

Siena Heights University
At Lake Michigan College
PHI 329---Technology and the Human Condition
Fall 2009

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Class Meeting/Time: Thursday, 9/3 --- 10/22, 6 pm to 9 pm, Room TBD

Required Texts: *Working in America* by Robert Sessions and Jack Wortman, *Coming of Age in the Milky Way* by Timothy Ferris, *The Universe Story* by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry

Sienna Heights University Mission Statement: The mission of Siena Heights University, a Catholic University, founded and sponsored by the Adrian Dominican Sisters, is to assist people to become more competent, purposeful, and ethical through a teaching and learning environment which respects the dignity of all.

Course Description: The humanities, science and technology are human activities which have advanced human knowledge and understanding. From age to age they have had an influence on how humans perceive the world and their place in it. Our quest is to bring these three activities together to address such human urges as the need to explore, to write poetry, to relate, to work, and to understand nature.

Course Outcomes: (1) To stir the holistic imagination in such a way as to empower that imagination to deal with, be challenged by, and moved by the meeting of the humanities, science and technology. (2) With that imagination so stirred, to explore the relationship between the humanities, science and technology, and values---how these have effected each other in the course of time, and how these may effect each other now and in the future by our choices and according to the way we perceive the world.

Program Outcomes: This course could benefit students in any program, particularly since we so obviously live in a world inundated with science and technology. The world has a soul, too, its *anima mundi*, and this course may help students to validate that soul in a materialistic ethos such as our own.

General Education Outcomes: This course will give a larger sense of *knowledge*, which is the original meaning of the word *science*, thus enlarging the circle that begins with asking what can we know. General education goals meet in that ever larger circle. This is a significant part of the challenge of our times.

Learning Strategies: Our approach will include lectures, storytelling, reading, discussion, writing, film, music, poetry.

Assessment Strategies: (1) There will be one exploratory, essay type examination at the end of the course, in which the student will be expected to relate class experiences, course reading, and other life experiences while demonstrating a growing ability to make the humanities connection with science and technology. *The exam is included in this outline so that you may perceive the strands of the course as goals to be worthily achieved.* (2) We will also develop together at the very end of the course a connection-maker's perception of the world, seeing by application just how a

world-view can create a world in its own image. Having created that world, we will ponder whether or not we would want our grandchildren to live in it.

Grading and Attendance Policy: The exam is worth 100 points. Attendance is worth 100 points. I will look for signs that you have listened to the strands of the course, read them well, and articulated them thoughtfully. Write with respect for the language! Celebrate what you have learned. Your grade will follow! Superior work=A; Above average work=B; Average work=C; Below average work=D. Please do not fall below C level!

Academic Dishonesty Policy: Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, will not be tolerated. The greatest harm, even if your plagiarism is not detected, would be an insult to your own intelligence that you will have to live with for the rest of your life. Be proud enough to demonstrate what you are learning, not what someone else has learned. Give your sources full credit.

Disability Statement: I consider each of my students to be academically able. Believe in yourself, trust your mind and heart, and you will succeed. By the way, this advice applies to every student in my class!

Course Schedule: The Quests in the exam indicate the agenda to be covered in class.

Assignment List: Read the texts at your pace, in any sequence, or all at the same time.

Pre-assignment: No pre-assignment.

Pertinent Quote From Someone With The Pertinacity To Say It

We make our progress by a constant spiraling back and forth between the inner world and the outer one, the personal and the political, the self and the circumstances. Nature doesn't move in a straight line, and as a part of nature, neither do we. The universe as we know it is a joint product of the observer and the observed.

Teilhard de Chardin, priest and scientist, connection-maker, saying what the new physics now confirms.

Further Quotable Evidence Of Pertinacity

Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. The methods used by these weavers vary widely: lectures, Socratic dialogues, laboratory experiments, collaborative problem solving, creative chaos. The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts---meaning heart in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self.

Parker Palmer in his book *Courage to Teach*

Themes To Be Pursued

The Influence Of World-views On Our Perceptions; A Sense Of Time; Reaching For The Moon; Climbing Everest.

Infinite in All Directions; Visions; Stephen Hawking's Universe; What It Means To Be At Home.

Truth; Work As Doing What You Love; Mind/Body, Health and Well-being; Gender and the Passionate Life.

Does The Future Need Us? The Fermi Solution; The Whole Shebang; Baraka; Design World-view; Quests Turned In!!!

The Exam

Not being your usual course, this will not be your usual exam. Please respond in your best writing, with heart and mind and soul, to the following quests. Let class experiences, your reading, and your own affective intelligence be evident as you respond.

Quest One---In this course you have been taken in several directions thematically speaking. Yet, through connection-making, the hope was that there would be a certain centering. How did this centering, this connection-making, work out for you, both in the academic and personal sense?

Quest Two---Seeing the earth from the moon, what might your perspectives be regarding the place of the human in a world in which science and technology are all pervasive?

Quest Three---You have read *Working in America*. What does the concept of work mean to you now? Weave a response that ties together some of the threads of your reading and your personal experiences. As you weave, draw lessons from readings such as *Bartleby the Scrivner*. Identify the message that such stories may convey.

Quest Four---You have read the book by Timothy Ferris. What sense do you gather from his book that engaging in science is a profoundly human activity? What one example stands out for you from his book? Connect your thoughts to the book by Swimme and Berry. What is your sense of the past? What is your sense of the future? In your response, relate to the place of nature and human nature. Does nature hold all the cards? Briefly relate to Stephen Hawking.

Quest Five---What is your attitude toward technology? Add some thoughts on Thomas Moore's reflections on the world's soul and his sense of taking care of our home. Connect this to your visit to the Amazon rainforest.

Quest Six---We spoke briefly to matters of gender in our short reflection from the book *The Passionate Life* by Sam Keen and *Soul of Sex* by Thomas Moore. Describe how issues of gender may influence your world-view. You may choose readings from *Working in America* to broaden your discussion of your world-view.

Quest Seven---Reflect on the world-view of Western medicine which defines health in material terms and seeks physical causes for illness and disease. (Other healing traditions promote the integration of body, mind and spirit.) Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of mind-body approaches. How can they best be integrated into our health care system?

Quest Eight---Begin developing a world-view based on what you may have learned through connection-making. Do not finish the picture. Just take the brush of your mind and heart and apply a few strokes to the canvas. We will share our first brush strokes on our last day in class.

Quest Nine---Develop a question to which you do not know the answer and which will add to the contours of your world-view. Do not respond to your question. Just ask it.

Quest Ten---Add whatever afterthoughts you may be inspired to give.