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CHT 306 J2 2020

Transhumanism and the *Imago Dei*: The History of the Church and Technology

Course Description

This course explores the issues that are facing the church in its technological present and transhumanist future. Transhumanism points to the power to transform humanity through technology and the creation of artificial intelligence or AI. What theological insights and spiritual practices has the Church adopted as technological innovation reshaped society in the past? How might the Church adapt them in the current challenge of living in a world dominated by technology without being dominated by its values? This course will use readings, film and guest lecture to prompt our discussion on these ideas.

Course Objectives

The course is designed to equip students to:

- Identify events within the history of the Church and its relationship with technology. *(Demonstrated through class discussion, reflection papers and projects)*
- Assess the impact of historical, scientific and theological factors upon the relationship of Christians and their approach to transhumanist ideology. *(Demonstrated through class discussion, reflection papers and project.)*
- Examine the historic influence of racism and technological development in the society of the United States. *(Demonstrated through class discussion, reflection papers and projects)*
- Historically situate the use of technology in the 20th century evangelical churches of North American United States. *(Demonstrated through reflection and projects)*
- Understand the definition and concept of Afrofuturism and examine its usefulness in examining transhumanism for compatibility and critique of Christianity and the Church. *(Demonstrated through guest lecture, discussion, reflection and projects)*

- Examine how social, political, and cultural values affect ecclesiology and technological innovation, and how these in turn affect society, politics, and culture. (*Demonstrated through the final project.*)

Required Texts

Steve Donaldson, Ron Cole-Turner, Editors. *Christian Perspectives on Transhumanism and the Church: Chips in the Brain, Immortality, and the World of Tomorrow*. Palgrave. 2018.

Jacob Shatzer. *Transhumanism and the Image of God: Technology and the Future of Christian Discipleship*. InterVarsity Press. 2019.

Craig Gay. *Modern Technology and the Human Future: A Christian Appraisal*. InterVarsity Press. 2018.

F. James Rutherford and Andrew Ahlgren. *Science for All Americans*. Online <http://www.project2061.org/publications/sfaa/online/sfaatoc.htm> 1990.

Course Evaluation:

1. Attendance & Participation (20%)
2. One Final Project (30%)
3. Two 2- 3 page Reflection Papers (30%)
4. One List of Definitions (20%)

Grading Scale:

This course follows the Grading Scale laid out in the Hood Theological Seminary Catalogue (p. 29).

A (93-100)	A- (90-92)	
B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)
D (60-69)	U (0-59)	

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation: Your regular attendance and active participation online and off line are essential to be successful in this course. This means that you will be expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Read the assigned materials prior to logging on to class
- Log in on time for synchronous class sessions and engage in asynchronous sessions with your colleagues for the entire time allotted for class.
- Prepare presentations as assigned

- Inform the professor of any anticipated absence
- Submit all work on time as required by due date; any unexcused late work will be subject to a grade reduction;
- Ask thoughtful questions and contribute constructively to class dialogue.

You are permitted two excused hours of absence during this intensive course; three or more hour absences will result in a grade deduction; and a day will result in unsatisfactory performance. Only documented medical emergencies or family tragedies will be counted as excused absences. **20%** of your final grade will be assessed through attendance and participation.

Reflection Papers

20% of your final grade will be assessed through two 2-3 page reflection papers on the class reading assignments. The format of a descriptive review will be used. The content of the reading assignment will be summarized, followed with the writer's reflection and one or two questions that the reading raised for them. They are due the days designated in the syllabus timeline of course.

Project/Presentation

40% of each student's final grade is based on the completion of a project and presentation on Friday. The project must include the use of technology, a transhumanist personality, and a primary source from the Christian church. **Due July 15, 2020 before midnight.**

Definitions Assignment

20% of each student's final grade is based on the completion of a definitions assignment as a group project. This must be prepared before June 10 and emailed or submitted through CANVAS to the professor. Portions of the definitions assignment will be submitted as class presentations and will be referred to during the intensive course.

Accommodations

Anyone having a documented condition or learning disability that will require an accommodation should let the instructor know the first week of class so that arrangements can be made.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs whenever anyone takes credit for someone else's *words or thoughts*. It can range in severity from inadvertently omitting a citation to printing an entire paper off the Internet. When in doubt, cite. The names of students who plagiarize will be submitted to the Academic Dean. As explained in the seminary's plagiarism policy, a student's first plagiarism offense will result in a letter and a mandatory meeting with a faculty member to discuss plagiarism. A second offense will result in an automatic 'U' for the course and the suspension of the student for one semester. A third offense will result in the student's dismissal from the seminary. For more information, visit <http://www.plagiarism.org/>.

