AN INTRODUCTION TO ECO-THEOLOGY

SMT3652HF
SMT6652HF
Winter 2014
Wednesday: 17:00 – 19:00, Rm. 207

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Introduction

January 8 – Introduction

Forming a Cosmological Vision: Understanding the Context

January 15 – Thomas Berry’s Articulation of the New Cosmology – The First 9 Billion Years
January 22 – Thomas Berry’s Articulation of the New Cosmology – The Last 4 Billion Years
January 29 – Thomas Berry’s Articulation of the New Cosmology – The Last 10,000 Years
February 5 – Thomas Berry’s Articulation of the New Cosmology – Spirituality and Consciousness in Cosmogenesis
February 12 – Thomas Berry’s Articulation of the New Cosmology – Redefining the Human

Reflection Paper due February 12, 2014

Reading Week: February 17 – 21

Possible Theological Implications of Adopting the New Cosmology:
Redefining Content

February 26 – Theological Implications: Original Sin and the Fall
March 5 – Theological Implications: Ecological Christology
March 12 – Theological Implications: Ecological Pneumatology
March 19 – Theological Implications: Revelation & Divine Immanence
March 26 – Theological Implications: Suffering and Providence
April 2 – Theological Implications: Eschatology & the Future of Theology

Integration Paper due April 2, 2014
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Using the writings of Thomas Berry & theologians who work with the new cosmology, the course provides an introduction to eco-theology as well as the ways eco-theologians are articulating new understandings of theological anthropology, revelation, Christology, pneumatology, sin and salvation, and eschatology. Adult learning methods. Evaluation: practical integration, reflection paper and integration paper.

GOALS
To provide the students with
♦ a basic understanding of the current scientific articulation of the new cosmology or epic of evolution;
♦ an introduction to the content, role and influence of the work of Thomas Berry and various ecotheologians;
♦ an appreciation of the implications of adopting the new cosmology as a context for understanding human culture and theology (particularly, Christianity);
♦ the background knowledge and critical thinking skills to appreciate more deeply the Christian response to the ecological challenges besetting Earth;
♦ opportunities to practically integrate didactic instruction with parish-based practice.

OBJECTIVES
The course will help the students to
♦ critically engage the cosmological and/or theological perspectives of Thomas Berry and selected ecotheologians;
♦ articulate the theological implications of adopting the epic of evolution as part of one’s cosmology, particularly with respect to theological anthropology, sin and conversion, divine immanence, Christology, pneumatology, and eschatology;
♦ begin the task of interpreting theological discourse into pastoral practice.

REQUIRED READING:

   • GE 195 .B47 1999 SMC, REG
These texts may be purchased at Crux Books, 5 Hoskin Ave. (behind Wycliffe College) (416) 599-2749.

All students are expected to read the required readings for each week, and the advanced degree students are also expected to read the additional assigned readings. There is also a list of supplementary readings that provide added depth to the required reading, or challenge their perspectives and/or assumptions. Students are encouraged to read at least one supplementary reading each week, if possible.

EVALUATION

Reflection paper ................................. 30
Integration paper ............................... 50
Practical Integration ............................ 20

100 %

Papers: All papers are to be double-spaced with 1 inch margins on the top, bottom and left, and a 1½ inch margin on the right. (This is not the normal margination, but aids the instructor’s ability to respond on students’ papers.) The papers should be properly referenced according Kate L. Turabian’s A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 8th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) also known as the Chicago Style. A free copy of the Chicago Manual of Style Online is available at:
http://main.library.utoronto.ca/eir/EIRdetail.cfm?Resources_ID=736514&T=R&FID. For a quick reference guide for formatting footnotes and bibliography references, see the handout: “Footnote & Bibliography Templates.” The font used in your paper should be Times New Roman 12 or its equivalent in size. Please review the “Writing at the University of Toronto” website for advice on effective writing skills, especially the section on “Advice.” These websites can be found at: http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/home and http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice, respectively. Please pay particular attention to the advice on avoiding plagiarism (http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize). For a guide to the grading of papers at the Toronto School of Theology, please refer to Section 11.2 of the TST Basic Degree Handbook, available at:
http://www.tst.edu/webfm_send/515. All papers must be submitted electronically to the instructor by their due date.

