A Unique Georgia Tech Course Offering!

IAC 2002 — "Science, Engineering, and Religion: An Interfaith Dialogue"

Spring Semester 2026 T/Th 5:00-6:15 pm

John D. Cressler

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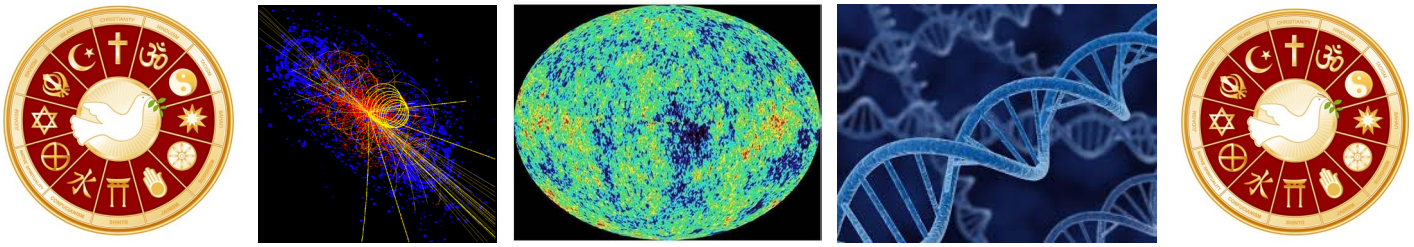

Course Description

Dividing lines exist within the rigorous, truth-seeking, intellectually demanding academic setting that defines Georgia Tech. I invite you to consider two examples. 1) Walls often separate science and engineering, on the one side, from religion and spirituality, on the other side. It is commonly assumed, for instance, that serious scientists and engineers cannot, by definition, be people of faith; and vice versa. Such matters are rarely, if ever, topics of conversation in classes. 2) Walls often separate the various religious traditions and world views that are represented in Georgia Tech's exceptionally diverse student body. For example, Christians often know very little about the beliefs and practices of Muslims, Jews about Buddhists, Taoists about Sikhs, Hindus about secular humanists. Meaningful dialogue between different religious/spiritual traditions and worldviews on campus is uncommon, or perhaps only comes in response to some tragic event. Again, such matters are rarely, if ever, topics of conversation in classes. With Georgia Tech's strategic goal of graduating outstanding global citizens, it is my view that the educational experience Georgia Tech provides could be further enhanced by engaging in meaningful dialogue across the boundaries of science, engineering and religion/spirituality, particularly within the context of multi-faith diversity. After all, we live in an ever-flattening global community.

This unique course is intended to help break down these barriers to meaningful dialogue in a creative way. The course will gather a small group of engaged students who are serious about their religious/spiritual lives, and yet who are also studying hard to be Georgia Tech's next cadre of world-class graduates. Together, we will explore a variety of topics related to the intersection of science, engineering, and religion. No prior background is assumed. All majors and years are welcomed. Together, will break open these topics by engaging in intimate, open and constructive dialogue. The class also includes a number of fun extracurricular events.

Prerequisites: (there are NO formal course prerequisites; open to GT UGs of ALL majors/years)

- An eagerness to engage in open and constructive discussion on a variety of controversial topics.
- An open-minded desire to learn more about other faith traditions and engage in intimate dialogue.
- A desire to better integrate your own religious/spiritual life and worldview with your chosen career.

IMPORTANT NOTE:
Interested? You must contact the professor and apply for a permit to register. Space is limited – act quickly.

Join Us for a Unique and Memorable Experience!

Course Syllabus – IAC 2002

"Science, Engineering, and Religion: An Interfaith Dialogue"

John D. Cressler

Regents Professor and Schlumberger Chair Professor, Georgia Tech

Course Description:

This course seeks to prepare students for leadership in a globally focused, multi-cultural, technological world by engaging in meaningful dialogue on contemporary topics spanning the boundaries of science, engineering, and religion, particularly within the context of multi-faith diversity. Site visits and speakers within the local Atlanta multi-faith community will be included, as well as several unique off-campus events. This course has no prerequisites and is intended for Georgia Tech undergraduates of all majors and years.

