

Loyola University Chicago
Institute of Pastoral Studies
SYLLABUS

Spirituality and the New Science (Barbara Fiand, SND de N., Ph.D.)

- **Fall 2008**
- **3 credits**

Course Description:

It is a well-known fact that all theology and the spirituality which is its grounding are contextual. Religions use (sometimes quite unconsciously) the views of the science, cosmology, and even psychology of their time to help explain the human quest for the ultimate, our longing for fulfillment, our search for meaning.

At this moment in history we are experiencing tremendous shifts in human self-understanding - a regular revolution in consciousness that has major implications for spirituality. Without getting bogged down in the complexities of science and cosmology, this course will explore the shifts in perspective they present to us and their implication for religion generally and Christian Spirituality in particular.

The classes are offered on three weekends to maximize in-put and discussion time. We will use current films to help facilitate what would otherwise be too complex. **Our aim is to enhance our understanding of the interconnectedness of everything and to catch the excitement and fascination that a new vision offers to our God quest.**

Course Objective

The intention of this course is not scientific, but spiritual. We will, therefore (as simply as possible), discuss some of the discoveries and theories of contemporary science without spending time addressing its methodology or process of discovery. **Our purpose is to begin to understand the changing world-view and expansion of consciousness that are emerging in our time and finding support in the quantum perspective of today's science. Our hope is to explore the role of spirituality in contextualizing the faith-life of today's believers as they search for the Holy in our time.**

Texts:

Barbara Fiand, *Awe-Filled Wonder: The Interface of Science and Spirituality*. New York: Paulist, 2008

Barbara Fiand, *From Religion back to Faith: A Journey of the Heart*, New York: Crossroad, 2006

Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Evolutionary Faith: Rediscovering God in Our Great Story*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2002
ISBN 1-57075-451-9

Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Luminous Web: Essays on Science and Religion*, Cambridge – Boston, Cowley Publications, 2000

Peter Russell, *From Science to God: A Physicist's Journey into The Mystery of Consciousness*, Novato, California, New World Library, 2002

Of Interest also:

Fiand, *In The Stillness You Will Know: Exploring The Paths of Our Ancient Belonging*

Fiand, *Prayer and The Quest for Healing: Our Personal Transformation and Cosmic Responsibility*, New York: Crossroad, 1999

O'Murchu, *Quantum Theology: Spiritual Implications of the New Physics*, New York: Crossroad 1997

Brian Swimme, *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos: Humanity and The New Story*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1996

All texts have extensive references to other sources that will be of benefit.

Topical Outline:

N.B. The topics identified are tentative. Syllabi are written before the class begins and their unfolding depends on class participation and interaction. It is, therefore, entirely possible that the topics will run into each other and overlap from one weekend to the next.

September 27/28

Course introduction, discussion of syllabus, readings, assignments.

Meaning of spirituality; its relation to religion and theology.

Discussion of "modern" world view, its origin, the spirituality and religious perspective based on it, the consciousness that supports it. Exploration into levels of consciousness and the transformation of consciousness necessary to support the "trans-modern" post-industrial, post-mechanistic perspective.

Film: **The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos** (80 minutes) followed by class discussion

OCTOBER 25/26

Review and continuation of previous class material. Light and human consciousness (Jacques Lusseyran - Arthus Zajonc - Jacob Liberman - Are we perhaps beacons of Light); Thought as energy, transformation of world-view - the basis in science - morphic resonance - morphogenetic fields, uncertainty principle; non-locality/temporality; holography generally and in the human body - Implications for spirituality.

Film: **Mind-Walk: A Film for Passionate Thinkers** Paramount Picture (110 Minutes)

Brief Video: Jill Bolte Taylor: **My Stroke of Insight**

followed by discussion

NOVEMBER 22/23 April 25/26

Review and continuation of previous class material. Deepening of our understanding of the ethical and theological implications of the new world-view. Who is God, what is redemption, salvation? What is the ethical mandate - how are we our brothers' and sisters' keepers? How can we understand death, and the "last things"? True stories to identify what change is already happening.

Film: **Keeping the Earth** Union of Concerned Scientists (27 minutes)

Excerpts from: **What The Bleep: Down The Rabbit Hole** – Interviews with Scientists and researchers.

followed by discussion

Reading:

The participant is invited to read the texts as soon as possible. They are all intended for in depth back-ground reading. Class discussions will reference the books and others as the topics arise. Whatever has not been read when mentioned in class can be read thereafter. Reading in general - no assigned reading as such is expected. The assignments will demand graduate level integration of class material and reading

Assignments:

Following each weekend the participants are asked to reflect on the content of the weekend in the light of their readings, and write a reflection paper (5-6 pages double spaced, typed). The question to be answered: **What during this weekend struck me as particularly relevant to my life, and my spirituality. How have I so far come to see with different eyes? What was new to me - anything particularly meaningful or upsetting. If so, why?**

The assignment should be handed in of Friday evening of the following weekend. Some time on Saturday will be spent in small group and subsequent large group discussion of your insights.

Please include a self-addressed envelope or identify where the graded paper can be dropped off for you.

Criteria for Evaluation:

The participants ability to be clear and precise while at the same time manifesting personal reflection, insight and synthesis. What is important is the participants' capacity to make connections between the readings and class material (as well as personal experience when applicable). Conciseness and the correct use of English, clarity and depth understanding are important.