Reflection Paper: The reflection paper will provide a brief overview of any issue or concept raised in the course and will describe how and why the student’s understanding of that matter has either been reinforced or shifted in some significant way. The reflection paper is intended to provide the student with an opportunity to reflect upon a moment of significant revelation or new awareness that transpired because of course readings or discussions; that is, an “ah-ha” moment. For the reflection paper, each Basic Degree student will submit a paper of not more than 8 pages while utilizing at least two sources of information. The sources can include readings from the course syllabus. Each Advanced Degree student will submit a paper of no more than 12 pages while utilizing at least three sources of information which can also include readings from the course syllabus. The reflection paper is due no later than February 12, 2014.
**Integration Paper:** The integration paper is meant to be a scholarly paper, not a reflection paper. The student will choose a particular aspect of one of the theological topics considered in the second half of the syllabus. In her/his paper, the student will clearly articulate a thesis statement pertaining to that topic and will integrate the perspectives of several sources in the subsequent discussion as s/he explains and defends this thesis statement. The student will provide a brief historical overview of that theological topic (e.g., the development of the doctrine on original sin), the current understanding of the topic, and how that understanding might be altered or reinforced by theological reflection that takes the epic of evolution seriously (or how the current theological understanding resists any revision from a perspective informed by this new cosmology). Due to restrictions on the length of the paper, the student will necessarily have to limit discussion of the topic. The student should briefly acknowledge these limitations.

Each Basic Degree student will submit an integration paper of no more than 12 pages while utilizing at least six sources of information which may include three readings form the course syllabus, but must be supplemented by at least three others. Each Advanced Degree student will submit an integration paper of no more than 18 pages while utilizing at least nine sources of information. The sources can include four readings from the course syllabus, but must be supplemented by at least five others. The integration paper is due no later than April 2, 2014.

**Practical Integration:** The practical integration portion of the course provides the students with an opportunity to explore and experience an academic and practical application of the course material within a parish setting. The intention is to take the academic learning of the classroom and expand it to include a more personal, spiritual and practical encounter with the concepts and issues of the course. A theological response to the ecological crisis that can inform and inspire transformation requires clear and effective communication of those theological insights. The practical integration portion of the course explores one way to undertake that communication. On the first Sunday of each month, students will have an opportunity to participate in a multi-denominational / non-denominational Eco-Sabbath gathering at St. Gabriel’s Parish. [http://www.stgabrielsparish.ca/](http://www.stgabrielsparish.ca/) The Eco-Sabbath gathering is a guided eco-spiritual / eco-theological reflection informed by the liturgical readings for that Sunday, the cosmological vision of Thomas Berry, and contemporary reflections on the ecological crisis. Students participate in the creation and delivery of the Eco-Sabbath gathering with the assistance of the course director. Students who are unable to attend the Eco-Sabbath gathering must make arrangements with the course director to complete a comparable form of practical integration. St. Gabriel’s Parish church is internationally recognized for its green design features. You can read about these features and the theology that informed them at: [http://stgabrielsparish.ca/who-we-are/green-church/](http://stgabrielsparish.ca/who-we-are/green-church/).

**Class Participation:** Each student is expected to contribute to the class discussions. Participation requires informed and intelligent discourse by the student on the issues or topics being discussed that week. Mere attendance at class is not participation. Students are expected to attend all classes; absence from more than two classes normally renders the course “Incomplete” for the student.

**INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE**

Some of the articles used in this course – especially those of a less contemporary nature – lack gender inclusive language. Nevertheless, students are required to use gender inclusive language.
COURSE OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

January 8 – Introduction

Focus Questions:
• What is the New Cosmology or the Epic of Evolution? Who is Thomas Berry? Why does theology need to pay attention to our cosmological perspective?

Learning Objectives:
All students will be able to:
• describe the value of studying theology within an ecological context
• describe the urgency of responding to the ecological crisis, and the role of theology for doing so

Required Reading (all):

Required Reading (AD students):

Supplemental Reading:


**FORMING A COSMOLOGICAL VISION: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT**

January 15 – Thomas Berry’s Articulation of the New Cosmology – The First 9 Billion Years

**Focus Questions (all):**
- What is Thomas Berry’s understanding of the New Cosmology? What seems to be unique about or the significance of his perspective? How does he understand the universe to be a continuously evolving interrelated adventure of ever increasing complexity?
- What are the roles of resistance, energy and dreams in Cosmogenesis?
- What are the Cosmological Principle of Einstein and Cosmogenetic Principle of Berry and Swimme?
- How does Berry understand the interrelated dynamic of differentiation, subjectivity and communion in cosogenesis?

