10/16 – Haught, chapter 9

10/18 – Haught, chapter 10

10/21 – Haught, chapter 11

10/23 – Haught, chapter 12

10/25 **Fall Break**

10/28 – Falk, *On the (Divine) Origin of Our Species*, Introduction

10/30 – Falk, 21-37

11/1 – Falk, 37-48. **Second reflection paper due by midnight, November 1.**

11/4 – Falk, 49-60

11/6 – Falk, 60-74

11/8 – Falk, 75-88

11/11 – Falk, 88-102

11/13 – Falk, 103-118

11/15 – Falk, 118-131

11/18 – Falk, 132-152

11/20 – Falk, 153-164

11/22 – Falk, 165-176

11/25 – Falk, 176-188

11/27-29 **Thanksgiving Break**

12/2 – Falk, 188-198

12/4 – Falk, 199-221

12/6 – Falk, 221-241

12/9 – Lodahl, *Renewal in Love*, 50-80

12/11 – *Renewal*, 80-110

12/13 – *Renewal*, 111-143

12/18 – Wednesday, 10:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Class final: brief questionnaire and essay.

12/20 – Third reflection paper due by midnight, December 20. *No late papers or work of any kind will be accepted after this day and date.*