

Hedgerow Spring 2026, Cosmology and Faith, Syllabus

Try to view [“The Journey of the Universe \(2013\) Documentary”](#) with Brian Swimme narrating, produced by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, before the Cosmology and Faith class begins. It’s online (60 minutes).

Feb 2, 2026 Cosmology and Faith, Presenter: Joan Mitchell
Chapters 1 & 2, Cosmic Vision of Teilhard de Chardin

Read Chapter 1; “Cosmos,” pp. 1-15

Optional Reading online: [Laudato Si’](#), Paragraphs 84-92, 137, 138-140, 143

Only in 20th century did scientists recognize the universe is a story still going. The sequence **divergence, convergence, emergence** has repeated itself at every stage of cosmogenesis. The human phenomenon is now weaving itself into a new stratum encircling our planet, ... something akin to a brain.

Matter (*dispersal, incoherence*) and **spirit** (*awakening converging toward unity, emergent complexity*) are polar tendencies in cosmogenesis.

Question

In what ways does the context of an unfinished universe, a universe still aborning, affect your personal understanding of faith, of God?

Read Chapter 2: “Future,” pp. 17-33

The Aborning Universe: cosmos has at least a general drift from simplicity to complexity, a loose direction, trending from less to more consciousness, from less being to fuller being.

Metaphysics of Past (atomistic),

Metaphysics of the Eternal Present (Platonic)

Metaphysics of the Future (historical universe, the not-yet is promise, hope, love)

Question Which metaphysic characterizes your faith at present?

Feb 9, 2026 Cosmology and Faith, Presenter: Joan Mitchell

Read Chapter 3: “Hope,” Cosmic Vision, pp. 35-41

Optional Reading: [The Mass on the World](#), from *Hymn of the Universe*, by Teilhard de Chardin

Matter is the tendency in nature to fall back toward a state of sheer multiplicity and incoherence; **spirit** moves toward unity up ahead. In its unfolding process nature is suspended between toward **fragmentation** (past) and **communion** (the future) (46).

Questions: What influence does Platonic thought have on your spirituality?

What experiences of unity and communion stand out in your life?

Feb 16, 2026

Cosmology and Faith, Presenter: Andrea Pearson Tande

Read Chapter 4, "Action," *Cosmic Vision*, 53-67

Read ["Thomas Berry and Journey of the Universe: Recognizing the Great Self in the Great Work," *Living Cosmology*, Peter Ellard](#) (See email)

"Awakening going on in the universe can give us a new zest for living, a sense of being part of a great cosmic adventure, and this adventure can refocus our moral lives. ...Especially when we realize we are part of a great cosmic project of bringing about more being."

Questions: In the visions of Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry, what inspires you? What is the place of gratitude in your spirituality? Of promise? Describe experiences of beauty, longing, creativity that energize you?

Feb 23, 2026

Cosmology and Faith, Presenter: Joan Mitchell

Chapters 5 and 6, "Spirituality," and "God," pp. 69-101

***Gaudium et Spes*, Church in the Modern World, Paragraphs 1-10, 16-17**

Evolution means that creation is still happening and that God is creating the world **not a retro**, that is out of the past, but **ab ante, from the up-ahead**. All things are being brought together in the Christ who is coming.

Nature is narrative to the core and the story of cosmic creation is far from over (72)

We are born into and borne along by a general drift of the entire cosmos in the direction of of a full awakening to God in Christ (84).

Questions: How do you experience the promise and pull toward more in your life? Who is God in your life? How has your experience of God evolved, unfolded with promise?

Mar 2, 2026

Cosmology and Faith, Presenter Cathy Steffens

Cosmic Walk

Chapter 7, "Descent" *Cosmic Vision of Teilhard de Chardin*, pp. 101-120

"What can it mean, after Darwin, that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God (105)?"

"Cosmologically the recent emergence of conscious self-awareness, accompanied by moral, aesthetic, and religious sensitivity, is the most dramatic development ever to have occurred in the long journey of our universe, at least up until now" (115).

Mar 9, 2026

Cosmology and Faith, Presenter Joan Mitchell

Chap 8, "Life" and Chap 9, "Suffering" *Cosmic Vision*, pp. 121-144

How does each kind of metaphysics—past (analytical), eternal present (analogical), future (anticipatory vision)—approach the features of life: descent, diversity, design, death, suffering, sex, intelligence, morality, and religion (134)?

Platonic hierarchy of being, the great struggle against the lure of materiality, to make it up the ladder of being to final union with God after death (121).

