

# THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

### *Overview*

The Christian gospel offers a particular and inspiring vision of the human person. This vision is grounded upon the person and work of Jesus Christ and is enlivened by the gift of the Spirit. The purpose of Christian theological anthropology is to explore the mystery of the human person in light of this divine self-communication through Christ and the Spirit. It seeks to convey what it means to be a *Christian humanist*, a notion that can perplex a contemporary audience that often sets in opposition the terms “Christian” and “humanist,” and increasingly turns to the natural sciences for guidance on what it means to be human. In contrast to the contemporary, culturally influential scientism, Christian philosophical reflection understands inquiry into religion and the *humanum* to be mutually beneficial. Christian theological anthropology, moreover, believes them to be intimately united. This course will examine the possibility and meaning of the idea of Christian humanism by reflecting on the basic dimensions of human existence and asking what light the person of Jesus Christ sheds on this reality.

### *Outcomes*

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- demonstrate a basic understanding of the Christian vision of the human person across a range of key topics
- register and begin to explore critical questions and challenges to that vision
- articulate the significance of contemporary findings in evolutionary biology and neuroscience for theological anthropology
- apply their understanding of theological anthropology in a pastorally effective and sensitive manner.

### *Schedule of Topics*

- 1 Introduction: The nature and purpose of theological anthropology
- 2 Creaturehood and *imago dei*
- 3 Embodiment and incarnation
- 4 Freedom and transcendence
- 5 Sin
- 6 Grace
- 7 Gender and sexuality
- 8 Community
- 9 God’s action / human action: vocation
- 10 Spirituality and prayer
- 11 Suffering human and divine
- 12 Dying and death; judgment and fulfillment
- 13 *Quaestiones disputatae*: emergence and theological anthropology

## ***Requirements***

- (1) **Attendance at all class meetings and active participation in discussion** that shows evidence of a close reading and thoughtful evaluation of the assigned readings. In addition, in the last class, students will present in groups on one chapter of the book assigned that week. Class participation will count for 30% of the grade.
  - (2) **One analysis paper** on any major theme treated up to week 7. This mid-term paper counts for 30% of the final grade.
  - (3) **Final take-home examination.** The final take-home exam will comprise four questions on major themes of the course, of which two must be answered (4-5 pages each). With the permission of the instructor, advanced students may write a research paper (15-20 pages) instead of the final exam. The final will count for 40% of the final grade.
- N.B. All written work must be submitted via the course website and be double-spaced, 12-point font, with one inch margins on all sides.

## **COURSE BOOKS**

- John R. Sachs, *The Christian Vision of Humanity: Basic Christian Anthropology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991).
- Johann Baptist Metz, *Poverty of Spirit* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1998).

## **COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF READINGS ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Week 1 Introduction: Nature and Purpose of Theological Anthropology**

Kathryn Tanner, "The Difference Theological Anthropology Makes," *Theology Today* 50.4 (1994), 567–79.

Karl Rahner, "The Theological Dimension of the Question about Man," *Theological Investigations* (hereafter *TI*) XVII, 53–70.

Stephen Pope, "Theological Anthropology, Science, and Human Flourishing" in *Questioning the Human: Toward a Theological Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Lieven Boeve, Yves De Maeseneer, and Ellen Van Stichel (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 13–30.

Dominic Doyle, *The Promise of Christian Humanism: Aquinas on Hope* (New York: Crossroads, 2011), 1–23.

### **Week 2 Creaturehood and the *imago dei***

J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, "Human Uniqueness and Human Origins," *Alone in the World? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 163–216.

John R. Sachs, *Christian Vision of Humanity* (hereafter *CVH*), 5–25.

Richard Clifford, "Genesis 1-3: Permission to Exploit Nature?" *The Bible Today* 26 (May 1988), 133-35.

Celia Deane-Drummond, "In God's Image and Likeness: From Reason to Revelation in Humans and Other Animals" in *Questioning the Human*, 60–76.

### **Week 3 Embodiment and Incarnation**

Sachs, *CVH*, 51-58.

Nancey Murphy, "What does science say about human nature? Physics, evolutionary biology, and neuroscience," *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 39-70.

Rahner, "The Unity of Spirit and Matter in the Christian Understanding," *TI VI*, 153-177.

Rahner, "On the Theology of the Incarnation," *TI IV*, 105-120.

Oliver Davies, "Neuroscience, Self, and Jesus Christ" in *Questioning the Human*, 79–100.

