



BOSTON COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL
The Jesuit High School of Boston

TEACHER: Patrick Tiernan, Religious Education
SUBJECT: Religion 8430—Religion and Science
TEXTBOOKS: Nigel Barber, *Kindness in a Cruel World: The Evolution of Altruism* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2004)
John F. Haught, *Deeper than Darwin: The Prospect for Religion in the Age of Evolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003)
Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2002)

Supplementary handouts provided by instructor
Supplementary readings available on-line

“To be fully ourselves it is in the opposite direction, in the direction of convergence with all the rest, that we must advance—towards the ‘other.’ The peak of ourselves, the acme of our originality, is not our individuality but our person; and according to the evolutionary structure of the world, we can only find our person by uniting together. There is no mind without synthesis. The same holds good from top to bottom. The true ego grows in inverse proportion to ‘egoism.’ Like the Omega which attracts it, the element only becomes personal when it universalizes itself.”

~Teilhard de Chardin, SJ

“What though these reasonings concerning human nature seem abstract and of difficult comprehension, this affords no presumption of their falsehood. On the contrary, it seems impossible that what has hitherto escaped so many wise and profound philosophers can be very obvious and easy. And whatever pains these researches may cost us, we may think ourselves sufficiently rewarded, not only in point of profit but of pleasure, if, by that means, we can make any addition to our stock of knowledge in subjects of such unspeakable importance.”

~David Hume

“As man advances in civilization, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races.”

~Charles Darwin

“Objectivity cannot be equated with mental blankness; rather, objectivity resides in recognizing your preferences and then subjecting them to especially harsh scrutiny — and also in a willingness to revise or abandon your theories when the tests fail (as they usually do).”

~Stephen Jay Gould

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is a senior level college-preparatory course that analyzes the dialogue between religion and science in the context of evolutionary theory and human nature. It will examine what characterizes authentic relationships from a Christian perspective of love and the relation of the human person to society and culture. This study rests on the premise that both faith and culture create tools for thinking about what it means to be an individual in relation to communities. It does this by considering the value of models for understanding

Christian suppositions about the exploration of how human effort and cooperation, love and sexuality, and suffering and death contribute toward defining a Christian view of the self.

As a course in Christian anthropology, it seeks to address the questions surrounding the concepts of sin, grace, and freedom in the context of the social sciences. This will be analyzed through themes of friendship, service, and responsible action and will be framed in an informed student-centered dialogue between religion and science; a structured reflection of how environmental and biological dynamics influence human nature; and a meditation on how love of neighbor calls for a social ethic of rightly ordered relationships directed toward God with love. Course topics will include a detailed analysis of the personalistic anthropology of John Paul II; sociobiological and psychological theories of human development; concepts of God, grace, and sin; emotional, religious and familial aspects of love; scientific factors in moral development; and the ethical dimensions of relationships.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:

Major topics, Terms, Concepts - By the close of the academic year students will understand and be able to comprehend, apply, analyze, and synthesize the following terms and concepts:

1. To analyze and evaluate the range of human behavior from egoism to altruism using a social psychological perspective.
2. To arrive at a greater understanding of the tension between the theoretical intricacy and practical ease of altruistic love toward others.
3. To discuss the implications of evolution for theology through the writings of neo-Darwinism and Christian mysticism using a framework of love and concern.
4. To present a theological overview of Christian anthropology through themes of divine love, grace, and love of neighbor.
5. To describe the theories of human nature and relationships developed in biological, philosophical, and psychological disciplines.

KEY QUESTIONS:

The following are examples of open-ended “essential” questions which you will be able to answer by the end of the year. They are intended to direct your studies by allowing for multiple responses:

1. Are faith and science reconcilable and is evolution compatible with a humanity made in the “image of God”?
2. What motivates altruism toward strangers or kin?
3. Does the Catholic tradition of the ordering of love differ from neo-Darwinian progress?
4. Does biology promote a “survival of the fittest” or a “prosperity of everyone” ethic?
5. How are prayer and spiritual reflection integral to a Christian view of love?
6. Does evolutionary theory include a transcendent dimension?
7. Is love by its nature beneficial or sacrificial in relationships?
8. Does culture contribute or detract from an understanding of self and community?
9. What truths does theology provide about human nature?

