

Religious Studies Department, Santa Clara University
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TESP 176 Nature, the Human Person and Spirituality (31830)

The true summons of the cosmos is a call consciously to share in the great work that goes on within it.
Teilhard de Chardin, in *Writings in Time of War*, 32

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves . . . Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.
Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, 35.

Course Description: Contextualized within the emerging universe story, the course is a personal and theological inquiry into the human person's desire for meaning, integration, and need for belonging and contributing as part of the Earth community, and in that search, the disclosure of the self and encounter with the Mystery of God. Engages with the writings of Thomas Berry, Teilhard de Chardin, Bill Plotkin, and Beatrice Bruteau; considers how the new cosmology identifies an emergent consciousness and is transforming our understanding of spiritual and ethical life. Course explores the tools and processes to think theologically, to access their personal lives, and to develop a practical spirituality, which attends to their experience in the ongoing relationship among and between the Absolute Mystery, the human community and the rest of creation. Through theological readings, spiritual praxis, dialogue and reflective writing, students will uncover the transformative and integrative experience of faith, identify and clarify the story, spirituality and ethics resonant in their lives. Fulfills Religious Studies (advanced) Core requirement. Students seeking RTC 3 credit must have completed RTC 2 and have at least 88 units.

Course Goals

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. *Identify and articulate* the universe story, that we are part of a single creation event, an evolutionary one, and processes for embodying this new understanding;
2. *Investigate* and *compare* the contributions of Thomas Berry, Teilhard de Chardin, Bill Plotkin and Karl Rahner which have contributed to a new understanding of humanity's story and spirituality in the cosmos;
3. *Recognize, contrast, analyze and apply* distinctions between contributions of Victor Frankl and Karl Rahner;
4. *Evaluate* diverse spiritual praxis for contemporary lives: meditation, pilgrimage, discernment, liturgy/ritual, community, intention, compassion;
5. *Construct* one's spiritual autobiography, through Plotkin's template, interpreted through theological anthropology;
6. *Evaluate* and *apply* insights from these studies to open-ended questions, (i.e. spirituality and identity formation; beauty and its role in spiritual development; shifts in understandings of spirituality; resonances between science and spirituality) facing their personal lives and contemporary society.

Departmental Goals (adapted from RS "Description of the Three Levels."

1. Students questions and probe religion for what it reveals about human beings, their diverse societies, traditions, convictions and aspirations;
2. Students use diverse materials and demonstrate formal postures of inquiry into religion in order to go beyond simple description of religion to reflective engagement with it;
3. Students propose and investigate the "big questions" – that is, the meta-reflective questions that ask how and why we ask the questions we do about religion.

Departmental goals are imbedded in course goals.

Core Curriculum Learning Goals and Objectives

This course fulfills Santa Clara's Core Requirement for RTC 3

- 3.1 Be able to identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary questions. (Critical Thinking: Ethical Reasoning; Perspective);
- 3.2 Be able to evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ed questions facing contemporary society. (Critical Thinking; Religious Reflection)

Approved Pathways: Beauty, Design Thinking, Paradigm Shifts and Ways of Knowing, Vocation, Sustainability.

Format: Lectures will be employed as a way of introducing (or revisiting) the central tenets of particular theological underpinnings and practices. However, in keeping with the course content and goals, class discussion of readings, reflective activities, dialogue groups, and one's own self-reflection will constitute the primary mode of inquiry. Class discussion will focus on understanding of authors' purposes and intentions as well as how the readings are relevant to, or enrich the individual's understanding of one's own search for meaning, purpose and direction.

Assessment and Grading

Attendance, Class Participation & Dialogue Groups (20)

Course participation component includes preparation and consistent, effective class participation. In particular, students will be expected to attend all classes with demonstrable preparation in the form of written notes and questions on the day's assigned texts. Students will be expected to actively engage in dialogue with the class, in large or smaller groups, based on thoughtful consideration and critical analysis of the readings. It is important that each student assumes responsibility for developing the skills of careful listening and making meaningful contributions in a manner befitting collaborative scholarly inquiry. Discussion of CAMINO readings works toward participation. Occasionally, students will be asked at the beginning of class to identify on note-cards, the author's thesis or purpose, or the context, theological process and challenge. These responses will be tallied within your participation grade.

