NEWBIGIN
HOUSE OF STUDIES

Integrating Faith and Technology:
Program Outline

Week of September 14th

Module 1: Mapping the Space

Objectives

This module introduces key concepts and definitions and provides a high level review of the context against which issues faith and technology arise. This week we will seek to better understand our own presuppositions coming into the program, to grasp what it means to think theologically about technology, and to be introduced to the main ideas and goals of the program.

Discussion Materials

Topic Brief – *Mapping the Space*

"Teardowns, Technology, and Change" in Andy Crouch's Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling

Billy Graham: On Technology and Faith *(watch from minute 3:50 to 24:15)*
https://www.ted.com/talks/billy_graham_on_technology_faith_and_suffering?language=en#t-332319

Discussion
- Is technology necessary and is technology moral?
- Where does the drive to develop and deploy technology come from?
- How is your vocation related to technology, either as a hardware, software, methodology or process? Can you identify the specific values, whether or not you choose them, that you express everyday through your work?
- Is Christianity a technology?

Further Reading
Peter Korn, Why We Make Things and Why It Matters: The Education of a Craftsman

Module 2: Historical Arc of Innovation

Objectives

To fully understand technology and faith in our current modern context it is useful to first understand how these two forces have interacted, conflicted and supported each other over a longer historical context. This module follows the arc of innovation through multiple historical accounts and eras and the interaction between technical innovations and the development of Christian thought and culture.

Discussion Materials

Topic Brief – *Historical Arc of Innovation*

A Brief History of Creationism
https://ncse.com/creationism/general/brief-history-creationism

Discussion
- Does the observation that perspectives on faith and technology have changed over time undermine their veracity at the time they are held?
- Are there previously held views about faith and technology that resonate more than present positions?
- Do you believe yourself to be an early adopter or a traditionalist? Overconfident or underconfident in technology?
- As you examine current perspectives on technology, which do you believe are transient and which do you believe express an eternal value or truth? What do you think people will believe about technology and faith in 100 years? What will they believe about our views?

Further Reading
David F. Noble, The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention
Ronald L. Numbers, Galileo Goes to Jail: And Other Myths about Science and Religion
George M. Mardsen, Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism

Week of September 21st

Module 3: God's Agency

Objectives
Technological innovation often arises as a response to hardship or limitations. This module addresses the question of how God is active in the world, particularly with respect to human suffering. This week we examine God's power over and accompaniment of creation, as well as how we as human beings can respond to the challenges in the world through our own faithful activity.

Discussion Materials

Topic Brief – *God's Agency*

Theodicy, God and Suffering *(watch from minute 4:45 – 21:25)*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Isg6Kx-3xdI

Discussion
- Can you identify the specific theodicy to which you subscribe and trace if and how it has changed over the course of your life?
- Are there specific spheres of responsibility that are solely the responsibility of God or of man? How have those boundaries changed over time in Christian discourse?
- What is your response to David Griffin's theodicy and its argument that we have shared power with God?
- If you reflect on periods of personal suffering, how does Wendy Farley's theodicy that God is a "suffering with" God resonate with you?

Further Reading
Stephen Davis, Encountering Evil
Wendy Farley, Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy
C. S. Lewis, A Grief Observed

Module 4: Co-Creation

Objectives
This module introduces the concept of co-creation. This week we explore how God creates and how we as Christians participate in the redemption of the world through our own creative activity.

Discussion Materials

Topic Brief – *Co-Creation*

Excerpt from Philip Hefner's "The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator" in <u>Cosmos as Creation: Science and Theology in Consonance</u>, ed. By Ted Peters

Discussion
- Do we reflect the image of God as Creator when we develop new technology?
- Is all creation equal? Is all creation good or divinely blessed?
- How does our participation in developing technology fit into the mandate of Genesis?
- Where do our creative energies end and where do God's begin?

Further Reading
Noreen Herzfeld, <u>Technology and Religion: Remaining Human in a Co-Created World</u>
Conrad Hyers, <u>The Meaning of Creation: Genesis and Modern Science</u>
Kevin Ashton, <u>How to Fly a Horse: The Secret History of Creation, Invention and Discovery</u>, Chapter 1: "Creating is Ordinary"

Week of September 28<u>th</u>

Module 5: The Recursive Relationship

Objectives
This module addresses how technology has become our language for creation and how it continually works to recreate us. This week we will examine the ways in which we use technology to shape our world, and the ways that those technologies - and their effects - in turn shape us.

Discussion Materials

Topic Brief – *The Recursive Relationship*

"Where Do We Stand with This Creation of Ours?" in W. Brian Arthur's <u>The Nature of Technology</u>

Discussion
- How are we shaped by our technologies? Does our use of technology strengthen or weaken our capabilities and our purposes?
- Are the ways you most commonly use technology on a day to day basis in harmony or in conflict with living a faithful life?
- Can you identify specific technologies in your life that are healing, enhancing or muting what you believe it means to be human?

Further Reading
Neil Postman, <u>Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology</u>

Module 6: Discursive Frameworks

Objectives
This module presents several frameworks for understanding the complex relationship between faith and technology. This week we will examine numerous theological and scientific perspectives on attempts to reconcile faith, science and technology – and suggestions that such a project cannot be accomplished.