**Learning Objectives (all):**
All students will be able to:
- articulate a brief sequential overview of the new cosmology;
- identify, in a preliminary fashion, Berry’s understanding of the consequence of attentively adopting the new cosmology;
- explain the interrelatedness of the universe community in both its evolutionary and relational qualities;
- describe the basic laws of the universe on the levels of reality: differentiation, subjectivity and communion;
- distinguish between evil and the violence and destructiveness that are intrinsic to the dynamics of the universe;
- define Einstein’s Cosmological Principle as well as Berry and Swimme’s Cosmogenetic Principle.

**Required Reading (all):**
Required Reading (AD students):

Supplemental Reading:
   - BT 695.5 .R83 1992 SMC, REG, VUEM, KNOX, TRIN, ROBA, STAS, UTS
   - BT1200 .N53 2003 SMC
   - QB 981 .S89 1985 SMC

**January 22 – Thomas Berry’s Articulation of the New Cosmology – The Last 4 Billion Years**

**Focus Questions (all):**
- Why does Berry seek the greatest amount of tension that a system can creatively engage?
- How is life transformed by genetic mutation, natural selection and conscious choice (or niche creation)?
- What are the epochs of human existence?
- How are genetic coding and cultural coding related?

**Learning Objectives (all):**
All students will be able to:
- describe the formation of Earth;
- describe the emergence of life on Earth;
- describe the sporadic increase in complexity, differentiation, and novelty as well as the reason for their increase;
- describe the significance of the emergence of various human civilizations;
- explain how the universe comes to consciousness in the human;
- identify and describe the geological and cultural epochs of Earth;
- explain how the human is trans-genetically coded to form culture.
Required Readings (all):

Required Readings (AD students)

Supplementary Readings (all):
   - BT 695.5 .D35 1999 SMC, REG, TRIN, ROBA, STAS
   - BT 695.5 .R83 1992 SMC, REG, VUEM, KNOX, TRIN, ROBA, STAS, UTS

January 29 – Thomas Berry’s Articulation of the New Cosmology – The Last 10,000 Years

Focus Questions (all):
- How did the various classical civilizations and the European civilization of the Modern era understand humanity’s place within creation? What were the consequences of this understanding?
- Why does Berry argue that the universe has had a psychic-spiritual dimension from its inception? What are the consequences of adopting this belief?
- What are the attitudes that will define the ecozoic era? How would you redefine the human in order to enter the ecozoic era?

Learning Objectives (all):
All students will be able to:
- describe the impact of the classical civilizations and the modern era on Earth;
- delineate the role of anthropocentrism and patriarchy in creating the current ecological crisis;
- define ecocide and geocide;
- describe and explain the significance of the psychic-spiritual dimension of the universe from the primal flaring forth to today;
- delineate the attitudes that will inform the ecozoic era and how these will counter the pathological patterns that have created the ecological crisis.

Required readings (all):
Required readings (AD students):

Supplementary readings (all):
   • BT712 .H38 2000 SMC, REG, VUEM, TRIN, ROBA, UTM, UTS
   • BT695.5 .W345 2005 EMM

February 5 – Thomas Berry’s Articulation of the New Cosmology – Spirituality and Consciousness in Cosmogenesis

Focus Questions (all):
• How does Berry understand consciousness and spirituality vis-à-vis humans and the rest of creation?
• According to Berry, how are the consciousness and spirituality of a plant similar to the consciousness and spirituality of a human, and how are they different?

Learning Objectives (all):
All students will be able to:
• describe how it is possible for Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry to argue that the universe has had a psychic-spiritual dimension from its inception 13.7 billion years ago, not just a physical-material manifestation;
• draw out the consequences of adopting such a perspective;
• articulate a preliminary understanding of a Christian view on the sacredness of creation and the presence of the divine in the phenomenal world.

