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Figure 1: University of St. Thomas - Core Curriculum

1 Faith, Reason, and Revelation

1.0.0.1 Corey Stephan, Ph.D. coreystephan.com

- Email: corey.stephan@stthom.edu
- Office location: Hughes 201
 - Office hours by appointment (email in advance)

1.0.0.2 Spring 2025 *Last updated on January 11*

Online and asynchronous (3 sections):

- THEOC-1301C
- THEOC-1301D
- THEOC-1301E

Notes:

1. As of the start of the semester, some aspects of this syllabus remain to be determined.
 2. I reserve the right to revise this syllabus at any time during the semester.
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Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.

Pope St. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, §1

An introductory course in fundamental Catholic theology, presenting the basic openness of the human person to divine revelation, the historical veracity of that revelation, and selected major theological themes in the Catholic worldview, with an eye to their coherence with one another and with the human person.

1.1 Journey

In this course, you will be introduced to what Catholic theology is, what its distinctive features and principles are, and why Catholic belief is reasonable. In so doing, you will deepen your understanding of yourself as a rational, free being, capable of affirming what is true and of freely embracing the purpose of your existence.

1.2 Destination

By the end of the semester, you will be able:

1. To explain the reasonableness of the Christian worldview in terms of human rationality and freedom.
2. To define the central Christian principles of faith, nature, grace, creation, and sin.
3. To explain the historical veracity of the Gospel accounts through a thorough analysis of issues of dating, genre, authorship, and external and internal witnesses.
4. To articulate the notion of Christian revelation, as well as modern objections.

I, Dr. Stephan, will consider anything short of this to be a failure—possibly mine, but possibly yours. This must be a team effort.

To that end, we have a “Faith, Reason, & Revelation Class Survey and Contract” in the “Start” page in Blackboard that everyone is required to complete and sign by the end of the first week.

Above all, note that you are expected to do all assigned readings and watch or listen to all assigned lectures every week.

1.3 Recommended Books

You are **not** required to purchase any book(s) for this class.

You are, however, strongly recommended to purchase the specific Study Bible from which we will be reading several major portions this semester, that is,

- *The Catholic Study Bible: Third Edition* [Catholic Study Bible]
– ISBN 9780190267230

Basically, this serves as our textbook. No other printed Bible suffices for our purposes, since this has specific historical, linguistic, and other scholarly information that is of highest importance for our university-level, academic context.

The following 3 items also form an integral part of the class. Accordingly, any student who prefers to hold a physical book rather than read documents online ought to purchase each of these, rent them, or otherwise acquire them when readings from them are assigned. Yet, the selections from them that you are required to read are available in Blackboard.

- *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC]
– ISBN 0385508190 or 1601376499
– Also available online on the Vatican website
- Mother Teresa, *Where There is Love, There is God* [Teresa]
– ISBN 9780385531801
- Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus* [Pitre]
– ISBN 978-0-385-36593-2

1.4 Other Materials

I distribute other assigned reading materials in Blackboard either as .pdf scans or via hyperlinks to online materials in the public domain.

1.5 Themes

The course is divided into three thematic units:

1. What are Faith and Reason?
 2. Apparent Clashes of Faith and Reason
 3. Revelation
-

1.6 Grades

The total class grade is weighted out of 100 points.

1. Start of Term: (5%) CLASS SURVEY AND CONTRACT
2. Semester Long: (50%) CONTENT QUIZZES
 - 10 quizzes on assigned content (Readings & Lectures)
 - The lowest content quiz score is automatically dropped from the gradebook
 - The total score for Content Quizzes is calculated cumulatively (simple point addition of total available points)
3. Early Term: (20%) SHORT ANSWER TEST
 - 1 class period of writing paragraphs synthesizing the material from Unit 1 in your own reasoned language, thinking of yourselves as ‘instructing the instructor’
4. End of Term: (20%) CUMULATIVE EXAM
 - Timed, full-length final exam with various question types – Details TBD
5. End of Term: (5%) LEARNING OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT QUIZ
 - Online assessment quiz required for University accreditation

1.6.0.1 Totals

- * Class Survey & Contract, 5%
 - * Content Quizzes, 50%
 - * Short Answer Test, 20%
 - * Comprehensive Exam, 20%
 - * Assessment Quiz, 5%
-

1.7 Schedule

You are expected to have completed each week's required lectures and readings *prior to* the Content Quiz or other task for that week.

Each instance of "Blackboard #" corresponds to a specific matching numbered module (folder) inside the "Readings & Lectures" tab in Blackboard.

1.7.1 Unit 1: What are faith and reason?

1.7.1.1 1: Introductions Complete the Faith, Reason, and Revelation Class Survey & Contract in Blackboard by 11:59 PM on Friday, January 17 (2.5% of class grade).

