



UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

Core Curriculum

Faith, Reason, and Revelation

Corey Stephan, Ph.D.

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- Office Hours: Mondays from 1:00-2:30 PM in Hughes House #201 *and by appointment (email in advance)*

Fall 2023

Notes:

1. As of the start of the semester, some submission deadlines and other aspects of this syllabus remain to be determined.
2. I reserve the right to revise this syllabus at any time during the semester.

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

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 be prepared for engaging full-group and small group discussions every class meeting.
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Class Webpage

The class webpage, which I (Dr. Stephan) host on my professional website (coreystephan.com), 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.
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Required Books

All of these books are 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 (in the class webpage that is linked above).

Themes

The course is divided into three thematic units:

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

The class has six grades.

The total class grade is weighted out of 100 points.

I. SEMESTER LONG: (22%) TRUTH TROOP TEAM TASKS

- Regular tasks with in-class learning groups, including sketches

II. UNIT 1: (22%) ONE-ON-ONE MEETING

- 1 one-on-one meeting (partly oral exam) with the instructor (me, Dr. Stephan)

III. UNIT 2: (22% = 17% for assignment + 5% for peer evaluations) PARTNER DEBATE

- Partner or small group 'staged' argument for and against one aspect of traditional Christian belief
- Each pair or group will be required to provide critical feedback on 3 other pairs' or groups'

IV. UNIT 3: (22%) CUMULATIVE ESSAY

- Faith, Reason, and Revelation in Mark's Gospel
- An argumentative essay incorporating all the themes from the class
- Graded in traditional point scale
- Due 11/21 at 11:59 PM
- 3-5 page formal essay (our *only* formal writing assignment)
- Revision for recuperated credit will be optional for all students

V. SEMESTER LONG: (10%) ATTENDANCE

- To receive **full credit** for this category, you may miss **up to 5 class periods** (over 1 full week's worth), *including for undocumented sickness*
- If you should have **more than 5 absences**, you will lose 20% of the attendance grade for each class period missed as follows: 6 = 80%, or -2 points from the total class grade; 7 = -4 points; 8 = -6 points; 9 = -8 points; 10 = -10 points (beyond a hypothetical 10 absences, there would be an additional penalty to be imposed at the judgment of the instructor with possible input from the Dean of the Division of Liberal Studies)
- University-excused absences are excluded from the tabulation, provided that you remind me of your official excuse
- No other absences are excused (excluded from the tabulation), unless you should provide a documented medical, legal, or other circumstance that precludes you from attending class (e.g. a letter from a medical or legal office) to me, the instructor

VI. END OF TERM: (2%) LEARNING OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT QUIZ

- Online assessment quiz required for University accreditation
 - The quiz itself will not be graded; instead, you will receive full credit for completion
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Schedule

You are expected to have completed each week's lectures and readings *prior to* the marked class period.

Unit 1: What are faith and reason?

1: Introductions *Complete the Faith, Reason, & Revelation Class Survey & Contract*

8/21

What are we doing here?

Lectures

- What is this Faith, Reason, and Revelation class?
- Faith, Reason, & Revelation: Syllabus & Class Bones

8/23

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

8/25

How should I use our class resources?

Lectures

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

Truth Troop Teams assigned.

2: What is faith? *Sign up for one-on-one meetings.*

8/28

Faith & Reason

Lecture

- Faith and Reason: Friends or Foes?

Readings

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

8/30

Faith in Human Experience, Giving Joy

Lecture

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

Reading

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

3: What is reason? 9/1

What can we say about God?