10. Is human nature genetic or socially constructed and are free will and determinism mutually exclusive ideas?

**READING SCHEDULE
(FIRST SEMESTER)**

COURSE TEXT ABBREVIATIONS:
KINDNESS IN A CRUEL WORLD: KCW
DEEPER THAN DARWIN: DTD
THE BLANK SLATE: TBS

I. INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

WEEK #1: COURSE OVERVIEW/ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS; ESSAY EXAM ON SUMMER READING

READING—IAN G. BARBOUR, *WHEN SCIENCE MEETS RELIGION*; “CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY” BY JOSEPH A. KOMONCHAK (ED.), *THE NEW DICTIONARY OF THEOLOGY*

WEEK #2: THE METAPHYSICS OF LOVE AND ALTRUISM IN RELATIONSHIPS

READING—KAROL WOJTYLA, *LOVE & RESPONSIBILITY* (SELECTIONS)
AUDIO-VISUAL—*WITNESS TO HOPE—THE LIFE OF JOHN PAUL II*

WEEK #3: CATHOLIC DIALOGUE WITH SCIENCE AND EVOLUTION

READING—*HUMANI GENERIS*; “TRUTH CANNOT CONTRADICT TRUTH”:
MESSAGE TO THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES; *GAUDIUM ET SPES*
(NOS. 4-10, 12-21, 53-62);

“EVOLUTION: SCIENCE OR THEOLOGY?” IN *INTERPRETING EVOLUTION* BY H. JAMES BIRX
AUDIO-VISUAL— PBS *EVOLUTION* SERIES “WHAT ABOUT GOD?”

II. SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN NATURE

WEEK #4: BIOLOGICAL SELECTION AND ALTRUISM

READING— KCW, PART I; CHARLES DARWIN, *ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES & DESCENT OF MAN* (SELECTIONS)
AUDIO-VISUAL—PBS *EVOLUTION* SERIES “DARWIN’S DANGEROUS IDEA” & “GREAT TRANSFORMATIONS”

WEEK #5: BIOLOGICAL SELECTION AND ALTRUISM, PART II

READING—KCW, PART II
AUDIO-VISUAL— PBS *EVOLUTION* SERIES “THE EVOLUTIONARY ARMS RACE”

WEEK #6: GENDER, RELATIONSHIPS, AND THE RECOGNITION OF OTHERNESS

READING—KCW, PART III; PETER SINGER, *THE EXPANDING CIRCLE* (SELECTIONS)
AUDIO-VISUAL— PBS *EVOLUTION* SERIES “WHY SEX?”

WEEK #7: THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIOBIOLOGY

READING—KCW, PART IV; E.O. WILSON, *SOCIOBIOLOGY: THE NEW SYNTHESIS* (CH. 27)
AUDIO-VISUAL— PBS *EVOLUTION* SERIES “THE MIND’S BIG BANG”

III. THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN NATURE

WEEK #8: THE HERMENEUTIC OF BIBLICAL LITERALISM AND EVOLUTION

READING—DTD, CHS. 1-3

WEEK #9: NEO-DARWINISM AND INTELLIGENT DESIGN THEORY

READING—DTD, CHS. 4-7; RICHARD DAWKINS, *THE SELFISH GENE* (SELECTIONS)

WEEK #10: THEOLOGY AFTER DARWIN

READING—DTD, CHS. 8-10

WEEK #11: THE 20TH CENTURY THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

READING—DTD, CHS. 11-13

IV. PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN NATURE

WEEK #12: PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE/NURTURE DEBATE

READING—TBS, PART I

WEEK #13: THE CHALLENGE OF FREE WILL AND DETERMINISM

READING—TBS, PART II & III; C.G. JUNG, *ANSWER TO JOB* (VOL. 11)

WEEK #14: THE CHALLENGE OF REASON AND MORALITY

READING—TBS, PART IV; THOMAS HOBBS, *LEVIATHAN* (CHS. 1,5,6,12,15)

WEEK #15: THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMANITY

READING—TBS, PART V & VI

(SECOND SEMESTER)

V. CHRISTIAN MYSTICAL TRADITION OF DIVINE LOVE

WEEK #1: THEOLOGY OF EVOLUTION

READING—TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, *THE FUTURE OF MAN* (SELECTIONS)

WEEK #2: THEOLOGY OF EVOLUTION, PART II

READING—*IBID.*

WEEK #3: PRAYER AND PERSONAL CONVERSION

READING—*THE WAY OF PERFECTION* (SELECTIONS)
AUDIO-VISUAL—*PIONEERS OF THE SPIRIT: TERESA OF AVILA*

WEEK #4: PERSONAL AND FAMILIAL LOVE OF GOD

READING—*REVELATIONS OF LOVE* (SELECTIONS)
AUDIO-VISUAL—*PIONEERS OF THE SPIRIT: JULIAN OF NORWICH*

WEEK #5: CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM SYNTHESIS

READING—TBA

VI. MODELS OF LOVE IN RELATIONSHIPS

WEEK #6: NATURE OF LOVE IN RELATIONSHIPS

READING—LEO BUSCAGLIA, *LOVING EACH OTHER*
AUDIO-VISUAL—LEO BUSCAGLIA, “LOVE CLASS”

WEEK #7: NATURE OF LOVE IN RELATIONSHIPS, PART II

READING—*IBID.*
AUDIO-VISUAL—LEO BUSCAGLIA, “LOVING RELATIONSHIPS”

WEEK #8: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LOVE

READING—ERIC FROMM, *THE ART OF LOVING* (SELECTIONS)