January 13-17

What are we doing here?

- What is this Faith, Reason, and Revelation class?

How will this Faith, Reason, and Revelation class work?

TO BE UPDATED * Faith, Reason, & Revelation: Syllabus & Class Bones (Spring 2025, Online)

What is theology? How should I start doing it?

Lectures

- What is Catholic theology? 30 Minute Guide
- How to Read and Think Like a Theologian

How should I use our class resources?

Lectures

- How do I use the Catholic Study Bible?
- How do I use the Catechism of the Catholic Church? 5 Minute Guide
- Optional: The Best Free Computer Sources for Catholic Theology
- Optional: Oxford Reference Website: Theology & History Usage Guide

1.7.1.1.1 CONTENT QUIZ on 1: Introductions is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, January 17.

1.7.1.2 2: What is faith? January 20-24

Faith & Reason

Lecture

- Faith and Reason: Friends or Foes?

Readings

- CCC #36-43
- Spe Salvi 1-31 *Faith in Human Experience, Giving Joy*

Lecture

- (Historical Recording) Martin Luther King, Jr.'s ["I have a dream" speech](<https://archive.org/details/MLKDream>)

Reading

- (Blackboard 2) Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Day is Now Far Spent* (44-45, 224-225)

1.7.1.3 3: What is reason? *What can we say about God?*

Lecture

- Apophatic and Kataphatic Theology: What can we say about God?

Reading

- CCC #153-161

1.7.1.4 SHORT ANSWER ESSAY TASK is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, January 24.

1.7.2 Unit 2: Apparent Clashes of Faith and Reason

1.7.2.1 4: Creation(ism) and Evolution(ism) January 27-31

Genesis & Creation, part 1: Genre

Lecture

- Genesis and Creation: Genre Matters

Reading

- (Blackboard 4) The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation, pages 1-61

Genesis & Creation, part 2: Genesis 1

Lecture

- Genesis 1-3 Theological Dive: Why did God create us? What does it mean that we are fallen?

Reading

- (Blackboard 4) Catholic Study Bible: Genesis Reading Guide (RG pp. 120-134), Genesis Introduction (Bible pp. 9-11), and Genesis 1 (Bible pp. 11-13)

February 3-7

Genesis & Creation, part 3: Genesis 2-3

Reading

- (Blackboard 4) Catholic Study Bible: Genesis 2-3 (Bible pp. 13-16)

Creation(ism) & Evolution(ism)

Lecture

- Creation(ism) and Evolution(ism): Five Minute Breakdown

Reading

- (Blackboard 4) St. John Paul II's Letter to Scientists

1.7.2.2 CONTENT QUIZ on 4: Creation(ism) and Evolution(ism) is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 7.

1.7.2.3 5: Original Sin February 10-14

Original Sin

Lecture

- What is original sin? CCC 385-390 & 396-421 Deep Dive

Reading

- CCC #396-401

Am I a sinner?

Lecture

- Am I a sinner? What is sin? St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, Q. 71, A. 6

Reading

- CCC #1849-1863

1.7.2.4 CONTENT QUIZ on 5: Creation(ism) and Evolution(ism) is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 14.

1.7.2.5 6: The Problem of Evil February 17-21

What is the Problem of Evil?

Lecture

- Optional: What is the Problem of Evil?

Readings

- Larrimore, *The Problem of Evil: A Reader*, Introduction (Blackboard 6)
- CCC #309-314

C.S. Lewis on the Problem

Lectures

- Sr. Albert Marie on Mother Teresa
- Sr. Albert Marie on the Problem of Evil

Reading

- C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, ch. 2: Divine Omnipotence (Blackboard 6)

February 24-28

Classical Solutions to the Problem

Readings

- Plato, *Timaeus* 27c-31b (scanned from Larrimore, Blackboard 6)
- St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* IV.1-2 (scanned from Larrimore, Blackboard 6)

March 3-7

- St. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, Book VII, Chadwick Translation (Blackboard 6)

1.7.2.6 CONTENT QUIZ on 6: The Problem of Evil is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, March 7. Spring Break: No Assignments for March 10-14

1.7.3 Unit 3: Revelation

1.7.3.1 7: Biblical Inspiration: Divine & Human March 17-21

Lecture

- Sr. Albert Marie on Biblical Inspiration (Blackboard 7)

Readings

- Catholic Study Bible: Reading Guide, pp. 11-32 (“The Biblical Texts and Their Backgrounds” and “The Bible in Catholic Life”) (Blackboard 7)

1.7.3.2 CONTENT QUIZ on 7: Biblical Inspiration: Divine & Human is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, March 21.

