



UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

Core Curriculum Faith, Reason, and Revelation

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ONLINE, COMPRESSED TRACK A (CTA)

A syllabus inspired by Sr. Albert Marie Surmanski, O.P., Ph.D.'s

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.

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

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.

Destination

By the end of the semester:

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

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

To that end, we have a [Faith, Reason, & Revelation Class Survey & Contract](#) that all of us, myself included, are required to sign by the end of the first week.

Above all, note that you are expected: 1. To do all assigned readings and watch or listen to all assigned lectures every week, 2. To meet virtually in your study group every week and, when required, to upload the results of those meetings in Blackboard, and 3. To prepare for a video meeting with the instructor (me, Dr. Stephan) at least 2-3 times, approximately once per unit.

Class Webpages

The [class webpage](#), which I (Dr. Stephan) host on my professional website (coreystephan.com/teaching/faith-reason-revelation), will contain:

- this syllabus,
- lecture recordings (audio and/or video),
- blog posts,
- hyperlinks to class readings, and
- other (semi-)permanent materials related to the class.

Required Books

All of these books are strictly required in order to participate in the class.

1. The Catholic Study Bible: Third Edition [Catholic Study Bible]
 - ISBN 9780190267230

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

I will distribute other assigned readings either as .pdf scans on Blackboard or via hyperlinks to online materials in the public domain (shared on the class webpage that is linked above).

Required Electronic Equipment

1. Stable Internet (WAN) access
2. Webcam (may be built-in, such as is ubiquitous in laptop computers)
3. Microphone (may be built-in, such as is ubiquitous in laptop computers)

You *must* be able to do live video conferencing, as well as self-recordings, for this class. You do *not* need to purchase any special, high-end equipment, but all of your audio and video (both live and recorded) *must* be clear. A smart phone generally will *not* work for our purposes (save, perhaps, one of the most expensive models). A tablet *might* work, but a proper computer with a desktop operating system (GNU/Linux, FreeBSD, OpenBSD, MacOS, Microsoft Windows, etc.) will be best. You *may* (of course) use the equipment that is included in your tuition in the Doherty Library (and elsewhere on campus).

Themes

The course is divided into three thematic units:

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

Grades

The class has four grades, each of which will allow you to foster (and showcase) a different set of skills:

I. (25%) ON-ON-ONE MEETINGS * Total of 3 one-on-one meetings (partly oral exams) with the instructor (me, Dr. Stephan) or TA (once per unit) * Graded as A (strong), B (good), C/D (poor), and F (did not attend or obviously failed)

II. (25%) LEARNING GROUP RECORDINGS * Total of regular recorded meetings with learning groups * Graded as A (strong), B (good), C/D (poor), and F (did not write or obviously failed) * 1 score automatically dropped (to account for life)

III. (20% for assignment + 5% for peer evaluations) PARTNER DEBATE * Partner 'staged' argument for and against one aspect of traditional Christian belief * Graded 100, 95, 90, etc. * All submissions, including responses, must be submitted the day before Midterm Break * Each pair will be required to provide critical feedback on 3 other pairs'

IV. (25%) CUMULATIVE ESSAY * Faith, Reason, and Revelation in Mark's Gospel * An argumentative essay incorporating all the themes from the class * Graded 100, 95, 90, etc. * Due the day before Thanksgiving Break * 3-5 page formal essay (our *only* formal writing assignment) * Revision is expected

Reading and Lecture Schedule

You may complete each week's lectures and readings at your own pace, as long as you finish all of them prior to your meetings.

Unit I: What are faith and reason?

Week of 8/22

Set I: Introductions

Lectures

- What is this Faith, Reason, and Revelation class?
- Faith, Reason, & Revelation: Syllabus & Class Bones
- The Best Online Sources for Catholic Theology
- How to Read and Think Like a Theologian

Set II: What is faith?

Lecture

- Fides et Ratio: Partners or Foes?

Readings

- CCC #36-43
- Spe Salvi 1-31

Lecture

- [Historical Recording] Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech

Reading

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

I. Week of 8/29

Set I: What is reason?

