



UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

Core Curriculum Faith, Reason, and Revelation

Cumulative Essay

Faith, Reason, & Revelation in Mark's Gospel

Corey Stephan, Ph.D. ~ Fall 2022

Directions are being drafted during this semester. For clarifications, please write to Dr. Stephan.

You will prepare a 3-5 page formal and argumentative essay that draws at least one theme or lesson from the class prior to the Gospel of Mark together with that biblical text. You should seek to answer one question about faith, reason, and revelation in relationship to Mark's Gospel. You will have a clear thesis statement, and you will cite class materials as evidence to argue your thesis.

Sample Question and Structure

The essay will have the classic structure of any high school through Master's-level argumentative one:

1. Introduction with thesis and preview of main points
2. Body paragraphs that argue the main points

3. Conclusion that reviews the thesis, ties together the argument, and points to something greater (*So what?*)

Yet, it will be different from what you might be accustomed to doing in that *you* are in charge of

For example, you might ask:

- Does Mark's Gospel address the Problem of Evil, specifically moral evil? If so, how?
 - Your clear **thesis statement** would be something to this effect:
The Gospel of Mark posits the solution to the moral aspect of the Problem of Evil that all moral evils are a consequence of humans freely choosing to reject God.
 - You would thus continue the introduction by previewing your main points, which might look like this:
The Gospel specifically points to this solution at three places: when Jesus is tempted in the wilderness (Mark Ch:VV), when the crowds repeatedly harass Jesus (e.g. Ch:VV and Ch:VV), and when Jesus is sentenced to death (Ch:VV).
 - Subsequent paragraphs would fill out (as it were) each of these main points. The first body paragraph, therefore, might go as follows:
When Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness, he seems to take for granted that Jesus, as a man, will freely choose to reject God. When he says, "...," he points to free will as his primary target in leading all people (not only his current target, Jesus) away from God's plans for our lives.
 - The conclusion would summarize the argument while pointing to something greater (*So what?*):
By showing the full gravity of the evil that flows from human free will, Mark's Gospel suggests a traditional theodicy: namely, that God created free will as a gift that outweighs the gravity of moral evils. The Resurrection, in fact, infinitely outweighs any and all moral evils inasmuch as...

Submission Requirements

Each essay will meet the following parameters:

- 3-5 pages double-spaced (either side of 1,000 words, i.e. ca. 750-1,250) with **ET-Book**, Garamond, or Times New Roman font in size 12
- Top-right corner, single-spaced list of name > class code > date > assignment name:

Last Name, First Name CLASS SECTION CODE MONTH DAY, YEAR Cumulative Essay
Smith, John/Jane THEOC 1301-A October 1, 2022 Cumulative Essay

- Provocative title with one space above and below (no wasted space), such as:
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- Submitted in the correct assignment area in Blackboard as a **.docx** file (.odt and other file types are not supported by Blackboard)
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Citations

You are only to make use of class materials, including assigned readings, video lectures, partner debate contents, class session notes, and other materials. This is both a constraint on scope to help keep you dutifully focused and a means by which I as the grader may assess how well you really have digested what we have done in the class.

Since you are only expected to make use of class materials, your citations may be very simple: abbreviated, sub-formal MLA-style parentheticals. Here is an example: *Mark's Gospel opens with these words: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mark 1:1).*

Note that I have not even had to specify the translation quoted, since we have a standard Bible for the class (*The Catholic Study Bible: Third Edition*, which uses the New American Bible: Revised Edition translation).

Here is another example: *Yet, the genre of a text always tells us something about what the text's author meant to communicate (Stephan lecture "Genesis & Creation: Genre Matters").*

Part of my goal as the instructor with this simplicity regarding citations is to allow you to focus on the creative and exciting process of writing rather than the inescapable drudgery that is academic citational style. You will have plenty of opportunity to learn the required style guide for your own discipline. (If you are wondering, both theology and history use the Chicago Manual of Style with the Notes & Bibliography sub-variant, so that is the only style that I, Dr. Stephan, know well, and that is what you will want to learn if you are a theology or history major).

Remember especially the class's four textbooks: *The Catholic Study Bible*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Pitre's *The Case for Jesus*, and St. Theresa's *Where There is Love, There is God*.

Real Writing is Revision

Your first submission for this essay assignment will be your best effort. You will, however, be expected to do a revision in which you incorporate either my (Dr. Stephan's) feedback or that of my teaching assistant. All deadlines are unique to each class section, so be sure to track your own section's calendar.

Your grade will come chiefly from your final submission. If you have worked especially hard through the process, that will boost your grade, and if you have hardly worked, that will lower your grade.

Dr. Stephan's Ten Commandments for Argumentative Essays

1. Thou shalt not use phrases such as 'I feel,' 'I felt,' or 'my feelings.' As a student, you *think*, thereby producing *thoughts*. (Exception: A raw emotional response to something specific followed by analysis of what caused that response.)
 2. Thou shalt not employ the first- or second-person forms of address. That what you are writing is your own thoughts is implicit, and that you are writing them to me as your grader is also implicit. A formal essay is written with attempted detachment.
 3. Thou shalt not remove words via contractions. 'Do not' takes maybe 3 ms longer to type than 'don't,' and the former is what is proper to formal writing.
 4. Thou shalt not make use of adjectives or adverbs. Rely on observations and facts rather than emotionally charged language.
 5. Thou shalt write with correct grammar and syntax. This is a university -- not a middle school. Plus, we have an open-access Tutorial Center.
 6. Thou shalt write with what thou knowest. The odds are low that you will impress me with your vocabulary. Write formally but without needing to frequent a thesaurus. Obviously, slang has no place in an essay of this kind.
 7. Thou shalt write with analysis rather than personal notes.
 8. Thou shalt double (and triple) check that thy thesis statement is clear and actually argued through the whole paper.
 9. Thou shalt make copious but judicious use of quotations from and citations of class materials. As part of your revision, and then (again) as part of your final editing, you must make sure that you do not make any sub-arguments without at least pointing to some assigned material from the class.
 10. Thou shalt have at least one trusted confidant read thy work critically before thou shouldst submit it to thy grader.
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Success Tips

1. Visit the Tutorial Center.
 2. Start working early.
 3. Solicit help from others.
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Grading

You will be graded for (1) thesis and scope, (2) structure, (3) evidence, and (4) overall cohesion and thoughtfulness in accordance with a broader rubric that you will be able to view on Blackboard.

Collaboration and Plagiarism

Do not duplicate anyone else's words, phrases, and/or ideas without citing them. When seeking feedback from others, which is part of the formal academic writing process, make sure that you nevertheless keep your paper organized in such a way that you are only communicating with your own voice.

I, Dr. Stephan, maintain a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism. If you cheat, you will simply be out of 25% of your class grade (from a score of 0% on this assignment), and you might face additional consequences.