

Wake Forest University School of Divinity
God and the Cosmos¹
Prof. Kevin Jung

Course Description

When did it all begin? How vast is it? Why is it expanding? Will it ever end? What is our place in it? These big questions about the nature of the cosmos have been around as far as the history of human beings goes, and both science and religion have been proposing cosmological theories about them. In this course, students will explore scientific facts and theories about the cosmos, while thinking about their implications for theology.

Course Structure

This is a one credit course consisting of a field trip and reading assignments/papers. The field trip will include a full tour of the Kennedy Space Center in Florida and a visit to a roof-top observatory at Eastern Florida State College's planetarium for stargazing and amateur astronomy. Students will be able to use one of the largest public telescopes in Florida — a 24" Ritchey-Chretien reflector. All basic costs (airfare, housing, ground transportation, and admission fees), excluding meals, involved in the field trip will be fully paid for by the AAAS grant. The course enrollment limit will be set at 20.

Course Requirements

1. Book reflection paper (80%): Students must submit a reflection paper after reading *How It Began* and the two other required articles. The paper should be a book reflection paper that considers the theological implications and significance of scientific cosmology. If desired, the paper can be a form of sermon. It should be six pages long, double-spaced (or three single-spaced pages). The reflection paper should be submitted by December 4. 30, noon.
2. A journal type reflection (20%) on the field trip is due on Nov. 16, noon. It should be two pages long, single-spaced.

Required Text

Chris Impey, *How It Began: A Time-Traveler's Guide to the Universe*. New York: W. W. Norton

& Company, 2013.

John Polkinghorne, "So Finely Tuned a Universe of Atoms, Stars, Quanta & God"
Commonweal, August 16, 1996. (Available on Sakai)

Victor J. Stenger, "The Universe Shows No Evidence for Design"
(Available on Sakai)

¹ This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class. For latest version of the syllabus, please see Sakai.

Course Schedule

- **There will be a guest lecture on Aug. 26 (Wed.) at 11am in Wingate 202. Every student is required to attend the lecture** (except those who must attend the Pathway workshop during the same time).
- The field trip will take place from Nov. 6 to Nov. 8. All travel information will be sent to students via email in advance.

Statement on Inclusive Language at WFUSD

Recognizing that words both shape and reflect reality, the faculty of the School of Divinity affirms inclusive language based on biblical and theological insights. Inclusive language rejects all discourse that discriminates against individuals and groups by race, ethnicity, or gender. The statement derives from the Old Testament declaration that God created humankind male and female in the divine image (Genesis 1:27) and from the New Testament declaration that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female (Galatians 3:28). These declarations derive from the understanding of God as the Creator and Holy One who transcends gender.

The implementation includes the following guidelines:

1. Instead of the term “man” and derivative compounds (e.g., clergyman, chairman), use such terms as “humanity,” “humankind,” “person,” “people,” “women and men,” “clergy” or “clergyperson,” “chair” or “chairperson.”
2. Instead of singular masculine pronouns, use “he and she” and “his and hers,” or, where appropriate, convert the singular pronouns to plurals, “they” and “theirs” (except when quoting historical documents).
3. Instead of pronouns for God, especially masculine pronouns, repeat the proper noun, utilize a different noun, or case the words so as to circumvent the problem (except when quoting translations of the Bible and historical documents). One strategy among others for using pronouns in reference to God is to vary masculine and feminine constructions.
4. Instead of exclusively using male imagery for God, a pattern that dominates Christian tradition, when using such imagery, use corresponding female imagery to communicate the identity of God beyond the distinctions of gender.

Offering these guidelines means that commitment, sensitivity, and imagination are essential to all theological discourse.

All faculty, staff, and students in the Wake Forest University School of Divinity are expected to use inclusive language in the life of the community. The statement applies to oral and written discourse including: lectures, seminars, discussions, sermons, liturgies, brochures, papers, and other academic assignments.