1.7.3.3 8: Ecclesiastes *A week-long intensive dive into the Book of Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth as it pertains to the themes of the class*

March 24-28

Reading

- Catholic Study Bible: Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth Reading Guide (RG pp. 298-302) and Introduction (Bible p. 879) (Blackboard 8)

Lecture

Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth: Reading Guide and Introduction

Reading

Catholic Study Bible: Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth, 1:1-6:9 (Bible pp. 879–884) (Blackboard 8)

Lecture

Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth: Close Reading, Part 1 (1:1-11 and 1:12-6:9)

Reading

Catholic Study Bible: Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth, 6:10-12:14 (Bible pp. 884-890) (Blackboard 8)

Lecture

Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth: Close Reading, Part 2 (6:10-12:14)

1.7.3.4 CONTENT QUIZ on 8: Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, March 28.

1.7.3.5 9: What are the Gospels? March 31-April 4

What are the Gospels?

Reading

- Pitre, ch. 1 (Blackboard 9)

Lecture

- What are the Gospels?

Who did Jesus claim to be?

Reading

- Pitre, ch. 2, 3, & 6 (Blackboard 9)

Lecture

- Who did Jesus claim to be? An Introduction to Jesus's Profession(s) about Himself in the Gospels

1.7.3.6 CONTENT QUIZ on 9: What are the Gospels? is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, April 4.

1.7.3.7 10: Christ and the Church April 7-11

- (Blackboard 10) Pitre, ch. 9

Lecture

- Who are the Fathers of the Church?

Samples of Father of the Church

In-class homilies and other Patristic texts shared by the instructor

1.7.3.8 CONTENT QUIZ on 10: Christ and the Church is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, April 11.

1.7.3.9 11: Grace & Virtue April 14-16 (Triduum Break starts April 17)

Grace & Virtue

Lectures

- Grace, Central A/C, and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Sr. Albert Marie on Grace (Blackboard 7)

Readings

- CCC #1804-1831
- Teresa, p.307-319

1.7.3.10 CONTENT QUIZ on 11: Grace & Virtue is due by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, April 16 (before break).

1.7.3.11 12: Miracles April 21-25

What are miracles?

Lecture

- What are miracles? (Live Class Recording)

Reading

- Nichols article, p. 703-714

Lourdes

- Miracles in Lourdes (Blackboard 12)

1.7.3.12 CONTENT QUIZ on 12: Miracles is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, April 25. April 28-May 2

1.7.3.13 Cumulative Exam Week

- Lecture

Class review video lecture (TBA)

1.7.3.14 CUMULATIVE EXAM is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, May 2.

1.7.3.15 LEARNING OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT QUIZ is due by 11:59 PM on Friday, May 2.

1.8 University Policies

1.8.1 Accommodations

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the University of St. Thomas will provide academic accommodations to ensure access for students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities who require accommodations for this class, must register with the Office of Access & Disability Services (ADS) and provide documentation of a disability to determine what accommodations are most appropriate. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and disability accommodations are not provided until a Course Accessibility Letter has been provided to the instructor. For questions regarding academic accommodations and accessibility, please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services by email at ACCESS@STTHOM.EDU, or visit the ADS website at STTHOM.EDU/ACCESS.

1.8.2 Textbook

You must have The Catholic Study Bible: Third Edition.

1.8.3 Meetings

I encourage you to meet with me (Dr. Stephan), especially for guidance on the readings and assignments. Generally, appointments will be handled during my office hours (as listed at the beginning of this document).

1.8.4 Communication

You must use university email for electronic correspondence with me. I do not communicate digitally with students via any other means.

1.9 Other Class Policies

1.9.1 Late Submissions

I (Dr. Stephan) know that life happens, and I know that the best work sometimes has to be submitted late (the Sistine Chapel's painting went behind schedule, after all). At the same time, this class is a team effort, so we all must strive to have our work to share with each other on time. Even one 'weak link' can tear down everyone's experience; you (as an individual student) really do matter to the class as a whole.

With all that in mind, I have structured class assignments in such a way that there should not be any legitimate reason for anyone to make a late submission. Most late submissions will incur a late penalty, and, occasionally, I will not be able to accept a late submission at all.

1.9.2 Statement on Software Freedom

I (Dr. Stephan) am a longtime advocate of Free Software as defined by the Free Software Foundation. I encourage you to teach yourself about software freedom. For my part, I promise that I will never require you to use non-free software – except class infrastructural tools that are currently required as part of our experience at the University of St. Thomas (e.g. Microsoft Teams and Blackboard) or otherwise of practical necessity for our work at hand. Whenever possible, I will encourage you to prepare your work in free software and submit it in formats with open standards.

1.10 Class Prayer

A Prayer by St. Thomas Aquinas

Grant, O Merciful God, that I may ardently desire, prudently examine, truthfully acknowledge, and perfectly accomplish what is pleasing to Thee for the praise and glory of Thy name. Amen.