Course Content:

Class meetings will consist of a modest amount of foundational material on the evolving dialogue between scientific and religious/spiritual worldviews, but mostly revolve around intimate conversation on a wide variety of contemporary topics spanning science and religion/spirituality (the specific topics addressed are student-prioritized).

Foundational Material:

Chapter 1: Life's BIG Questions
Chapter 2: Rethinking Science and Religion
Chapter 3: The New Cosmic Story
Chapter 4: Science and Spirituality in the Universe

4.1 A journey outward into the cosmos
4.2 A journey inward into the quantum realm
4.3 A journey into nature and the living forest
4.4 A journey into the depths of the human heart and mind

Case Studies at the Boundaries of Science, Engineering, and Religion (to be prioritized by the class):

- The climate crisis and spiritual mandate
- The role of women in science, engineering, religion, and society
- CRISPR, genetic engineering, and transhumanism
- The internet, Big Tech, and social media
- Artificial intelligence, LLM, and AGI, impact and limits
- 21st century politics: democracy, authoritarianism, and theocracy
- Exoplanets and extraterrestrial life
- Religious fundamentalism and extremism

Textbooks: (there will be additional supplemental reading material for specific conversations)

- John D. Cressler, *Portal to the Divine: Finding Spirituality in Science,* Orbis Books, 2026.

Other Planned Activities:

- Site visits within the Atlanta multi-faith community; guest speakers; offsite events; pizza & movie nights

Student Requirements:

- Class attendance is mandatory, although Georgia Tech excused absences are permitted
- There is a significant amount of assigned reading, from books and a variety of articles
- Active participation in class discussions is required
- There are 6 writing assignments on a variety of course topics related to the Case Studies listed above. For each, there are assigned readings on the topic, and then students must research the topic on their own using different resources, and then write an essay on the nuances of the topic and how it intersects their particular worldview.
- Attendance of the site visits and off-campus events is important. We will carpool to get there.

- Students are expected to abide by the Georgia Tech Honor Code: www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18b.php
- Accommodations will be granted for students with disabilities, arranged in advance with the Office of Disability Services: www.adapts.gatech.edu
- The use of electronic devices is not permitted during lectures or class discussions.

Grading Policy:

- 6 writing assignments: 100% of course grade

Course Learning Outcomes:

Through this course students will be able to:

- *Understand and articulate* the fundamental assumptions behind, and inherent limitations of the scientific enterprise
- *Understand and articulate* our current scientific knowledge in the realms of cosmology, quantum theory, biology, ecology, and what those findings mean for religious/spiritual worldviews
- *Understand and articulate* the history and on-going models for meaningful interaction between scientific and religious/spiritual worldviews
- *Reflect upon and articulate* their own worldviews, work to better understand what they believe and why, and learn how their own worldviews compare with those of other cultures and religious traditions
- *Understand and articulate* the beliefs and practices of the world's major religious traditions, and each traditions' dynamic relationship with contemporary issues in science, engineering, and technology
- *Experience and reflect* upon site visits within the Atlanta multi-faith community
- *Prepare* for leadership within multi-language, multi-cultural, multi-religious global communities by researching, reflecting upon, and then engaging in meaningful dialogue on contemporary topics that span the boundaries of scientific and religious/spiritual worldviews

About the Professor: Cressler was awarded the 2010 Class of 1940 W. Howard Ector Outstanding Teacher Award (Georgia Tech's top teaching award), and the 2013 Class of 1934 Distinguished Professor Award (the highest honor Georgia Tech bestows on its faculty). He is a Regents Professor. Visit: *http://cressler.ece.gatech.edu/ and http://johndcressler.com*