



Module

Transhumanism: Theological Responses

Science Module for existing university or seminary level courses.

Drop in to a course syllabus (with modifications) in

Evolutionary Biology

Technology Studies

Future Studies

Religious Studies

Theological Anthropology

Systematic Theology: Eschatology

1 week's assignment for 3 hours of class meeting

TRANSHUMANISM: THEOLOGICAL RESPONSES

Transhumanism, also known as H+, is a rapidly growing worldwide movement that synthesizes computer technology, nano-technology, genetics, the cognitive sciences, and futurism for the purposes of advancing evolution to a post-biological stage. The belief that all of evolutionary history has been oriented toward increased intelligence is a basic H+ assumption. And, because this generation has the wherewithal to amplify intelligence both in human brains and in machines, it is our moral responsibility to speed up the evolutionary process and leap forward. Armed with the most up-to-date scientific and technological knowledge, transhumanists intend to generate a *Singularity*, to cross a threshold after which a

new and higher level of intelligent being will take the reins of evolution and steer it forward.

The assumptions and goals of H+ have both troubled and excited religious futurists. To assume that evolution is directed toward increased intelligence cannot be confirmed by evolutionary biologists, and theological ethicists fear that H+ will undercut society's compassion for persons who are mentally challenged. Yet, some Mormons and some Buddhists are welcoming transhumanism with open arms, embracing its optimism for transformation and renewal. The subject of transhumanism provides an arena in which to wrestle with fundamental religious values and the startling possibilities of advancing science and technology.

DLO (Desired Learning Outcomes)

Added to the set of DLOs for the entire course. The student should also demonstrate...

1. knowledge of current conversation regarding transhumanism and religion
2. ability to describe issues at stake;
3. at least a tentative moral stand regarding public policy regarding H+ technology.

REQUIRED READING

Lincoln Cannon, "What is Mormon Transhumanism?" *Theology and Science* 13:2 (2015) 202-218.
Michael Latorra, "What is Buddhist Transhumanism?" *Theology and Science* 13:2 (2015) 219-229.
Brian Patrick Green, "Transhumanism and Roman Catholicism," *Theology and Science* 13:2 (May 2015) 187-201.
Ted, Peters "Transhumanism and the Posthuman Future: Will Technological Progress Get us There?"
Transhumanism and Its Critics, eds., Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie.
Philadelphia: Metanexus, 2011; Chapter 10.

RCRS: *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Science*, eds., James W. Haag, Gregory R. Peterson, and Michael L. Spezio. London: Routledge, 2012.
ISBN 978-0-415-49244-7 (hbk) or 978-0-203-80351-6 (ebk).

This comprehensive volume is valuable for almost all modules.

- RCRS 48 Aubrey D.N.J. DeGrey, "Prospects of the biomedical postponement of aging"
RCRS 51 Ann Milliken Pederson, "A Christian theological response to Aubrey DeGrey"
RCRS 53 Robert M. Geraci, "Cyborgs, robots, and eternal avatars: Transhumanist salvation"
RCRS 54 Noreen Herzfeld, "Human-directed evolution: A Christian perspective"

RECOMMENDED READING

Cole-Turner, Ronald, ed., *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011. ISBN 978-1-58901-780-1.
Maher, Derek F., and Calvin Mercer, eds., *Religion and the Implications of Radical Life Extension*.
New York: Palgrave, 2009. ISBN 978-0-230-60794-1.

NOTE: Some of these copyrighted materials for uploading into an educational setting are easily available at CTNS.