

OBLATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Course Number: TBD Fall 2016
Course Title: Catholicism in an Evolving World
Instructor: Linda Gibler, OP, PhD
Office Phone: 210-341-1366 x282
E-mail: lgibler@ost.edu

Course Description:

This science and religion course continues the conversation between Big Bang cosmology, evolutionary science, and Catholic thought. Since most of our Catholic theology and spirituality was formulated without knowledge of recent cosmology or evolution, this course highlights the change required by moving from a static worldview to an ever-emerging one. Throughout the course, students discuss how this new information about the creation and on-going emergence of the Universe, Earth, and themselves upholds, challenges, or changes their previous worldview and understanding of theology. The conversational tone of the course is designed to help students work through any cognitive dissonance they encounter and bring them to a deeper appreciation of the significance of intergrading a dynamic worldview into their theology and pastoral practice.

This **two-credit course** is presented **three units**.

The first unit, with Scott Woodward, DMin, presents a historical overview of the relationship between science and religion in the Roman Catholic tradition. He reviews that patristic tradition of creation and scripture as the Two Books of Revelation, the scholastic relationship between faith and reason, and the modern need to rely on existential reality to inform our theological worldview. This first unit makes the case that scientific knowledge of creation, specifically, how the world came into being and continues to evolve, is essential to our understanding of God, creation, humanity, and ourselves.

The second unit, with Linda Gibler, OP, PhD, focuses on the Big Bang cosmology. This unit begins with a look at the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2 through an ecological lens with the intention of demonstrating a scientifically informed view of scripture does not endanger faith but rather enhances it. The unit continues with the scientific story of how the Universe was created. Emphasis is given to the first three minutes, nucleosynthesis of elements, the on-going creativity of stars, and the formation of the Solar System. This unit concludes with a conversation about Galileo and the Church.

The third unit, also with Linda Gibler, turns to the evolution of life on Earth. It begins with a discussion of Earth's tectonic activity and the formation of the continents. It then continues with the emergence of life, the gift of fish (the life form who first developed our basic body style), the challenge of life on dry land, the legacy of reptiles, the appearance of hominids, and the eventual emergence of *Homo sapiens*. This unit concludes with a conversation about Darwin and his challenge to a static view of the Earth and to our theological sensibilities.

Goal: The goal of this course is to increase the students' scientific literacy, particularly in the area of cosmology and evolution.

Student Learning Objectives: *Upon completion the student will be able to:*

1. Articulate the evolutionary narrative of creation, from the Big Bang to today, in a way that integrates and respects both scientific knowledge and Catholic theology
2. Articulate the significance of an evolutionary worldview to Catholic theology
3. Apply this scientifically informed perspective in pastoral situations

Course Requirements

1. Mid-Term Preaching Assignment

- Students will prepare a brief preaching (5-8 minutes) that they might use in their ministry. It could be a homily, a RCIA reflection, a Bible study reflection, etc.
- This preaching will be delivered in front of the class.
- Along with the oral presentation, students will submit a paper that includes 1) the text of the reflection, 2) the setting of the reflection, 3) the main point of the reflection, 4) the scientific themes included, and 5) why the student chose the main point and themes for the setting.
- The preaching and papers are due the fifth session of the course

2. Public Presentation *or* Research Paper

Students may choose between two final assignments

Public Presentation

- Students, individually or in groups up to three, prepare a deliver a public presentation.
- Students may choose a ministry site for the presentation. Students must have written approval from the site director (DRE, pastor, etc.) as well as approval from the course instructor.
- Students will submit a written overview for the presentation. This overview will include, 1) an outline of the presentation, 2) a description of the setting of the presentation, 3) the main point(s) chosen for the presentation, 4) the scientific themes included, 4) the rationale for the choices, and 5) PowerPoint or teaching aides used, and 6) a means to assess the success of the presentation that includes participants' evaluation and students' self-evaluation..
- The written overview is due in the ninth (next to the last) session of the course
- **Approval of the instructor is required before students may proceed with the public presentation.**
- All public presentations must be completed before December 21.
- Students will submit a video of the presentation and the assessment tools by December 21.
- A limited number of **\$100 stipends** will be available for students offering public presentations.
- **LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**

Research Paper

- Students may choose to write a 10-page research paper that goes deeper into the course material.

- The paper must include why the student chose the topic, why it was of interest, and why it is important to ministry.
- The paper must include course material and well as additional research.
- The paper must include scientific and theological themes.
- **Approval of the instructor is required for all papers**
- The paper is due the tenth (or final) session of the course
- **LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**

3. Final Oral Exam

- All students will participate in a final group exam.
- The final group exam will be composed of questions drawn from the course material and that a pastor might be asked on the church stairs.
- A student will be asked to reply to a specific question, and then other students will be asked to add to the reply.
- This process will continue until all students have the opportunity to give the initial reply.
- Students will be assessed on their initial reply and on how they nuanced and developed other replies.