Required readings (all):

Required readings (AD students):

Supplementary readings (all):
   • HQ 1233 .W595 1996 SMC, VUEM, REG, UTS, ROBA

February 12 – Thomas Berry’s Articulation of the New Cosmology – Redefining the Human

Reflection Paper Due February 12, 2014

Focus Questions (all):
• If we are to undertake a reinvention of the human, what will this require on a personal, community, national and planetary level?
• Who owes the ecological debt, and how will/should it be repaid?
• Can Christianity inspire and inform this reinvention of the human?

Learning Objectives (all):
All students will be able to:
• list the principles that will guide the formation of the ecozoic human;
• postulate how we might transform our present state of affairs (on a personal, social, national, and global level) in order to move from a technozoic to an ecozoic age;
• discuss the role of dream and inspiration in such a transformation.

Required readings (all):

Required readings (AD students):

Supplementary readings (all):
POSSIBLE THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ADOPTING THE NEW COSMOLOGY: REDEFINING CONTENT

February 26 – Theological Implications: Original Sin and the Fall

Focus Questions (all):
• What is Christianity’s understanding of original sin and the fall? How was this understanding formed? How much of this understanding is based on philosophy vs. revelation?
• In the context of the new cosmology, how might we articulate a teaching of original sin and the fall?

Learning Objectives (all):
All students will be able to:
• articulate a traditional understanding of original sin and the fall;
• describe the foundation and evolution of these doctrines;
• distinguish between the philosophical constructs that inform the way this doctrine has been articulated and revelation;
• speculate how these doctrines might be rearticulated within the context of the new cosmology.

Required readings (all):
   BT 720 .W54 2002 SMC, SAS, REG

Required readings (AD students):

Supplemental reading (all):
   • BT 695.5 .M443 1993 SMC, REG, WYC, TRIN, VUEM, ROBA, KNOX, STAS
   • BT 695.5 .R83 1992 SMC, REG, VUEM, KNOX, TRIN, ROBA, STAS, UTS
   • BD 511 .T54 1987 SMC, REG, VUEM, TRIN, KNOX, STAS, UTM
   • BT720 .S83 1994 REG, KNOX, SAS, ROBA
   • BT 83.55 .R83 1998 KNOX, REG

March 5 – Theological Implications: Ecological Christology

Focus Questions (all):
• What is a contemporary understanding of the Cosmic Christ? How might this complement our understanding of Christ as Redeemer?
• How does the new cosmology resonate with an understanding of the Cosmic Christ? Does this expand or contract, clarify or confuse our understanding of God?

Learning Objectives (all):
All students will be able to:
• articulate a contemporary understanding of the Cosmic Christ;
• explain how this understanding of Christ as Creator and Sustainer complements our understanding of Christ as Redeemer;
• create links between an understanding of the Cosmic Christ and the new cosmology;
• speculate how we might further expand our understanding of Christology given the new cosmology.

Required readings (all):

Required readings (AD students):

Supplemental reading (all):
   • BT 695 .E39 SMC, REG, STAS
   • BT 695.5 .E273 2001 SMC, STAS, ROBA
March 12 – Theological Implications: Ecological Pneumatology

Focus Questions (all):

• How does an articulation of an ecological pneumatology retrieve an appreciation of the work of the Spirit that has tended to be lost in our present understanding of the Christian faith?

• How does the new cosmology contribute to this understanding? Does this redefinition of pneumatology expand or contract, clarify or confuse our understanding of God?

Learning Objectives (all):

All students will be able to:
• articulate a pneumatology that reflects the understanding of the early Christian Church;
• create links between an understanding of the Spirit and the new cosmology;
• explain how this new and expanded understanding of Spirit complements our earlier understandings of pneumatology;
• speculate how we might further expand our understanding of pneumatology given the new cosmology.

**Required readings (all):**

**Required readings (AD students):**

**Supplemental reading (all):**
   • BT119. E39 2004 SMC, REG, KNOX, ROBA
   • BT695.5 .B693 1995 SMC, VUEM, KNOX, TRIN, UTM, REG
   - BT 695 .5 T48 1996 SMC, ROBA, VUEM, KNOX, TRIN, UTM
12. Gail Worcelo, “Discovering The Divine Within The Universe,” *Earth Light*, no. 39 (Fall 2000). Also available at:
   - GF80.B6313 1997 SMC, REG, SAS, ROBA

**March 19 – Theological Implications: Revelation & Divine Immanence**

**Focus Questions (all):**
- What are the two books of revelation? Since the modern era, how attentively has Western Christianity read the book of creation?
- What is the difference between the Incarnation and Divine Immanence?
- How does the new cosmology inform our understanding of revelation and divine immanence?