WEEK #9: THE SOCIOLOGY OF LOVE

READING—TBA

VII. CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN RELIGION & SCIENCE

WEEK #10: ESCHATOLOGY AND HOPE

READING—JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN, *THEOLOGY OF HOPE* (CHS. 1-2)

WEEK #11: BIOETHICS AND SOCIETY

READING—TBA

WEEK #12: INTEGRATION OF RELIGION AND SCIENCE

READING—TBA

WEEK #13: PRESENTATION OF STUDENT RESEARCH PAPERS

READING—TBA

WEEK #14: PRESENTATION OF STUDENT RESEARCH PAPERS

READING— TBA

WEEK #15: PRESENTATION OF STUDENT RESEARCH PAPERS

READING—TBA

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

HOMEWORK: All assigned homework to be turned in to instructor will be typed and not handwritten. There will be no exceptions to this rule. Homework assignments will have the date, student's name, course title and section number at the head of each paper. This will also pertain to any other assignments such as essays or take-home tests. No late homework will be accepted.

CLASSWORK: You must acquire a composition book for this class. It will be essential both to your work during class and your work at home. This notebook is to be used for religion only and will be required of you, along with your textbooks, on a daily basis. Free response questions will be assigned on a frequent basis in class and will establish preliminary questions for discussion. We will also be reading several works of secondary literature that will supplement our study.

FIELD EXPERIENCE: During the first semester you will be asked to participate in (at least) four observation experiments of different social and cultural origins. At the beginning of the second semester, you will shadow a community leader to test the theories and ideas you learned in class. You will record your observations and reactions in your field journal. The rationale behind the field experience requirement is not intended to be burdensome but rather to serve as a practical application of the various religious and secular ideas we discuss in class.

FORMAT AND EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY: As a senior college-prep course, you should expect to read at least 50 pages a week and should prepare a half an hour each night in preparation for the next day's class. The class is intended to be framed around student-centered discussions meaning that questions and comments about the daily readings are intended to come from your reading of the material. Every day 1 you will be responsible for a 1-2 page summary of that week's required readings while raising questions about how they speak to human nature.

ATTENDANCE: Your daily attendance to class is mandatory. Should you be absent, it is your responsibility to find out from a classmate any assignments that need to be made up; such assignments will be due immediately upon your return. If you are absent on the day of a quiz or test you must make an appointment with me the day you return to retake it or you will receive no credit. Being absent is not an excuse for failing to turn in work or not being adequately prepared for a quiz or test. College visits or attending college fairs are not acceptable excuses for not submitting work or taking quizzes or exams.

BEHAVIOR: You are to act in a manner consistent with the code of conduct outlined in the student handbook (language, food/drink in class, etc.); my classroom is no different in this respect. Please use the restroom before coming to class and before the bell as you will not be allowed to go once we have begun; it is a disruption to me as well as to your classmates.

CLASSROOM RULES AND ROUTINES: As a Catholic high school it is important for us to recognize the value of religious education. As such, we will begin each day with prayer and begin to use daily reflections and meditations from the traditions we study over the course of the year. It is my hope that our classroom will be one of discussion and debate tempered with compassion and respect for the diversity of views and backgrounds represented. This class is about fostering an appreciation and respect for the culture and traditions of our world. Please recognize that your best efforts in and beyond the classroom can only enhance both your comprehension and appreciation for this course. This is what it asked of you as men of "competence, conscience and compassion."

ASSESSMENT/GRADING POLICY:

Student achievement and progress will be assessed regularly using the following forms of formative and summative assessments. Each will be a worth a certain amount of points which will be calculated into your final grade. Behavior and participation are graded on a scale of 1-4 (excellent to deficient, respectively).

NB: A score of 2 in my class is understood to mean “meeting all course requirements”

<u>Descriptive Data:</u>	<u>% of Term Grade:</u>
Homework	25%
Participation (Field Work/Journal/Attendance)	25%
Quizzes	25%
Tests (two per quarter)	25%
Research Paper (3 rd quarter in lieu of tests; details TBA)	25%

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Consultation Schedule: The Religious Education office is located on the second floor of Loyola between the Social Studies and English departments. I am available for extra help on _____ at _____ am/pm or by appointment at a mutual time.

Phone number/ e-mail: You may reach me by e-mail (tiernan@bchigh.edu) or phone (617-474-5156) with any questions or concerns. Please note that e-mail is the most expedient method of getting in touch with me.

NB: No class assignments will be accepted via e-mail without prior approval of teacher.

Parent Appointments: Please feel free to contact me through the information provided above to schedule an appointment at your convenience.

PLEASE SIGN AND DETACH SIGNATURE FORM AND RETURN TO TEACHER:
PARENT/GUARDIAN & STUDENT SIGNATURES: I understand the objectives, expectations, and other information indicated in this syllabus.

Parent/Guardian:

Date:

Student:

Print name:
