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Figure 1: University of St. Thomas - Core Curriculum

Faith, Reason, and Revelation

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- Office Hours: Mondays from 12:15 - 1:15 in Hughes House #201 *and by appointment (email in advance)*

Fall 2024

- THEOC-1301B, 9:10-10:00 MWF, Malloy Hall 017
- THEOC-1301C, 10:10-11:00 MWF, Malloy Hall 017
- THEOC-1301M, 11:10-12:00 MWF, Malloy Hall 017

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.

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.

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, 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:

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 at every required meeting.

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

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 total class grade is weighted out of 100 points.

1. Start of Term: (2.5%) CLASS SURVEY AND CONTRACT
2. Semester Long: (15%) 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*.
 - This category will be tabulated with a simple percentage *at the end of the term*.
 - That means that if you look in your gradebook in Blackboard and see that you have, say, 3 absences, you still have a score of 100% for attendance. Blackboard does not allow the instructor to exempt up to a certain number of absences automatically.
 - University-excused absences are excluded from the attendance grade tabulation, provided that you remind me of your official excuse.
 - Tracking any excused absence(s) that you might have and ensuring that they end up entered into Blackboard is your responsibility as the student.
 - 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.
3. Semester Long: (20%) TRUTH TROOP TEAM TASK(S)
 - 1 or more graded task with in-class learning groups
4. Unit 1: (20%) SHORT ANSWER TEST (Early Term Exam)
 - 1 class period of writing paragraphs synthesizing the material from Unit 1 in your own reasoned language, thinking of yourselves as 'instructing the instructor'
5. Unit 2: (20%) PARTNER/GROUP DEBATE (Midterm Project)
 - 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' projects
6. Unit 3: (20%) IN-CLASS ESSAY (Final Exam)
 - In-class, handwritten or typed cumulative essay
7. End of Term: (2.5%) LEARNING OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT QUIZ
 - Online assessment quiz required for University accreditation

Totals

- Individual Grades = 60%
 - Class Survey, 2.5%
 - Attendance, 15%
 - Short Answer Test, 20%
 - In-class Essay, 20%
 - Assessment Quiz, 2.5%
 - Group Grades = 40%
 - Truth Troop Team Tasks, 20%
 - Partner / Group Debates, 20%
-

Schedule

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

Items specially labeled “Optional” are *recommended* for all students but not, in fact, *required*. They variously serve as ready-to-go ‘backup’ tasks in case of unexpected class cancellations (such as from extreme weather events), supplemental materials to assist regular student learning (such as for students who might learn best by themselves outside of class), and ‘makeup’ materials for students who might need to miss specific class periods.

All items not labeled “Optional” are required for all students.

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

Unit 1: What are faith and reason?

1: Introductions Complete the Faith, Reason, and Revelation Class Survey & Contract in Blackboard by 11:59 PM on Friday, August 23 (2.5% of class grade)

August 19

What are we doing here?

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

August 21

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

- Optional: Faith, Reason, & Revelation: Syllabus & Class Bones

August 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

August 26

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

Truth Troop Teams assigned.

2: What is faith? *Discuss the short answer essay test task.*

August 28

Faith & Reason

Lecture

- Faith and Reason: Friends or Foes?

Readings

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

August 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? September 2 - LABOR DAY - UST CAMPUS CLOSED

September 4

What can we say about God?

Lecture

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

Reading

- CCC #153-161

September 6

Short Answer Essay Test

Unit 2: Apparent Clashes of Faith and Reason

4: Creation(ism) and Evolution(ism) September 9

Genesis & Creation, part 1: Genre

Lecture

- Genesis and Creation: Genre Matters

Reading

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

September 11

Genesis & Creation, part 2: Genesis 1

Lecture

- Optional: 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 (RG pp. 120-134), Genesis Introduction (Bible pp. 9-11), and Genesis 1 (Bible pp. 11-13)

In-class: Genesis 1, First Account of Creation

September 13

Genesis & Creation, part 3: Genesis 2-3

Reading

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

In-class: Genesis 2-3, Second Account of Creation (Adam & Eve)

September 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

September 18, 20, 23, and 25

Prepare and present Creation Myth Truth Troop Team projects

5: Original Sin September 27

Original Sin

Lecture

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

Reading

- CCC #396-401

September 30

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 October 2

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

October 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)

October 7

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)

October 9

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

October 11

Introduce Partner/Group Debate project task

- Optional: Faith, Reason, & Revelation Class Partner Debates

October 14 - UST MIDTERM BREAK - CAMPUS CLOSED

October 16, 18, 21

Partner/Group Debate project series

Unit 3: Revelation

7: Biblical Inspiration: Divine & Human October 23

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”)

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

October 25

Reading

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

Lecture

Optional: Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth: Reading Guide and Introduction

October 28

Reading

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

Lecture

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

October 30

Reading

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

Lecture

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

9: What are the Gospels? November 1

What are the Gospels?

Reading

- Pitre, ch. 1

Lecture

- Optional: What are the Gospels?

November 4

- Pitre, ch. 2, 3, & 6

November 6

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: Christ and the Church November 8

- 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

11: Grace & Virtue November 11

Grace & Virtue

Lectures

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

November 13

Readings

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

12: Miracles November 15

What are miracles?

Lecture

- Optional: What are miracles? (Live Class Recording)

Reading

- Nichols article, p. 703-714

Lourdes

- Miracles in Lourdes (Blackboard 12)

13: Resurrection November 18

Reading

- Pitre, ch. 12

Lecture

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

Cumulative Essay (Final Exam) November 20

What is this cumulative essay assignment? How should I approach it?

November 22

Full class cumulative review, Day 1

November 25

Full class cumulative review, Day 2

November 28

CUMULATIVE ESSAY

by “Blue Books” (hand-written) or live typing (computer keyboard)

Class Wrap-Up December 2

Learning Objective Assessment Quizzes (2.5% of class grade)

Class Round-Table Discussion

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 (Dr. Stephan) 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 for electronic correspondence with me. I do not communicate digitally with students via any other means.

Other Class Policies

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices such as laptop computers and digital tablets are only permitted in class when situationally required, such as for doing a group project or accessing a specific digital reading – or, of course, for students with documented medical conditions (notably, visual impairments) that require the use of specific electronic accessories. Otherwise, they should not be used in class. I (Dr. Stephan) strongly prefer that such electronic devices be kept in students' bags.

I might ask a student who distracts other students and/or the instructor with out-of-place electronic device usage to leave the class for the day; that student would then be marked as “Absent” against his/her attendance record (grade).

Cell phone usage is never appropriate in a classroom. If you should have an urgent matter to address that requires making a telephone call or text messaging, then you ought to step out of the room to take care of it.

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.

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.

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.