

Final Exam
Religion and Science, REL 197
Spring 2007

The following exam is take-home. It is due on Friday, May 11, at 2:45 pm, though you are encouraged to submit it in advance of that day (that's the time the exam is officially scheduled to end) and should be submitted only through WebCT. If WebCT is down or you aren't sure whether you submitted it successfully, email me a copy as well.

Answer all three questions. Each question is worth an equal number of points.

Grades will be a function of accuracy and your ability to balance comprehensiveness and conciseness. I won't impose a maximum length: say as much as you need to in making your point, but try to say no more than you need to. The best way to reach this goal is to not write your final answers in one sitting. You may want to take notes on each question, including examples and page numbers; set those aside for a day or two and then write a first draft; set that aside for a day or two, then edit for conciseness and accuracy.

(1) Discuss Newton's methods for reading the "books of nature and scripture". Answer both (a) and (b):

(a) Book of Nature. Consider the role that mathematics plays in the construction of Newton's system. Pick one Definition and one Phenomenon: quote it and explain what it means; then discuss how mathematics, observation, and theory construction are present in each.

(b) Book of Scripture. Look at several instances of his interpretation of *Daniel* and try to generalize from these to a general claim about his method of interpreting scripture.

(2) How is Polkinghorne, in his own language, a "consonantist"? Explain the term and discuss in some detail one or two examples of claims he makes elsewhere in the book, showing how they illustrate his approach to the balancing of religious and scientific methods.

(3) Answering either (a) or (b):

(a) In his lecture to our class, Dimitris Xygalatas proposed a cognitive explanation for the Anastenia. Summarize his argument, making sure to address: (i) his evidence, (ii) the theoretical context for his explanation, (iii) the nature of the problem he seeks to explain (what kind of an answer is he looking for?), (iv) the explanation he presents, and (v) whether you find his explanation persuasive. Make sure (v) builds on earlier answers, especially the relationship between (iii) and (iv).

(b) Do the objects of religious studies have any special status? Use the papers by Godlove and/or McCauley/Lawson for arguments and examples: you need to orient your argument to at least one of these papers, but you can also use ideas from elsewhere in the course; do not rely on facts or arguments we have not considered in the course.

Advice. Here are some suggestions for where to look in the papers for material to put in your answer. Note that here I am not organizing your answer as I did in (a), just pointing you to passages and ideas that might be helpful.

For Godlove, look initially at the claim c. p. 23 that (this is not exactly his language, though it's close) the causal, material circumstances of speech and action don't explain religious action *qua* action. Get an understanding of the claim he is making and why he is making it.

For McCauley/Lawson, begin by looking at the claim in section III that (in their words) "the history of religions has yet to fully free itself from theological assumptions" and see how this claim is consistent with what they say elsewhere in their paper.