Lecture

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

Reading

- CCC #39-43, #153-161

First One-on-One Meeting w/Instructor or TA

Unit 2: Apparent Clashes of Faith and Reason

Set II: Genesis & Creation

Lecture

- Genesis and Creation: Genre Matters

Reading

- Catholic Study Bible: Genesis Reading Guide, Genesis Introduction, and Genesis Chapters 1-3

Lecture

- Creation(ism) and Evolution(ism)

Reading

- St. John Paul II's Letter to Scientists

2. Week of 9/5

Set I: Sin

Lecture

- What is original sin?

Reading

- CCC #396-401

Lectures

- Am I a sinner?
- Sr. Albert Marie on Grace (Blackboard, 5.2)

Reading

- CCC #1849-1863

Set II: The Problem of Evil

Lecture

- What is the Problem of Evil?

Readings

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

Lecture

- Sr. Albert Marie on Mother Teresa (Blackboard, 6 [Excursus])

Readings

- Teresa, p.1-41
- C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain, ch. 2: Divine Omnipotence

Lectures

- Sr. Albert Marie on the Problem of Evil (Blackboard, 6 & 7)

Readings

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

3. Week of 9/12

Partner Debates

PARTNER DEBATES DUE BY END OF DAY ON 9/16

RESPONSES TO PARTNER DEBATES DUE BY END OF DAY ON 9/21

Second One-on-One Meeting w/Instructor or TA

Unit 3: Revelation

4. Week of 9/19

Set I: Biblical Inspiration

Lecture

- Sr. Albert Marie on Biblical Inspiration (Blackboard 9)

Readings

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

Reading

- Pitre, ch. 1

Set II: Christ and the Church

Lecture

- Who did Jesus say that He is?

Reading

- Pitre, ch. 2-3

Lecture

- Who are the Fathers of the Church?

Reading

- Pitre, ch. 4-5

5. Week of 9/26

Set I: Gospels and Jesus

Lecture

- Essay Assignment: Faith, Reason, and Revelation in Mark's Gospel

Lecture

- What are the Gospels?

Reading

- Pitre, ch. 6-7

Lecture

- What did the Apostles see in Jesus?

Reading

- Pitre, ch. 8-10

Set II: Essay Assignment

Reading

- Catholic Study Bible: Mark Reading Guide, Mark Introduction, Mark's Gospel (all)

Lecture

- Tips for Writing a Theology Essay

Third One-on-One Meeting w/Instructor or TA

Special focus on essays

ESSAYS DUE BY END OF DAY ON 10/1

6. Week of 10/3

Set I: Grace

Lecture

- Sr. Albert Marie on Grace (Blackboard 8)

Reading

- CCC #1804-1813

Set II: Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Lectures

- The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Readings

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

ORIGINAL ESSAYS RETURNED BY END OF DAY ON 10/5

7. Week of 10/10

NO LECTURES OR READINGS

REVISED ESSAYS DUE BY END OF DAY ON 10/10

Week 16: NO CLASS

REVISED ESSAYS DUE BY END OF DAY ON 12/6

University Policies

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.

Preparation

You must have all the required textbooks, ideally as soon as the class begins. Their ISBN numbers must match those on the syllabus. It is your responsibility, not the bookstore's, to arrange to have the proper books.

Meetings

I encourage you to meet with the TA and/or me (Dr. Stephan) outside of the classroom, especially for guidance on the readings and assignments. Generally, appointments will be handled via Jitsi (meet.jit.si/DrStephan).

Communication

You must use university email or Teams for electronic correspondence with me and with the TA. Any lost or missed communication as a result of using third party email, or failing to maintain one's UST email account under quota will be considered the student's fault.

Other Class Policies

Late Submissions

I 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, let me make this policy as simple as possible:

1. With legitimate excuse(s), I will accept 1 late submission from you with no penalty.
2. Without legitimate excuse(s), or if you are submitting a third item (of three formal submissions, no less!) late, then you will incur a 10% penalty per day.
3. After the grading deadline has passed at the end of the semester, I will not accept any more work.

Revision

For whichever projects for which this is possible (*as noted explicitly by me, Dr. Stephan*):

If you are not satisfied with your grade, you may do a full revision (or even start from scratch) and resubmit for full credit as though it were your first submission.

Statement on Software Freedom

I 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 tools that are currently required as part of our experience at the University of St. Thomas (e.g. Microsoft Teams). To the contrary, whenever possible, I will encourage or require you even to submit your work in formats with open standards.