For proper citation technique, refer to Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 9th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018). Discussing assignments with your peers is encouraged, however, to avoid plagiarism, do not share your papers with anyone else in the class. If an instance of plagiarism involves one student's copying from another student, both papers will be penalized.

Classroom Code of Conduct

As a graduate student in seminary, you are expected to conduct yourself professionally. Failure to follow any of these rules will result in a substantial penalty to your final grade.

- **Be Respectful:** Be respectful to the professor and fellow students.
- **Avoid Habitual Lateness:** Be on time to class.

Course Schedule (Subject to Adjustment)

PREWORK: Read and summarize Chapter 1: Science For All Americans

- (1) <http://www.project2061.org/publications/sfaa/online/chap1.htm#Nature>
Chapter 1, "Introduction to Scientific Method"

Day 1 - Class Introduction; Humanity and Technology Overview

Readings:

Morning: Discussion of Prewrite Assignment and Scientific Literacy

Afternoon (1) Shatzer, Introduction, Chapters, 1 and 2

Definitions researched as group work and submitted as CANVAS Discussion Post

Activity: Watch film, GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHil4Y4r3Wk&has>

Day 2 – The Science of Transhumanism

Readings: (1) <http://www.project2061.org/publications/sfaa/online/chap6.htm>

Chapter 6, "The Human Organism"

(2) Shatzer, Chapters 3, 6 and 10.

(3) Gay, Chapters 1 -3

Day 3 –The Ethics of Transhumanism

Readings: (1) Donaldson. Cole -Turner, Chapters 6, 7, and 10

(2) <http://www.project2061.org/publications/sfaa/online/chap3.htm>

Chapter 3, "The Nature of Technology"

First Reflection paper due

Afternoon: Watch Film: TRANSCENDENCE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwtXMa4bU04>

Submit CANVAS discussion post

Day 4 – The Theological Implications of Transhumanism

Readings: (1) Donaldson, Cole-Turner, Chapter 9

Day 5– Afrofuturism and

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Philip Reed-Butler

Readings: <http://www.project2061.org/publications/sfaa/online/chap7.htm>
Chapter 7, “Human Society”

Second Reflection Paper Due

CHT 306 The History of the Church and Technology: Transhumanism and the Imago Dei

10 June 2020

Definitions

Afrofuturism A cultural aesthetic philosophy of science and philosophy of history that explores the development intersection of African diaspora culture with technology. It was coined by Mark Dery in 1993 and explored through conversations led by Alondra Nelson.

Bioconservative A stance of hesitancy and skepticism regarding radical technological advances, especially those that seek to modify or enhance the human condition.

Bioengineering The application of life science, physical science, mathematics and engineering principles to define and solve problems in biology, medicine, health care and other fields.

Bioethics The ethic of medical and biological research. 1. Principle of respect 2. Principle of non-maleficence 3. Principle of beneficence 4. Principle of justice

Biogerontology The study of the biological basis of ageing and age related diseases,

Bioluddite A political, historical term relating to a political movement as opposition to specific or general technological development and emerging technologies.

Cyberworld Is an online environment where many participants are involved in social social interactions and have the ability to affect and influence each other.

Cyberpsychology A developing field that encompasses all psychological phenomena associated with or affected by emerging technology.

Eugenics The study of how to arrange reproduction within a human population to increase the occurrence of heritable characteristics regarded as desirable. Developed by Francis Galton as a method to improve the human race.

Extropianism Is an evolving framework of values and standards for continuously improving the human condition.

Human-enhancement technologies The natural, artificial, or technological alteration of the human body in order to enhance physical or mental capabilities.

Noosphere A postulated sphere or evolutionary development dominated by consciousness, the mind, and interpersonal relationships. (From the writings of Teilhard de Chardin)

Omega Point Is the subject of everything in the universe is fated to spiral towards a final point of unification. (a term coined by a Catholic Priest from France. Pierre Teilhard)

Posthumanism A concept originating in the field of science fiction, futurology, contemporary art, and philosophy that literally means a person or entity that exist in a state beyond being human.

Singularity Is a hypothetical point in time at which technological growth becomes uncontrollable and irreversible, resulting in unforeseeable changes to human civilization.

Jessie S. Dancy