### **Week 4 Transcendence and Freedom**

Sachs, *CVH*, 27-34.

Daniel A. Helminiak, "Neuroscience: The Biological Bases of Transcendent Experiences," *Brain, Consciousness, and God: A Lonerganian Integration* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2015), 81–109.

Rahner, "Theology of Freedom," *TI VI*, 178-196.

Michael Spezio. "Interiority and purpose: Emerging points of contact for theology and the neurosciences," *Theology & Science* (2009) 7:119-121.

### **Week 5 Sin**

Sachs, *CVH*, 59-66.

Jack Mahoney, *Christianity in Evolution* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 98–110.

Roger Haight, "Sin and Grace" in Francis Schlüsser Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (eds.), *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 375-402.

Susan Ross, *Anthropology: Seeking Light and Beauty* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 109–32.

### **Week 6 Grace**

Sachs, *CVH*, 67-74.

Rahner, "Nature and Grace," *TI IV*, 165-88.

Roger Haight, "Sin and Grace," in Fiorenza and Galvin (eds.) *Systematic Theology*, 402–30.

Patrick McNamara, *The Neuroscience of Religious Experience*. (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 80–130 [=ch. 5 "Neurology of Religious Experiences"].

## **Week 7      Gender and Sexuality**

Sachs, *CVH*, 43-50.

Lisa Cahill, *Between the Sexes* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 45-104.

Susan Ross, *Anthropology*, 85–108.

## **Week 8      Community**

Sachs, *CVH*, 35-42.

*Gaudium and Spes*, preface, chapters 1-2 (§ 1-32).

Robert Di Vito, “Old Testament Anthropology and the Construction of Personal Identity,”

*Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61 (1999): 217–238.

Rahner, “Reflections on the Unity of Love of God and the Love of Neighbor,” *TI* VI, 231–49.

Wesley Wildman, *Religious and Spiritual Experiences* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 187–226 [= ch. 6: “The brain-group nexus: the social power of religious and spiritual experiences”].

## **Week 9                      God’s Action / Human Action: Vocation**

Sachs, *CVH*, 103-112.

Michael Buckley, “Humanism and Jesuit Theology,” in *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press), 74-89.

Timothy Radcliffe, “Making Promises till Death,” in *I Call You Friends* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 89-97.

Radcliffe, “Religious Vocations: Leaving Behind the Usual Signs of Identity,” in *Sing a New Song: The Christian Vocation* (Springfield, IL: Templegate), 191-209.

Thomas F. O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999), 199-210.

William Barry, “Toward a Theology of Discernment,” *Way* 64 (Spring 1989), 129-40.

## **Week 10      Spirituality and prayer**

Johannes Baptist Metz, *Poverty of Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1968).

Schjoedt, U., Geertz, A, et al., “Highly religious participants recruit areas of social cognition in personal prayer,” *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* (2009) 4.2: 199–207.

## **Week 11      Human Suffering and Divine Suffering**

Rahner, “Why Does God Allow Us to Suffer?,” *TI* XIX, 194-208.

McCabe, “The Involvement of God” in *God Matters*, 39-51.

Thomas Weinandy, “Does God Suffer?” *First Things* 117 (November 2001), 35-41.

Johann Baptist Metz, “Theology as Theodicy?” in *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1988), 54-71.

Elizabeth Johnson, "The Crucified God of Compassion" in *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 49-69.

## **Week 12      Dying and Death; Judgment and Fulfillment**

Sachs, *CVH*, 75-102.

Eamon Duffy "The Art of Dying" in *Faith of Our Fathers: Reflections on Catholic Tradition* (London: Continuum, 2004), 107-115.

Rahner, "Ideas for a Theology of Death," *TI XIII*, 169-86.

Rahner, "The Theological Problems Entailed in the Idea of the 'New Earth'," *TI X*, 260-272.

Rahner, "Immanent and Transcendent Consummation of the World," *TI X*, 273-289.

## **Week 13      *Quaestiones Disputatae*: emergence and theological anthropology**

Arthur Peacocke, "Emergence, Mind, and Divine Action: The Hierarchy of the Sciences in Relation to the Human Mind-Brain-Body" in Philip Clayton and Paul Davies (eds), *The ReEmergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 257–278.

Niels Henrik Gregersen, "Emergence: What is at Stake for Religious Reflection?" in *The ReEmergence of Emergence*, 279–302.

Philip Clayton, "Emergence from Quantum Physics to Religion: A Critical Appraisal" in *The ReEmergence of Emergence*, 303–321.