

# The SHORELINE



*Walking together on the shoreline of an infinite sea of mystery...*

**THE HUMAN NATURE PROJECT**

Vol. XIV No. 4

Frank Villa, Editor

Special Edition

SCIENCE and RELIGION at the BTI

***BTI Announces***

## ***STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST***

***On Being Human...***

***What does it mean to be human?***

As we explore this eternal question scientifically, theologically, and philosophically, we become aware of the awesome privilege of human existence in the vast and ancient universe. As a sentient life form we are a rare, perhaps unique, phenomenon. In the words of theologian Thomas Berry, "We are a new dimension of the universe". In modern times, discoveries in neurobiology and medical technology have both informed us and led us to pursue a more complex understanding of human existence.

The Boston Theological Institute announces a Student Essay Contest for the 2006/2007 academic year to provide graduate level students the opportunity to explore questions of human nature under the guidance of a trusted faculty advisor, and to share these insights with others as we carry this dialogue to new levels. Successful essays will offer new ideas

and insights on topics of human nature as they acknowledge developments in science and medicine, and relate them to issues of theology and faith.

Two contest winners will each receive a \$750 prize, and all accepted essays will

***An opportunity for  
students to enter  
ideas and insights  
into public dia-  
logue!...***

***\$750 Prize awarded to Two Winners!***

***Essays to appear in new BTI publication series,  
"On Human Nature"***

## THE HUMAN NATURE PROJECT

### STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST

# On Being Human

Students entering essays into this contest will be taking part in the first phase of a three-year initiative sponsored by The Boston Theological Institute to explore the nature of human being and what it means to be human. This project is designed to create fruitful dialogue among many different academic disciplines on the special privilege of being human. What is special about sentient being? Is there human purpose? Few issues at the intersection of faith and science have more profound possibilities for assessing the future of humankind. Thoughtful students often have fresh insights and new ideas that can provide the basis for serious debate. All reviewed essays will given serious consideration.





Acceptable essays include any topic that speaks to this broad issue as determined by author and faculty advisor.. Planned symposia include discussion topics that suggest some core questions of the society:

- Violence as a Medical Health Issue and Its Relation to Spiritual Health
- Artificial Intelligence
- End of Life
- Faith and Whole-Body Healing:

This contest is based on the strong interest among students and faculty at the schools represented by the BTI and reflects a commitment to promoting thoughtful dialogue on the importance of religious and scientific perspectives on human nature. We are looking for fresh ideas, new viewpoints, and multi-disciplinary insights. The sample topics shown below are by no means all-inclusive. Other possibilities include a wide variety of subjects that can explore artificial intelligence, ethical questions on stem cell research, end-of-life issues, or any topic that relates faith, spirituality, or theology to scientific advances

## The Human Nature Project

Suggested Topics (though others are acceptables)

-  ***What does it mean to be human in light of new technology in medical and biological science?***
-  ***What role do faith and spirituality play in human nature? How do discoveries in neurobiology and genetics inform our understanding of spirituality?***
-  ***What ethical issues are raised by advances in medical and biological technology? How can these issues be informed by faith?***
-  ***How do spirituality, prayer, and faith affect human healing?***

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# EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

### 1. Authors

Authors must have been enrolled in 2006 in a graduate (post-baccalaureate) degree or certificate program. The submitted essay must have been read and recommended for submittal by a faculty member at the school where the author is enrolled.

### 2. Topics

As a creative component of the Human Nature Project at the BTI, the topic to be addressed should be based on the question of what it means to be human in light of new technology in medical and biological science. Topics could analyze, but not be limited to:

- The role of faith and spirituality in human nature: How do discoveries in neurobiology and genetics inform our understanding of spirituality?
- Artificial Intelligence as a means of understanding
- Ethical issues raised by advances in medical and biological technology How can these issues be informed by faith?
- How do spirituality, prayer, and faith affect human healing?

### 3. Length

Essays should be approximately 3000 words in length.

### 4. Abstract

A 50-100-word abstract should be included.

### 5. Language

Essays must be written in English, or accompanied by an English translation. Gender-inclusive language is encouraged.

### 6. Format

Please mail printed text, accompanied by an electronic version on diskette or CD formatted, if possible, in Microsoft Word for Macintosh or PC.

### 7. Citation

Authors should use endnotes rather than footnotes. Reference materials should follow the form below:

### 8. Biographical sketch

Please include a brief statement introducing yourself. Mention details such as where you come from, your past work experience, the degree program and school at which you wrote your essay, what you are doing now, your religious tradition, hopes and plans for your future, your interests, and family information (if desired).

### 9. Deadline

All essays to be postmarked by 15 March 2007. Mail them to: Science Coordinator, Boston Theological Institute, 210 Herrick Rd., Newton Centre, MA 02459.

**For a complete list of guidelines or further information, contact us at [villa@bostontheological.org](mailto:villa@bostontheological.org) or by calling 617.527.4880.**

## ***BTI CERTIFICATE IN SCIENCE AND RELIGION***

*The local church at the beginning of the twenty-first century remains a place of solace and sanctuary for the devoted parishioners who fill the pews. At the same time, it is becoming a place where modern issues can be discussed in a safe and supportive environment. Pastoral education re-*

*quires a new literacy in science and technology to fill this need. The Certificate Program in Science and Religion fills this need by supplementing pastoral education with directed study towards one of four tracks of Scientific expertise.*

***For more information...  
Contact Frank Villa  
e-mail:***

*villa@bostontheological.org*

***Phone:***

***617-527-4880***

## ***WHO EARNS THE CERTIFICATE?***

### ***Professional Practitioners in Science: Seeking the Spiritual Dimension***

A growing number of students is entering the certificate program from well-established professions in many fields of interest. Medical practitioners, teachers, researchers in robotics – these are all professions from which new students are seeking the certificate. They are exploring the spiritual dimension of their field of expertise to add breadth to their pursuit of excellence and understanding. We welcome these students as a new part of the theological community that comprises the BTI schools.

### ***Professional Practitioners in Ministry: Understanding Technology***

Ministers are often confronted with new dilemmas as they seek to counsel parishioners who are intrigued by questions raised by advances in medicine, biological sciences, and related fields. Often they are exploring deeper questions of creation, human origins, and human being. The Science and Religion Certificate Program gives them the opportunity to explore scientific questions in the safe and stimulating environment of a theological community.

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210 Herrick Road  
Newton Centre, MA 02459***