

## “Science Frontiers and Religion” Discussion Plan 4/12/2026

Our current plan is to have 6 monthly meetings on Zoom. For each meeting there will be a “unit” consisting of topic, resources, and a short presentation during the meeting to kick-off discussions.

Let it be clear that these meetings concern the material world. We leave theism off the discussion table, but participants are encouraged to consider what new scientific understanding means for us as ethical agents. Thus, we will intrude on the territory of religion.

The resources are various things: books, magazine articles, YouTube video lectures and podcasts. You can read some resources before the meeting if you are earnest about this or wait until after the meeting to follow up on what especially interested you during the discussion.

You don’t need to decide on participation now, although we would appreciate knowing the audience. However, to receive meeting times and Zoom links or to gain access to the study material, you need to be on a mailing list. You can unsubscribe from this list anytime. You can [subscribe by clicking here](#).

The following is a tentative plan for the 6 monthly meetings. This series is new and the plan could change. Participants are also encouraged to consider leading one of the meetings, but this is not necessary. Bring your mind and powers of expression.

### 1. In the beginning and in the Today’s Laboratory

Our goal in the initial meeting is to get to know each other and our interests. Next, we review the presentation “Astrophysics finds Religion – Can You”. Then, we pose a controversial question to be answered in the final meeting. Finally, the title of this series uses the term “frontiers” in a way that requires explanation. Our explanation will take the form of a short review of different understandings over history. Today part of the scientific community works opportunistically with a variety of methods – a frontier approach from which we derive our title.

### 2. Emergence

Emergence is a new frontier of science that lives largely in obscure corners of the literature although it engages with the well-known and well-supported study of Biology. The twist is that Biology discusses what exists as if it was just here as a simple obvious fact while emergence strives to understand how matter came alive. The unit will lean primarily on YouTube video lectures. The resources for this unit contain references to books and recent magazine articles.

### 3. The Second Arrow of Time

The title of the unit is taken from a new book that views weak and strong emergence as an intrinsic property the material universe placing it on a par with the second law of thermodynamics. That second law is thought by some to define the first arrow of time.

Somewhere we need to update our overall idea of Darwin’s evolution, and this may be a point to start that discussion

#### 4. Things – where subjective and objective merge

I've noticed that one obstacle to thinking about new science is that it is hard to reimagine what it is to be a thing. Some things act as agents. Are they deterministic or not? In this unit we kick around some ideas. There is a video prepared already and many books address determinism.

#### 5. Formalism

The mechanics of the frontier: Stuart Kaufmann's approach, functional information, assembly theory, etc. This will be mostly an inventory but some of the ideas are sticky – you will remember them and use them.

#### 6. Ethics/Religion

In closing, we fold together the previous ideas to explore their connection with ethics and religion. Also provide a controversial answer to the question left from the first session.