Discussion Materials

Topic Brief – *Discursive Frameworks*

Seven Patterns for Relating Science and The Christian Faith
http://www.worldvieweyes.org/resources/Strauss/7PrdgmsChrSience8p.htm

Bill Moyers Interview | Neil deGrasse Tyson
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRHefbIgKxk&app=desktop

A New Way to Explain Explanation | David Deutsch
https://www.ted.com/talks/david_deutsch_a_new_way_to_explain_explanation/transcript?language=en

Discussion
- Can science, technology and faith be fully reconciled? Is it necessary to do so?
- Which of Bube's seven patterns for relating science and religion do you believe is the most dominant in public discourse today? Which do you subscribe to?
- Where do you hear "the God of the gaps" in theological discourse today?

Further Reading
Richard H. Bube, <u>Putting It All Together: Seven Patterns for Relating Science and the Christian Faith</u>
Ian G. Barbour, <u>When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners?</u>
Alister E. McGrath, <u>Surprised by Meaning: Science, Faith, and Howe We Make Sense of Things</u>

Week of October 5th

Module 7: Exploring Life Extension

Objectives
This module examines human longevity technology as a case study of a contemporary issue in faith and technology. This week we will look at the question of what it means to seek a longer life. What are the practical, ethical and faith implications of living longer? Are suffering and death necessary material or spiritual realities?

Discussion Materials

Topic Brief – *Exploring Life Extension*

Stephen Garner, "Transhumanism and Christian Social Concern" in the Journal of Evolution & Technology

Discussion
- What are the theological and spiritual consequences of scientific and medical advancements, both realized and projected, allowing us to significantly enhance our natural capacities?
- Is mortality essential to the moral life?
- What technologies make you feel that you are self sustaining apart from God? What technologies feel like hope in themselves?
- Would the promise of a significantly longer life dramatically change the choices you are making now?

Further Reading
Ernest Becker, <u>The Denial of Death</u>
Stephen G. Post and Robert H. Binstock, <u>The Fountain of Youth: Cultural, Scientific, and Ethical Perspectives on a Biomedical Goal</u>
Derek F. Maher and Calvin Mercer, <u>Religion and the Implications of Radical Life Extension</u>
Peters, Ted. <u>Playing God?: Genetic Determinism and Human Freedom</u>

Module 8: The Prophets of Technology

Objectives
This module examines the role of the prophetic voice in discerning issues of faith and technology in the modern age. This week we explore the development of super-humans – biogenetics, robotics and artificial intelligence - and the commentary of those who champion its use and warn us of its perils.

Discussion Materials

Topic Brief – *The Prophets of Technology*

The Robots Are Coming: But Will They Be Mindful? | D. Scott Phoenix
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DHg4ESOkPA

Artificial Intelligence | Elon Musk
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmPX8-HK1os

 "A Tale of Two Dystopias" in Francis Fukuyama's Our Posthuman Future, pp. 3-17

Discussion
- Is "human nature" a static and meaningful concept? Where is the line between the human and the posthuman?
- Is there a point at which further "human evolution" will come at too high of a cost?
- How do you map the human-divine relationship against the human-artificial intelligence relationship?
- Will cybernetic immortality supplant the Christian doctrine of resurrection or will be be compatible with a new eschatological vision?

Further Reading
Noreen L. Herzfeld, In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit
Brent Waters, From Human to Posthuman: Christian Theology and Technology in a Postmodern World

Week of October 12th

Module 9: A Christian Technoculture

Objectives
This module examines the concepts of Christian duty and technoethics. This week will include a discussion of technology, politics and theology with an eye towards understanding both the reasons and sources of optimism and pessimism about the future found in both faith and technological communities.

Discussion Materials

Topic Brief – *A Christian Technoculture*

What is the Hope for Humanity? *(watch from minute 8:42-13:16, 27:12-57:08)*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9Mlu7sHEHE

Discussion
- Is technological progress inevitable and on autopilot?
- Is there the sense that the pie is growing and that more and more people are participating in the benefits of new and better technology?
- Do you believe that the future will look very different than the present or the past? Will it be better or worse?
- Do you have a strong sense for your center of value, and does it orient your daily choices?

Further Reading
John Dyer, From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology
Albert Borgmann, Power Failure: Christianity in the Culture of Technology

Week of October 19th

Module 10: The Coming Future

Objectives
This module discusses specific technologies being pursued and how to make choices about what the future should look like. This week we will discuss visions of the future and how our current perceptions and needs shape the types of futures we are likely to pursue and to achieve.

Discussion Materials

Topic Brief – *The Coming Future*

Bill Joy, "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us"
http://www.wired.com/2000/04/joy-2/

Ross Andersen, "Exodus"
https://aeon.co/essays/elon-musk-puts-his-case-for-a-multi-planet-civilisation

Discussion
- Will our current visions of transcendence lead us to a more moral state?
- Do you agree with Musk that we have a moral imperative to invest into making human civilization "multi-planetary" despite Earth's current demands and challenges?
- What are your thoughts on Bill Joy's warning against a technical elite with tremendous power, and how will they engage with the masses?
- Do you have dystopian or utopian visions or the future? Where do they come from?
- Is the idea that *the development of technology is an expression of a spiritual hope for a better future* convincing to you?

Further Reading
Alec Ross, The Industries of the Future
Michio Kaku, Physics of the Future: How Science Will Shape Human Destiny and Our Daily Lives by the Year 2100