

## **Catholic Studies 322: Contemporary Issues in Christianity and Science**

**Professor:** William Sweet

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 10 am – 12 pm, and by arrangement

Information on the course, on assignments and examinations, etc., will be periodically posted on the course web page: <http://www.stfx.ca/people/wsweet/CS322-15.html>

### **Academic Calendar Course description**

This course examines contemporary issues related to science. Topics may include: modern Catholic responses to methodologies in the sciences; evolution and debates about the interpretation of the creation narrative in the book of Genesis; Catholic teaching on the meaning of human embodiment and its relevance to understanding sexuality and issues in bioethics; neuroscience and the phenomena of religious experience; the impact of contemporary cosmology, technology, and biology on Christian theology. Three credits.

### **Outline**

#### **1. Introduction: Basic Concepts and a Bit of History**

- a. Christianity and Catholicism
- b. Science
- c. An ambiguous history

#### **2. Cosmology and Creation**

- a. Naturalism and non-naturalism
- b. Cosmogony and creation

#### **3. Evolution, Matter, and the Immaterial**

- a. Abiogenesis and evolution
- b. Evil, bodies, and souls
- c. The environment and ecology

#### **4. Transhumanism**

- a. Genetic and non-genetic enhancements
- b. Embodiment, integrity, and dignity
- c. Imago Dei

#### **5. Conclusions**

- a. Science as a challenge and science as a resource for religion

### **Required Texts**

- Readings will be distributed electronically, on moodle, in pdf format. Students are **required** to print out the readings and to bring them to class. **Please purchase a binder / duotang to keep the readings together.**
- It is useful to have a copy of the Bible, such as *The New American Bible Revised Edition*.

- As a supplementary text: *Religion, Science, and Non-Science*, by William Sweet, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publishers, 2003.

### **Method of the course and the role of the student:**

The class will have a 'lecture and discussion' format. The professor will introduce a topic with a summary of the relevant arguments or a commentary on a text. This will be followed by questions and discussion of the material by the class as a whole (e.g., points of clarification or criticism and of comparison; comments on the relations between or among different issues).

Students are expected to have prepared the readings before class, to attend all of the classes and to participate in discussion. In conformity with University regulations, students who have more than 3 unjustified absences in a term may be reported to their Dean.

**It is essential that students be prepared to ask and answer questions in class.**

### **Laptops and other technologies**

Laptops and similar technologies are not permitted unless you have my prior, explicit permission. Unauthorized use or related activities will result in being asked to leave the classroom.

### **Students with disabilities**

Students who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Centre for Accessible Learning [Bloomfield Centre room 421; (902) 867-5349] as soon as possible to ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

### **Email and office policy**

I can respond to short messages through email, and I try to check e-mail once a day. I do not, however, provide grades or summaries of course content by email. Students should make use of my office hours and ask questions in class. Urgent requests (e.g., to meet) are best made by telephone.

If I am not in when you call, please call later or drop by.

**Writing to a course instructor is not the same as writing to a friend.** For example, if you send me an e-mail message, please mention **the course number and specific topic** of your message in the "subject" line. Use proper English. Begin the communication with an appropriate salutation, e.g., "Dear Dr. Sweet." Write carefully and correctly; a poorly written and misspelled message reflects badly on the author. Sign the communication with your name and that of the course.

### **Policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty**

St. Francis Xavier University values academic integrity. All forms of academic dishonesty (including plagiarism) are unacceptable. For the university policy on plagiarism, please visit <http://www.stfx.ca/services/registrar/academic-integrity-document.pdf>

### **Policy on attendance**

In conformity with University regulations, students who have more than 3 unjustified absences in a term may be reported to their Dean. It is the responsibility of each student to notify the instructor as soon as possible **and in writing (e-mail preferred)** for justified absences. Moreover, each unexcused / unjustified absence beyond 2 will be penalized 2.5 percent from the 'attendance' category of the final grade.

### **Method of evaluation:**

Attendance / class notes / quality discussion - 10 %  
 Quizzes from the text, lowest grade dropped - 20 %  
 Written assignment (due November 17) - 30 %  
 Final examination - 40 %