To find a place for Teilhard's thought...we need to look beneath the narrow theme of design and look for a kind of intelligibility—a narrative coherence. ...For Teilhard, the story of life is seamlessly woven into the long cosmic drama that has shown itself **only after Einstein**. . . . A preexisting narrative matrix—**inherent in the cosmos from the very start**—renders life, along with the whole universe, horizontally dramatic rather than vertically hierarchical (126-127).

Question: How is evolution a dramatic story? How is the cosmic story our story?

Chapter 9, "Suffering," *Cosmic Vision*, pp. 145-159

If God is love, an initially completed universe is theologically inconceivable.an initially finished or perfect creation, if one could imagine it, would be frozen everlastingly into a finalized block. It would have no room for freedom, for human creativity, or even for life (154).

Explaining suffering as expiation must give way to the fact that the suffering of life is an inevitable part of the drawn-out drama of cosmic awakening... Hope seeks companionship and communion with all fellow sufferers—both human and nonhuman—on the long cosmic journey into God (158).

Questions: What difference does the universe giving rise to subjectivity or inwardness—and hence to awakening—make to you? How does your identity depend on it? What help do you experience from companionship and communion with other sufferers?

Mar 16, 2026 Cosmology and Faith, Presenter Colleen Corrigan

Read Chapter 10, "Thought," *Cosmic Vision*, pp. 161-176

"On earth, **cosmogogenesis** has given birth to the spheres of matter (the geosphere) and life (the biosphere), and is now seamlessly weaving around our planet a new kind of "geological" stratum, a sphere of mind—the noosphere (162).

Mar 23, 2026

**Cosmology and Faith, Presenter Andrea Pearson Tande
Read Chapter 11, "Religion," *Cosmic Vision*, pp. 177-190
Related to Teilhard book *The Human Phenomenon***

“An increasingly sensitive vein of interiority has been throbbing in the cosmos from the start, but conventional science is not wired to take its pulse” (179).

The “inside” story of the universe includes all the events that have taken place in the world of sentient humans and nonhuman subjects alike. **The inside story of the universe is made up of** all the sensations, moods, cognitions, desires, enjoyments, and offerings that have accumulated beneath the outer crust of cosmic history since the origin of life 3.8 billion years ago. **The inside story also includes** human intellectual, moral, and aesthetic awareness, and covers our species’ religious long for deliverance from suffering, death, and meaninglessness. ...**Subjective experience** also underlies artistic creations that have been deposited in the outside story and serves as a text that allows us to read what is going on inside. The religious subjectivity of humans is made concrete in works of art, written texts, and liturgical performances(181).

Teilhard calls for a **new God**, one who would be the center of convergence for an unfinished universe rather than a governor overseeing a creation that had once been perfect but is now spoiled by sin and the ravages of time (189)

Question: If you have a new God, what is your new God like? What’s your inside story in the categories above?

Mar 30, 2026

Thomas Berry: The New Story, The Great Work Is Our Work

Presenter: Anne Hannahan

Handout on Thomas Berry online

[“Thomas Berry and the Great Work,” Podcast \(18 minutes\)](#)

In the 1980s Berry saw a new geological era unfolding that he named “Ecozoic.” It marked the end of a geological era in which thousands of species were disappearing each year amidst the industrial-technological bubble of resource extraction. He observed that scientists were telling us that we are in the midst of an extinction period. Nothing this devastating had occurred since the dinosaurs went extinct sixty-five million years ago and the Cenozoic era began. Berry used the term *Ecozoic* to name the emerging period in which humans would recover their creative orientation to the world.

Teilhard’s major work titled *The Human Phenomenon* was for Thomas a powerful narration of universe emergence. While Teilhard saw his work as science, Thomas narrated it as a “new story.”

Questions: How does Teilhard influence Berry? How does Berry advance Teilhard?

What are the urgencies Thomas Berry holds up for us?

What deliberate actions might you participate in doing?

Apr 6, 2026 Cosmology and Faith, Presenter: Joan Mitchell

Chps. 12 and 13, “Transhumanism,” “Criticism,” *Cosmic Vision*, 191-226.

“If we lose nature,” says Catholic environmentalist Thomas Berry, “we also lose God” (196).

Only because humans, as personal organisms, are striving beings, examples of which are our longing to understand, our desiring to know, and our struggle to find out what is good—are we able to recognize intuitively the trait of striving that makes other related beings instances of vitality (202).

More than any other Catholic thinker in the history of the church, in my opinion, Teilhard showed us how to love God without turning our backs on the world, and how to love the world without turning our backs on God (334).

Questions

What experiences of the state of consciousness, of human subjectivity do you carry?

How can cosmic transform begin with your personal transformation?

How do you enhance rather than diminish vitality, subjectivity, creativity central to the universe today?

Apr 13, 2026 Sharing evening of projects that express personal insights, the meaning of the class for each of us expressed in some way.