COURSE DESCRIPTION
In this course we study Alfred North Whitehead’s magnum opus, *Process and Reality* (1929), on the most important work of speculative metaphysics of the 20th century.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
1. Class Presentation (2-page, 12 pt. font) delivered orally based on the assigned reading for the week.
2. A Research Paper (10-12 pages) on some aspect of *Process and Reality*.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

These books will be read in conjunction with *Process and Reality* since they are devoted to the exposition of the text. However, the authors may not agree with each other of specific points of interpretation. Whitehead’s work is extremely demanding and on some points of Whitehead meant there is no consensus. Although I did not assign pages from the William Christian book, it is by far one of the most respected (and demanding) interpretations of Whitehead’s metaphysics. If you can get it (and a paperback edition can be found), it will repay its study.

OTHER RECOMMENDED ARTICLES AND BOOKS FOR RESEARCH PAPER


For the research paper you must use at least three (3) articles from academic journals, in addition to the Lowe, Leclerc, and Christian books. The best place to search for articles is JSTOR.COM, which makes available the full text of the most important publications in the field of religion and philosophy. You can access and download the full texts from home logging in to JSTOR with you FIU Panther log in information. The recommended books listed above can be found in our library, although with the current Covid-19 crisis it might not be possible to physically visit or check out the book.

**PROCESS AND REALITY AND THE STUDY OF RELIGION**

Alfred North Whitehead (d. 1947) was a notable British mathematician and logician and professor at Cambridge University, England. His first major contribution was a co-author with Bertrand Russell (d. 197) of the three-volume *Principia Mathematica*, the seminal work in symbolic or mathematical logic, published in 1910-1913. At the age of 64 Harvard University appointed him professor of Logic and thus began Whitehead’s second career as a highly original and speculative metaphysician. In 1929 he published *Process and Reality*, his major metaphysical system.

Whitehead’s system failed to gain much traction in the academic world of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s due to the rise of the strongly anti-metaphysical school of philosophy known as Logical Positivism (or Logical Empiricism), which came to dominate the philosophical world both in the continent, and then later in the UK and the United
States. However, given the highly spiritual, and one could also say theological, vision of Process and Reality, it is not surprising that process thought exerted a profound influence of theologians and philosophers of religion. A whole school of process theology flourished at the University of Chicago with Charles Hartshorne (who was a student of Whitehead) from 1928-1955, and then at the Claremont School of Theology in California under the leadership of John B. Cobb (A Christian Natural Theology, Christ in a Pluralistic Age), David Ray Griffin (Process Christology), and Donald Sherburne (A Key to Whitehead’s Process and Reality) at Vanderbilt. The critical and corrected edition of Process and Reality published in 1978 (and our textbook) is due to the collaboration of Griffin and Sherburne, who carefully collated (and corrected) the defectively printed American and British editions of Whitehead’s work.

In an age where scientific naturalism reigns, Whitehead’s metaphysical system appears at first blush out of place, a child too late to be born. But it must not be forgotten that Whitehead was a brilliant mathematician and logician; and furthermore, one who was intimately acquainted with the most recent developments in physics, and specially Einstein’s theory of relativity. He could talk mathematical logic and modern physics with the best of them and hold his own. Perhaps all Whitehead gives in PR is a “model” of reality, not the model. Scoffers might say (and probably have) that Whitehead’s speculative system is just too speculative or ambitious for our own frugal tastes—or too theological or religious for the cultured despisers of religion; but it nevertheless remains a monument of speculative thinking whose time has perhaps not yet arrived, and rather than saying that it was born too late perhaps future generations might say, who knows, that it was born too soon.

COURSE STRUCTURE

WEEK 1
Read PR xi-xv; 3-17; Lowe, UW, “Whitehead’s Philosophy of Science,” 59-89 [on Canvas]; “Whitehead’s Philosophy of Religion,” 90-113 [on Canvas].

WEEK 2

WEEK 3
Derivative Notions, PR 31-51; Leclerc, Whitehead’s Metaphysics [WM], “Whitehead’s Categoreal Scheme,” 53-112; Sherburne, KWPR, 1-19.
WEEK 4
The Extensive Continuum, PR 61-82; Sherburne, KWPR, 20-35.

WEEK 5
The Order of Nature; Organisms and Environment, PR 83-129, 147-156; Sherburne, 36-70.

WEEK 6
Historical Antecedents, PR 130-147; Sherburne, KWPR, 126-170.

WEEK 7
The Subjectivist Principle and Symbolic Reference; PR 160-183; Leclerc, WM, 115-143.

WEEK 8
Theory of Prehensions (Propositions and Process), PR 184-215; Leclerc, WM, 144-162; Sherburne, KWPR, 72-97.

WEEK 9
Feelings, PR 219-243; Leclerc, WM, 165-188.

WEEK 10
Transmission of Feelings; Propositions and Feelings. PR 244-265; Sherburne, KWPR, 98-125.

WEEK 11
Higher Phases of Experience. PR 266-280.

WEEK 12
Coordinate Division; Extensive Connection, PR 283-301; Leclerc, WM, 189-225.

WEEK 13
Flat Loci, Strains, and Measurement. PR 302-333.

WEEK 14
Ideal Opposites; God and the World. PR 337-351; Sherburne, KWPR, 171-190.

WEEK 15
Concluding Discussion. Recommended: Lowe, UW, 3-58; Sherburne, KWPR, 191-204.