**Traditions:**

The two key notions around which this course revolves: notion of worldview & notion of humanism.

Philosophy has traditionally been divided into four major areas of investigation:

* **Logic** – the study of the correct rules of reasoning  
  Point: Good reasoning is key to analyzing worldviews and to support your own worldview
* **Epistemology –** the study of knowledge  
  Point: Facts are crucial in our understanding of worldviews
* **Ethics / Politics –** the study of right and wrong and how to organize social life  
  Point: Worldviews typically include significant ethical and political components
* **Metaphysics** – the study of the nature of reality  
  Point: Worldviews are primarily about what reality consist of, whether “reality” is understood in a philosophical, religious, scientific, political, etc., sense the term

**A Brief Overview of the History of Humanism**

*Humanism comes from Italian word “umanista” which referred to the “humanities”.*

Key moments in history of humanism:

Stage #1: The roots of humanism in ancient times (from the 6th century BC to the Roman Empire).

Key breakthroughs for the humanist tradition:

* The birth of philosophy – the passage from a mythological understanding of the world to rational/scientific one. (theme #1)
* The emergency of some skepticism cocerning the existence of Gods (theme #2)  
  Protagoras (490-420 BC): “Concerning the gods, I have no means of knowing wether they exist or not or what sort they may be, because of the obscurity of the subject, and the brevity of human life.”
* The possibility of leading a good and meaningful life without relying on Gods or supernatural explanations (themes #3, 4 and 6), for instance in a views such as Stoicism or Epicureanism.

Famour quote from Epicurus (341-271 BC): “Death does not concern us, because as long we exis, death is not here. And when it does come, we no longer exist.”

Stage #2: Renaissance humanism (1450-1600)

The renaissance, which means “rebirth,” is a social and intellectual movement which is important for the humanist tradition because it involved:

* A rediscovery of key humanist themes from Antiquity
* The rejection of scholasticism, the doctrine that prevailed during the Middles Ages
* Main breakthrough for the humanist tradition: A new focus – humans and their role in the universe and society
* Symbolic representation of this new movement: Leanardo da Vinci’s (1452-1519) The Vitruvian Man
* Giovanni Pico dela Mirandolla’s On the Dignity of Man (1486) is often seen as the manifesto of Renaissance humanism.  
  Key points of this quote:   
  The nature of humans, unlike that of animals, is not fixed.  
  This means that we have the ability and responsibility to make free choices.  
  Plus, humans are special and have a special role to play in worldly affairs.

Stage #3: The scientific revolution of the 17th century (humanist theme #1)

* Emergence of a purely mechanical/naturalistic conception of the world
* Inventon of many technologies
* Mathematics becomes the best tool to study the universe
* The new rules of knowledge: Logic, reason and evidence/experiment.

Stage #4: The enlightenment (the 18th century) – the Age of Reason

* First time in human history when science and philosohy become independent of religion
* Political revolutions that result in the birth of modern democracies which rest on a clear separation of church and state (humanist theme of secularism)

Stage #5: The Golden Age of Humanism – from the 19th century to the present day:

* Emergency of thinkers who are openy atheist: Karl Marx, Friederich Nietzche, Signmund Freud
* Emergence of moral theories designed to promote human happiness (e.g., utilitarianism)
* Science and religion conflict on many social and ethical issues

**The issues**

We will address four separate issues:

1. The mystery of the origin of the universe who or what caused the universe?
2. Is it justified to believe in God? Are there any rational grounds for that belief?
3. Why do people believe in God - what makes them believe in God?
4. What is the relationship between science and religion?

Definitions:

* What do we mean by “God”?: The three main characteristics of God in the three main monotheistic religions: Omniscience, omnipotence and supreme benevolence.
* Reminder – some key words in that context:   
  Theism  
  Deism  
  Atheism,   
  Agnosticism   
  Pantheism: nature is the universe which suggest something more divine. However no one created it.

**First issue: The mystery of the Origins of the Universe:**

Discussion based on the principle of sufficient reason – the principle that for everything that exists there must be an explanation of why it exists.

So the issue is: Who or what caused the universe to exist?

1. The scientific answer: The Big Bang  
   Big explosion 15 billion years ago whereby space and time were created.  
   Purely naturalistic explanation that answers the “how” question  
   Most scientists dismiss the “why” question in that context as unnecessary
2. The religious answer: The consomological argument  
   There must be a reason/purpose beyond the Big Bang as to why the universe exists

**Second issue: Are there Rational Grounds for Believing?**

Puzzle: The widespread evidence of “The Wonders of Nature” – that is, of “design” and “complexity”.

1. The religious answer  
   William Paley’s (1743-1805) watchmarker analogy  
   See the two forms of design argument on the hand-out
2. The scientific answer: The argument from evolution  
   Natural selection is the process that brought about all the phenomena of complex design  
   Father of that theory: Charles Darwin (1809=1882)  
   See the three conditions for evolution by natural selection to operate on hand-out

**Third issue: Why people do believe?**

1. The fear-of-the-unkown argument:  
   Religion was created to satisfy our curiosity and to explain the unexplained  
   Religion gives meaning/purpose/comfort to the life of individuals
2. The anthropological argument:  
   Religion was created to organize and regulate social life

Religion is a means of controlling the mob

* Lucretius (99-55 BC): ”Fear is the mother of all gods.”
* Karl Marx (1818-1883): “Religion is the opium of the people.”