This will indirectly support all course goals as well as RTC 3 core learning objectives 3.1 and 3.2

Circles of Trust, based on the work of Parker J. Palmer: <http://www.couragerenewal.org/approach/>

Student-led Discussion: (15)

Working groups of two people will be asked to take responsibility for one of the readings/topics that are assigned on the syllabus or a selected supplemental topic. All students are required to read the material; the group's task is to present a summary of the reading and lead a conversation around 2-3 critical questions raised by the article. The group is responsible to craft the following:

- a. a one-page summary of the author's argument;
- b. a description of the central evidence and/or analysis used by the author
- c. 2-3 questions that engage the course material thus far with the author's argument. (Refer to Bloom's taxonomy: #2, 3,4,6, comprehension, analysis, application, evaluation)

The group will introduce the article on the first day, and lead a follow-up discussion the second day. Please submit via e-mail the following to your professor one day before the class meeting: Names of group members, title and author of the article.. Divide the responsibilities as you decide is best. All may present or just one or two people. The group earns the same grade (15 of the 25 points for participation)

Midterm (15)

Spiritual Autobiography and Spiritual Praxis, 10 – 12 page (35) Due Week 8.

Based on Bill Plotkin's template of soul-centric human development, students will construct their own spiritual autobiography which addresses: What questions am I living through my life? This will be a thematic exploration of experiences through childhood, adolescence, and emerging adulthood, with a projection into the future. In this narrative, students will critically reflect on their lives in light of the theoretical work of Barry, Swimme, Rahner, Teidhard de Chardin, Frankl,, Parks as well as the spiritual praxis they take on during the quarter. The aim is to identify one's horizon, one's conscious and intentional movement, transformation, and integration through one's questions and spiritual journey through the lens of theological anthropology and in the context of the universe story. Includes assessment of a spiritual practice you have taken up during the quarter. Guidelines posted on CAMINO. *This will assess course goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5; RTC 3 objectives 3.1 and 3.2;*

Final Student-Designed Project: (10) Eco-theology, spiritual praxis and contemporary life.

Evaluation final grades will be based on the following criteria:

Attendance, Participation & dialogue groups (20%)

Includes outside experiential praxis, due Week Three.

Student-led discussion (15%)

Midterm Quiz 15%;

Written Assignments (65%)

Spiritual autobiography, through lens of theological anthropology (35%) Due Week Eight.

Question, student-designed: Ecotheology, spiritual praxis and contemporary life. (20%) Due Finals Week.

Extra credit: (5 pts.) See guidelines. Carol Collins: Dreams in the Midst of a Nightmare (SCU January 14); SCU SALON 2016: (in) Humanity events , including XLIII: Contemporary Requiem (SCU January 15); Day of Mindfulness and Meditation (January 23);

Policies:

Incompletes, Plagiarism and Cheating. Late papers, make-up exams, or incompletes are not acceptable except under unusual circumstances and with prior permission. Please speak with me in anticipation of a problem. In accordance with the Student Handbook, plagiarism and cheating of any kind are a serious breach of morality and can lead to expulsion.

Disability Accommodation: To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in Benson Center, (408) 554 4111; TTY (408) 554 5445.

Academic Integrity: Please see the universities policy regarding academic integrity
<http://www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm>.

Grading Scale:

A	100-93	outstanding
A-	92-90	exceptional
B+	89-87	very good
B	86-83	good
B-	82-80	solid performance
C+	79-77	average
C	76-72	

Texts Required

Chardin, Teilhard. 1999. *Writings Selected* With an Introduction by Ursula King. Orbis Books. 1-57-75-248-6

Plotkin, Bill. 2008. *Nature and the Human Soul*. (Novato, CA: New World Library). 978-1-57731-551-3

Pope Francis. *Encyclical on Climate Change & Inequality: On Care for the Common Home*.

Intro by Naomi Oreskes. Brooklyn: Melville House Publishing 978 1 61219 528 5

These texts will be supplemented by a wide variety of other readings mainly excerpted from larger works of poetry, biography, theology, psychology, and spiritual writing. (These sources appear on CAMINO)

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Unit One: The Story of the Universe & the Human Person

“The most notable single event is that modern science is giving us a new and more comprehensive account of our own birth out of the earth.”
--- Thomas Berry

Week One (January 5 & 7)

T Introduction to Course

Overview of course content, procedures and expectations.

ChronoZoom: <http://www.chronozoom.com/#/t55>

The universe story, a story that has the power to awaken us more deeply into who we really are.

TH Paradigm Shift: The Earth is Our Primary Community

Read: (See CAMINO for reading guidelines)

Thomas Barry: The New Story:

http://static1.1.sgspscdn.com/static/f/558814/26600687/1444690893070/Thomas_Barry-The_New_Story.pdf?token=PkGH8ay6O%2BG%2BBNpSmtf6xr7fODY%3D

Thomas Berry, on The Ecozoic Era: CAMINO

<http://www.earth-community.org/images/The%20Ecozoic%20Era.pdf>

