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IWU Philosophy Professor Carl Gillett Receives \$10,000

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IWU Philosophy Professor Carl Gillett Receives \$10,000

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--God versus Science. Cosmic combatants or irreconcilable allies? Students at Illinois Wesleyan University will ponder such questions in Assistant Professor of Philosophy Carl Gillett's fall term class, titled "God and Science." In April of 1998 the Templeton Foundation awarded a \$5000.00 cash stipend to Gillett, and a matching \$5000.00 to IWU to fund the course.

Gillett proposed his course after attending a Templeton Foundation seminar last summer at St. Anne's College, Oxford, England. Since 1994 the foundation has developed the Science & Religion Course Program which encourages the teaching of interdisciplinary courses in science and religion at colleges, universities and schools of theology worldwide. The program awards prizes for outstanding courses in science and religion as well as offering a series of workshops on science and religion pedagogy and course development and instruction.

According to Gillett, the five day seminar was "incredibly eclectic," with people from a variety of disciplines including "biology, philosophy, English and religion," and "Greek orthodox preachers sitting next to hard-line, atheistic biologists." Workshops and lectures presented previous prize winners detailing courses they devised and stimulated debate about the teaching of science and religion.

Gillett returned to Illinois Wesleyan braced to develop a course that would not only interest the Templeton Foundation, but also intellectually engage students. Winning the cash award certainly attests to the former, and the subsequent enrollment of students in not one, but two sections of the course seems to validate the latter.

The course asks how science relates to religion. Do the sciences undermine religion, and, are the two compatible or even mutually supportive? Topics like creationism versus the theory of natural selection and the nature of properties/laws in chaos theory, even the problem of free will, will be discussed. The issues will be examined by studying the writing and arguments offered by philosophers, theologians and scientists.

Gillett thinks the questions proposed by the course are pertinent to science students in particular. "For a theistic science student this has got to be important." But even the non-scientific student will most likely become engaged in the debate. "Surely this is one of the issues one should be thinking about, especially at a liberal arts college." Gillett wants the students to debate theories

of knowledge, theories of mind, and "in the end," Gillett says, "I want the students to learn to formulate arguments charitably."

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and its Schools of Music, Theater Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletic center, a \$25 million science building, a \$6.8 million residence hall, and a \$5.1 million liberal arts center. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching ranks Illinois Wesleyan a "Baccalaureate I" institution, a classification that places it among the 159 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges. IWU won the 1997 NCAA Division III men's basketball championship.

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