4. Class Participation

- Active participation in each of the ten course sessions and the final oral exam are required.
- Active participation includes asking questions, verbally participating in class conversation, verbally demonstrating knowledge of assignments.
- If a student must miss a session, the Instructor must be notified in advance and arrangements made for the student to obtain the video from the session.

Assessment and Grading

Requirements	Learning Objective	Points
1. Preaching Assignment	1, 2, 3	10
2. Public Presentation/Research Paper	1, 2, 3	40
3. Final Exam	1, 2, 3	25
4. Class Participation	1, 2, 3	25

Required Materials

Big History Project. Accessed Date August 4, 2015. <https://www.bighistoryproject.com/home>
 Chaberek, Michael. *Catholicism and Evolution: A History from Darwin to Pope Francis*.

Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2015

Consolmagno, Guy and Paul Mueller. "What Really Happened to Galileo" In *Would You Baptize an Extraterrestrial?: And Other Questions from the Astronomers' In -Box at the Vatican Observatory*. Colorado Springs: Image Books, 2014.

Gibler, Linda. *From the Beginning to Baptism: The Scientific and Sacred Stories of Water, Oil, and Fire*. Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2010.

Kurzynski, James. "Discussion: Why Do Debates On Faith And Science Almost Always Fail?" *The Catholic Astronomer: The Vatican Observatory Foundation Blog*. August 4, 2015. Accessed on August 4, 2015. <http://www.vofoundation.org/blog/>

Other supplementary readings, mostly from scholarly literature, will be disseminated in class throughout the course.

Recommended Bibliography

- Artigas, Mariano, Thomas Glick, and Rafael Martinez, eds. *Negotiating Darwin*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins, 2006.
- Ayala, Francisco. *Am I a Monkey?: Six Big Questions about Evolution*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.
- Caruana, Louis, ed. *Darwin and Catholicism: The Past and Present Dynamics of a Cultural Encounter*. New York: T&T Clark, 2009.
- Consolmagno, Guy. *Galileo: Science, Faith, and the Catholic Church*. DVD. Now You Know Media. 2015.
- Haught, John. *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution. Second Edition*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 2008.
- NewsWise SciWire—Science New for Journalist, Public Edition. www.newswise.com
- Shubin, Neil. *Your Inner Fish: A Journey into the 3.5-Billion-Year History of the Human Body*. New York: Pantheon, 2007. Book
- Tangled Bank Studios. *Your Inner Fish: Explore your Inner Animals*. Windfall Films, 2014. Accessed August 4, 2015. <http://www.pbs.org/your-inner-fish/classroom/>
- Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre. *Christianity and Evolution*. New York: Harcourt Inc, 1969.
- Your Inner Fish: A Journey into the 3.5-Billion-Year History of the Human Body*. DVD. PBS Studios, 2014.

Course Outline

- Session 1 Intro and Overview of the Course
 Historical Overview of Science and Religion
- Session 2 Historical Overview of Science and Religion, continued
 Before Class
 1) Kurzynski Discussion: Why Do Debates on Faith And Science Almost Always Fail?
 2) Chaberek Introduction and Chapter 1: The Controversy about Evolution
- Session 3 Big Bang Cosmology or How God Created the World
 Genesis, All of Scripture is true
 The Universe Story: from nothing to everything
 (The Beginning through Stars)
 Before Class
 1) Gibler Introduction
 2) Chaberek Chapter 2: From Biblical Creationism to Intelligent Design and
 Chapter 3: Early Statements of the Magisterium on Evolution

- 3) BHP Chapter 1: The Universe
- Session 4 Big Bang
The Universe Story: from nothing to everything
(Galaxies to Earth)
Before Class
1) Gibler Chapter 1: Water
2) Chaberek Chapter 4: The Rise of Catholic Evolutionism.
3) BHP Chapter 2: Our Solar System and Earth.
- Session 5 Big Bang
Galileo
Before Class
1) Consolmagnò, Guy and Paul Mueller. What Really Happened to Galileo
2) Chaberek Chapter 5: The Pontifical Biblical Commission Decree, 1905-1909”
Chapter 6: Evolution During the Pontificate of Pius XII
- Session 6 Mid-term Preaching
- Session 7 Evolution
The Universe Story: from nothing to everything
(Emergence of Life to Hominids)
Before Class
1) Gibler Chapter 2: Oil
2) Chaberek Chapter 7: The Evolutionary Vision of Teilhard de Chardin
3) BHP Chapter 3: Life.
- Session 8 Evolution
The Universe Story: from nothing to everything
(Hominids to us)
Before Class
1) Gibler Chapter 3: Fire
2) Chaberek Chapter 8: The Standpoint of Pope John Paul II
3) BHP Chapter 4: Humans
- Session 9 Evolution
Darwin
Before Class
1) Gibler Chapter 5: Cosmocentric Sacramentality
2) Chaberek Chapter 9: The Current Theological Debate
Chapter 10: Looking into the Past: Two Stages in Church
Teaching on Evolution
Conclusion

Session 10 Student Presentations of Public Presentations

Session 11 Group Oral Exam
Stair-Step Questions