Religion is a psychological necessity: people are naturally programmed to believe.

People are just downright irrational (Richard Dawkins, Steven Weinberg, Christopher Hitchens)

Religion is a safe boat – Blaise Pascal’s (1623-1662) wager

After March Break:

**First Issue: The Relationship between Science and Religion**

There are two dimensions of this issue to be analyzed here:

1. The philosophical dimension about the relationship between science and religion
2. The political dimension about the relationship between science and religion.

Science and religion: the philosophical dimension

Three approaches to the relationship between science and religion:

1. The conflict approach: science and religion are competitors
2. The complementary approach: science and religion can peacefully co-exist because they deal with totally different subject matters
3. The replacement approach: one day science will be the successor to religion

Gould (2) -> Noma-non-overlapping magisterial:  
science = the domain of “how” questions – natural laws  
religion = the domain of “why” questions – meaning, purpose, etc.

Science and religion: the political dimension

Two historical cases illustrating the political dimension of the science/religion relationship:

Case #1: The Galileo Affair

* Nicolaus Capernicus (1473-1543)
* Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)
* The Catholic Inquisition and Pope Urban VIII

Case #2: The Evolution/Creation controversy in the US

* Charles Darwin’s (1809-1882) publication of the *Origins of Species* in 1859
* One of the biggest blows ever to the ego of humans

Episode #1: The Scopes Trial in 1925

Episode #2: Creation Science versus evolutionary theory in the courtrooms (1960s-1980s)

Episode #3: The Intelligent Design debate (1990s to present-day)

For Dickson these historical cases suggest:

* That the science/religion debate is not one that is first foremost about Knowledge or the Truth
* It is rather a debate with a political dimension involving:  
  1) Which institution is authorized to produce and disseminate knowledge  
  2) Which institution/party should have greater influence in social life  
  3) Who should control education and its curriculum

“Secularism should be understood as the view that: government should not involve itself with religious matters; religious doctrine should play no role in shaping public policy; and religious institutions and beliefs should not enjoy a privilege position within society” (Lindsay p.18)

Why secularism?:

* To avoid social tensions, conflicts, and wars based on religious disagreements.  
  “Blood gave birth to the secular state” (Lindsay p.26)
* To manage and cope with “religious diversity” for the benefit of social harmony  
  *By being officially neutral, the state shows no bias in favor or against any specific religious group or those without religion (e.g., agnostics and atheists).*

Additional remarks on secularism:

* A secular state is not anti-religious; it merely says that religion is a private affair
* Monarchies and theocracies are good examples of political systems that are not secular (rule behalf of god and oppose beliefs on your population)
* Religious considerations should never be a factor influencing social policy in a secular state
* Modern democracies are official secular – they involve a clear separation of Church and State
  + The French Revolution (1789) and American Revolution (1776) were the ultimate political outcomes of key philosophical ideas that emerged during the 17th-18th centuries:  
      
    1) Government are instituted by the consent of the people: The idea of social contract was put forth by many influential philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau  
      
    2) The idea that all people are born with natural and inalienable rights: This eventually paved the way for the first Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen in 1789 and ultimate to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  + The job of the government should be limited to protecting these fundamental rights and it should never interfere in the “salvation of souls”:   
      
    John Locke’s(1632-1704) three-point argument to limit the role of government in religious matters:  
      
    1) Free and rational individuals cannot trust the government to make the correct choice of religious doctrine for them  
      
    2) Even if we gave the government the power to impose a religion, it would be futile because force cannot change one’s belief  
      
    3) Because governments can be wrong about religious matters, it is preferable to let people arrive at their own beliefs through reasoning and discussion with others
  + The challenge of secular states today: coping with the “Unprecedented Moment in Human History”.  
      
    *Two parallel phenomena: Increase in the numbers of non-believers & increase of the number of immigrants that are quite religious*  
      
    Humanists are concerned about a “return of religion” in the political and public spheres  
      
    But humanists disagree among themselves as to the role of religion society and the extent to which religion should be a strict privilege affair or not
* Though humanists do not believe in any utopia they generally embrace these nine political ideals:  
    
  1) Humanists value participation in the community  
    
  2) Humanists value free-thinking, resistance and even dissidence  
    
  3) Humanist value freedom in general, and free speech in particular  
    
  4) Humanists value democracy  
    
  5) Humanists value an “open society”: access to information, access to wealth, access to education, access to media not controlled by the government  
    
  6) Humanists oppose racial, sexual, and religious discrimination  
    
  7) Humanists value a fair economic distribution  
    
  8) Humanists value social reforms that lead individuals to decide what’s good for them (as opposed to society deciding what’s good for them): abortion, decriminalization of sexual behaviors, voluntary euthanasia et legalization of certain drugs  
    
  9) Humanists value of life of each individual equally