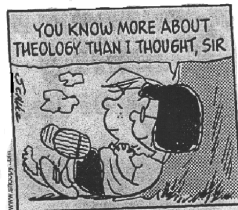
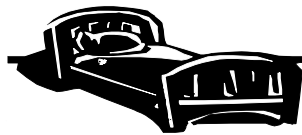


Introduction to Chrtc 390 Online Course by the instructor, Prof. Paul Flaman



Daily Prayer: So far today, God, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been greedy or grumpy, nasty or self-centered. I'm really glad about that. But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed. Then I'm going to need a lot of help.



Welcome to this online course of Chrtc 390 Neuroscience, the Person and Christian Theology. This introduction is meant for us to begin to get to know each other and to introduce this online University of Alberta course which is taught through St. Joseph's College, a Catholic University College affiliated with and located in the heart of the University of Alberta.

A Little About Me: I (Professor Paul Flaman) grew up on a farm about 50 km North of Regina, the oldest of 8 children (my parents raised us Catholic). I attended a public school in the town of Southey. Most of us were German background (my grandparents and parents' first language was German but I only learned some German as an adult) of either Catholic, Lutheran or Baptist Christian denominations. In my later teens I questioned many things about my Christian Catholic upbringing. I attended the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon for four years obtaining a B.A. with Honours in English. While at university, as a result of a number of factors including taking a few courses at the Catholic College (St. Thomas More), I again became a believing Christian and convinced Catholic. I took two years off university to work including one year in the L'Arche Community in Calgary, living and working with mentally disabled adults, and a year working with the leadership of the Love of God prayer community in Regina. I then went on to study Christian theology in Rome obtaining Bachelor, Licentiate and Doctorate degrees in Catholic Theology. My specialization was in the area of moral-spiritual theology and my doctoral dissertation focused on Family Unity. I got married to a very beautiful woman Maggie in 1983. We have three young adult children, and a grandson (born in October 2014). I continue

to be a believing Christian and try to be a practicing Catholic. My research and publishing areas include a few topics in this course. Not related to university I enjoy going for walks, playing golf, word games and cards with my wife. I also enjoy playing chess (if any of you want to play let me know!). While I cheer for the Edmonton Oilers I am still at heart a Saskatchewan Roughrider fan first and an Edmonton Elks fan second.

A Little About You: On this section of the E-Class please introduce yourself to me and the other students in the class. Among other things please let us know briefly your university goals and what you hope to learn in this course (or why you are taking it). Also, let us know a bit about yourself including any interests not related to university. You are not obliged to do so, but if you like you can also share a bit about your religious background or lack thereof. At St. Joseph's College we get a wide variety of students including not only students of various Christian backgrounds, but also sometimes of other religious backgrounds (e.g., Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh ...) or of no religious background including agnostics and atheists. Some students, e.g., who have never opened a Bible or stepped into a Christian church, are concerned about taking a theology course like this. In this course, marks are not related to your personal views—I attempt to mark fairly according to each student's academic merits. Also, in the take home final exam you are only tested on your understanding of the related course materials and not about other biblical or theological questions.

A Note about the Origins of this Course

This course began with a chance encounter in an airport. I, a Christian theology professor at St. Joseph's College, the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Canada, was on my way to a conference in Washington, D.C. in November 2000. While waiting for my plane in the airport I ended up in conversation with a theology and interdisciplinary studies professor at The King's University, also in Edmonton. I described my desire to develop a new interdisciplinary university science and religion course related to some questions I had from my other courses in bioethics, love and personal relationships, and Christian spirituality, as well as some reading, I had done related to these questions in neuroscience. The other professor suggested I should talk to Heather Looy, a colleague of his in psychology at The King's University, also in Edmonton. To make a long story short, on my return to Edmonton I contacted Dr. Looy. We found that we had many common interests and questions about human nature and personhood, coming from different perspectives—I as a Catholic Christian theologian, and Heather as a Protestant Christian and biopsychologist. The blend resulted in the course, "Neuroscience, the Person, and Christian Theology," which she helped me to develop, and which received a Templeton Foundation Science and Religion Course Award in 2001. We team-taught the course twice, in 2002 and 2005, and drew wonderfully diverse groups of students from both our home institutions. We have also taught the course since separately several times at our respective institutions. I continue to teach the course regularly through St. Joseph's College at the University of Alberta.

The central question of this course is: What does it mean to be a person? What can the fields of study of neuroscience and Christian theology, as well as philosophy as a kind of bridge field of study which uses critical reason, contribute to our understanding of human persons? Personhood is not just an idea or concept since legally a person has many rights and much more

status than even intelligent animals not deemed to be persons. This course explores many questions related to what it means to be a person.

Course Outline / Syllabus, Requirements and Expectations: Please read the course outline-syllabus which is posted on the E-Class, especially the first two pages and read at least the highlights of the course calendar on pages 2-7. The rest of the syllabus provides some guidelines / instructions for the Reading Responses, the Research and Reflection paper, and the take home final exam, as well as standard University of Alberta Policy regarding grading, etc. If you have any questions about the course requirements or the rest of the Course outline you can post them in this section of the E-Class or if you prefer email me them (see the top of the first page of the Course Outline for my email, availability, etc.). By the way, the STD after my name means that I in fact have an STD (not what comes to mind for many, that is, a sexually transmitted disease—I give blood regularly and am tested for these—but a doctorate in Catholic theology).

Required Readings: See page 2 of the course syllabus for information on the Custom Courseware (course pack) which is sold through the University of Alberta Bookstore (if you live outside of Edmonton you can order these from the Bookstore and ask them to ship these to you). I plan to post the required readings for the first two modules of this course on the E-Class so that any students joining the class a bit late can quickly catch up.

The Approach in this Course: The neuroscience parts of this course are built on Dr. Heather Looy's class slides and notes. My class notes (instead of oral lectures) for Module 1 will be available from the first day of classes. These introduce both neuroscience and Christian theology and their interaction and are meant to give you a good idea of how various topics related to persons will be approached in this course. If you have any questions about any of this you can post them under Student Posts for Module 1 and/or email them to me. For a photo and short biography of Dr. Heather Looy, the biopsychologist who originally helped me to develop this course and team taught it with me the first two times it was taught at the UofA see: https://www.kingsu.ca/about-us/staff-directory/contact_id/3628.

Class Participation involving Discussion on the E-Class: A big part of an online course experience is the online student participation, posts and discussion. **Besides posts related to the Reading Responses and other students' posts (see course outline bottom of p. 7 to top of p. 8), your additional posts can also involve sharing related experiences (you may but are not obliged to share personal experiences in this course), related material from other courses, or related themes from media such as a movie, television show or song.** To promote open and honest discussion and dialogue I invite all of you to follow the Golden Rule: Always treat others the way you would like to be treated. I think it is unrealistic to expect that we will all agree on everything in a course like this. Nevertheless, we can all try to choose to respect each other and try to understand why others hold the views they do (especially if their views are different than yours). If we (I include myself here) respect each other, this tends to foster trust which in turn fosters more open and honest and interesting conversation. I would also ask that all of us respect the rights to confidentiality of each other. That is, any sharing with others not in the class about class discussions should not include any names or personally identifying information.

Thank you. I look forward to this course and to each of your contributions. If you have any questions or concerns about this course, now or later in the course, please contact me (see my email at the top of p. 1 of the course outline).