Lecture

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

Reading

- CCC #153-161

9/4 - *Labor Day* - *CAMPUS CLOSED*

9/6, 9/7, & 9/8

One-on-One Meetings w/Instructor NO CLASS on 9/6 or 9/8 days, since one-on-one meetings will take place during those hours

Unit 2: Apparent Clashes of Faith and Reason

4: Creation(ism) and Evolution(ism) 9/11

Genesis & Creation

Lectures

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

Reading

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

In-class: Begin Sketch Tragedies (Genesis 2-3)

9/13

Lecture *Creation(ism) & Evolution(ism)*

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

Reading

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

9/15 & 9/18

In-class: Prepare Sketch Tragedies (Genesis 2-3)

9/20 & 9/22

In-class: Present Sketch Tragedies (Genesis 2-3)

5: Original Sin 9/25

Original Sin

Lecture

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

Reading

- CCC #396-401

9/27

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

6: The Problem of Evil 9/29

Mother Teresa's Worldview

Lecture

- Sr. Albert Marie on Mother Teresa

Readings

- Teresa, p.1-41

10/2

What is the Problem of Evil?

Lecture

- What is the Problem of Evil?

Readings

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

10/4

C.S. Lewis on the Problem

Lectures

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

Reading

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

10/6

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)

10/9 - *Columbus Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day, & UST Midterm Break - CAMPUS CLOSED*

10/11

Augustine on the Problem of Evil MATERIALS TBD

10/13

Beginning the Partner Debate project

Lecture

- Faith, Reason, & Revelation Class Partner Debates

10/16, 10/18, & 10/20

PARTNER DEBATE WEEK

Unit 3: Revelation

7: Grace & Virtue 10/23

Grace & Virtue

Lecture

- Grace, Central A/C, and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Reading

- CCC #1804-1831

10/25

Lecture

- Sr. Albert Marie on Grace (Blackboard 7)

Reading

- Teresa, p.307-319

8: Biblical Inspiration: Divine & Human 10/27

Lecture

- Sr. Albert Marie on Biblical Inspiration (Blackboard 8)

Readings

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

9: What are the Gospels? 10/30

Essay Assignment

Lectures (Blackboard -> Cumulative Essays)

- Cumulative Essay Assignment: Faith, Reason, and Revelation in Mark's Gospel
- How can a new undergraduate student write a successful theological essay? Deep Essay Writing Guide

11/1

What are the Gospels?

Reading

- Pitre, ch. 1, 2, 3, & 6

Lecture

- What are the Gospels?

11/3

Who did Jesus claim to be?

Lecture

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

10: Gospel of Mark *A week-long intensive dive into Mark's Gospel*

11/6

Mark, pt. 1

Readings

- Catholic Study Bible: Mark Reading Guide, Mark Introduction

11/8

Mark, pt. 2

Readings

- Mark 1-8

11/10

Mark, pt. 3

Readings

- Mark 8-16
- Pitre, ch. 11

Cumulative Essay Assignment *4 class periods of focused writing, peer editing, etc.*

11/13

In-class WRITING WORKSHOP 1

11/15

In-class WRITING WORKSHOP 2

11/17

In-class WRITING PEER REVIEW (Truth Troop Team Task)

11/20

In-class WRITING WRAP-UP

ESSAYS DUE BY 11:59 PM on TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21

THANKSGIVING BREAK -- NO CLASS 11/22 or 11/24

11: Christ and the Church

- Pitre, ch. 9

11/27

Who are the Fathers of the Church?

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

12: Miracles 11/29

What are miracles?

Lecture

- What are miracles? (Live Class Recording)

Reading

- Nichols article, p. 703-714

Lourdes

- Miracles in Lourdes (Blackboard 12)

13: Resurrection 12/1

Reading

- Pitre, ch. 12

Lecture

- Bishop Barron on the Resurrection of Jesus (Blackboard 15)

14: Class Wrap-up 12/4

Class wrap-up round table

LEARNING OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT QUIZZES DUE BY 11:59 PM on Monday, December 4

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 me outside of the classroom, 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).

Communication

You must use university email or Teams for electronic correspondence with me. 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, I have structured class assignments in such a way that there should not be any legitimate reason for anyone to make a late submission. Yet, for individual project submissions for which late submissions are actually viable (*as judged by me, Dr. Stephan*), I will not penalize students for late submissions.

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.

All writing, and, indeed, all creative production (engineering, painting, coding, etc.), is, after all, *revision*.

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.