**Learning Objectives (all):**
All students will be able to:
- identify the two books of revelation;
- critically evaluate the Church’s recent reading of the book of creation;
- distinguish between the Incarnation and Divine Immanence, and describe the theological significance of each;
- discuss how the new cosmology heightens our appreciation of divine immanence;
- discuss how a deeper appreciation of divine immanence can inform an ecological ethic.

**Required readings (all):**

**Required readings (AD students):**
Supplemental reading (all):
   • BT 83.55.C35 2002 SMC, TRIN, EMM, KNOX, ROBA, NC, UTM, UTS
   • BT695.5 .B693 1995 SMC, VUEM, KNOX, TRIN, UTM, REG
   • BL240.2 .B375 2000 SMC, REG, EMM, KNOX
   • BX 1795 .H82A53 1996 SMC, REG, STAS, UTM
   • GF80.B6313 1997 SMC, REG, SAS, ROBA
   • BT 205.2456 2003 SMC, REG

March 26 – Theological Implications: Suffering and Providence

Focus Questions (all):
• Can suffering be part of a meaningful universe story? If it can, does this change anything?
• How does the new cosmology inform our understanding of suffering?
• How is God’s providence understood in the Christian tradition and in terms of the new cosmology?

Learning Objectives (all):
All students will be able to:
• situate an understanding of human suffering within a context of the new cosmology;
• draw parallels and distinctions between human suffering and the suffering of other members of the Earth community;
• explore the meaning of suffering within a purposeful universe story;
• define a Christian understanding of God’s providence;
• modify this understanding given the context of the new cosmology.

Required readings (all):

Required readings (AD students):

Supplemental reading (all):
5. Thomas Berry, “Sacrifice and Grace” in Befriending the Earth, 131-142.
   • BX 1795 .H82A53 1996 SMC, REG, STAS, UTM
   • BT 695.5 .E273 2001 SMC, STAS, ROBA
   • HQ 1233 .W595 1996 SMC, VUEM, REG, UTS, ROBA
   • BL240.2 P5763 1989 SMC, TRIN, VIC
   • BT135 .S95 1998 SMC, TRIN, ROBA


   • BD450.V36 1998 SMC, TRIN, VIC, ROBA, SAS, UC.

   • BL51. H497 1983 TRIN, ROBA, UTM

**April 2 – Theological Implications: Eschatology & the Future of Theology**

**Integration Paper Due April 2, 2012**

**Focus Questions (all):**
- How does the eschatological vision for humanity and the rest of creation shift if our theology is informed by the new cosmology? Does it help to consider eschatology as “here and now” rather than just “to come”? Is the rest of creation saved; does it require saving/salvation?
- If we take the new cosmology seriously, what implications would this have for the way we rearticulate Christian theology, or would it prompt any change at all?

**Learning Objectives (all):**
All students will be able to:
- describe the vision of eschatology held by the Church in the modern era;
- articulate how this vision is shifting and in what ways as a result of eco-theology
- describe the role of context in doing theology;
- describe the theological significance of adopting the new cosmology as context.

**Required readings (all):**

**Required readings (AD students):**
Supplemental reading (all):
   • BX 1795 .H82A53 1996 SMC, REG, STAS, UTM
   • BT 695.5 .M443 1993 SMC, REG, WYC, TRIN, VUEM, ROBA, KNOX, STAS
   • GF50 .R49 1990 SMC, TRIN, ROBA, UTS,
   • BL 458 .R84 1985 SMC, ROBA, KNOX, VUEM, STAS, TRIN, NEWC
   • BQ 4570 .W6G78 2001 REG, VUEM, NEWC, ROBA
   • BT695.5 .B6413 1995 SMC, REG, EMM, TRIN, SAS, ROBA
   - BT 83.55.C35 2002 SMC, TRIN, EMM, KNOX, ROBA, NC, UTM, UTS