

Mount St. Mary's Seminary
Fall 2024

SYST 501 — Revelation, Faith, and Theology
3 credits (3 hrs./wk. for 15 wks.)

T/F, 9:50–11:05am
McSweeney 123

Dr. Michael S. Hahn, Ph.D. (University of Notre Dame)
Associate Professor of Sacred Scripture
Keating 003 (office hours by appointment)
m.s.hahn@msmary.edu

Course Description

This initial course in systematic theology serves as an introduction to the discipline of theology in general—including its sources, methods, and purpose—by means of a sustained consideration of the triune God's self-disclosure in revelation and the human person's divinely aided response to this revelation in faith. These central topics of revelation, faith, and theology are examined in terms of divine teaching and pedagogy—what God teaches, why God teaches, how God teaches, and how this teaching is profitably received and appropriated. Through a careful reading of texts from Scripture, Church doctors, the Magisterium, and contemporary scholars, seminarians will study and reflect upon the content and unity of this divine teaching, its gratuity and fittingness, its ecclesially mediated character, and its centeredness on the person and saving work of Christ.

Place of this course in the Intellectual Formation Program

The following five intellectual formation dimension goals are addressed:

- 1.A. Possesses a familiarity with the Scriptures and understands biblical theology in accord with the mind of the Church.
- 1.B. Knows and accepts the normative function of the Magisterium.
- 1.C. Gives evidence of the knowledge of the distinction between the truths revealed by God and contained in the deposit of faith, and their theological mode of expression.
- 4.A. Demonstrates a habit of reading, particularly through the completion of assigned readings and dedication to further theological and non-theological reading.
- 4.B. Practices critical thinking as evidenced in class participation, exams, and/or papers.

Place of this course in the degree program(s)

Required for the M.Div. and S.T.B. degrees, and a prerequisite for M.A. program admission.

Course Goals/Learning Outcomes

Seminarians will gain the theological and pastoral competence necessary to:

- grasp the nature and methods of the discipline of theology as an intellectual inquiry into the triune God's self-revelation, as well as the vital importance of theological study and reflection for forming and strengthening the Christian life of clergy and laity alike;
- appreciate the pedagogy of God's self-revelation and its manifold suitedness to the rational, embodied, social, and historical dimensions of the human person;
- recognize the foundational importance of faith both as divine gift and as human act, the first fruits of God's gratuitous equipping and assisting of the human person to cooperate with him in attaining to God as beatifying end;

- understand the interrelationships that obtain between Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium, as well as their shared orientation to the proclamation of Christ and the mystery of salvation;
- delve further into the thought of Thomas Aquinas and appreciate its place in the Church's theological tradition, as flowing from Scripture and the teaching of earlier doctors, as making fitting use of the philosophical insights of the ancients, and as giving rise to later doctrinal and theological developments.

Course Requirements

- 1) Regular participation in class discussion, informed by careful preparation of assigned readings (10%).
- 2) Daily written responses to distributed reading questions, to be submitted to the instructor via email (in body of email, *not* in attachment) by midnight on the night prior to the corresponding class meeting; three “skips” allowed (tip: use these “skips” wisely) (25%).
- 3) Two in-class end-of-unit quizzes, on 9/27 and 10/29 (10% for each, 20% total).
- 4) One short paper (5–6pp.) on a chosen topic in the *Summa theologiae*'s treatise on faith, due 10/25; guidelines for paper provided at end of syllabus (20%).
- 5) Final exam, date and time TBD (25%).

Course Policies

Policies follow the Academic Norms found in the *Seminarian Handbook*, available online at https://seminary.msmary.edu/registrar/seminary-documents/seminarian_handbook.pdf.

Absences/late work—Seminarians are required to attend all classes and to be present for the entirety of each class. More than two absences will result in an automatic lowering of one's overall grade; further absences may result in failure of the course. When possible, seminarians should alert the instructor in advance to any anticipated absence from class (including late arrival or early departure). Unless otherwise arranged with the instructor, seminarians are responsible for all course material for classes from which they are absent, and are likewise expected to submit coursework on the date it is due. Late work will be docked up to one half-letter per day.

Disabilities—Seminarians with a physical or learning disability that will require accommodation in the course should alert the instructor to this fact within the first week of the semester.

Technology—Unless explicit prior allowance has been given by the instructor (e.g., as part of a previously established accommodation for disability, etc.), the use of laptops or tablets during class is not permitted. For those for whom allowance is made, the use of laptops/tablets is only to be for work directly related to the course (e.g., note-taking, reviewing reading assignments, etc.); any use of laptops/tablets for purposes unrelated to the course will result in a lower participation grade and the loss of this allowance. For all, the use of cell phones during class is forbidden.

Academic honesty—Seminarians are expected to abide by all rules regarding Academic Integrity that are outlined in the *Seminarian Handbook*. You should familiarize yourself with the details of these rules, especially with regard to what constitutes cheating and plagiarism, which are grave violations of academic integrity as well as serious formation issues. In this course, the creation of written work with the assistance of AI tools or language model software is regarded as a form of

automated plagiarism. In the event that such a violation is determined to have occurred, your diocese will be alerted to this and the academic dean may dismiss you from the degree program. The minimum penalty for a first offense is a grade of zero on the assignment in question; a second offense will automatically result in a failing grade for the course and a recommendation for expulsion from the Seminary.

Grade Scale— A grade of “A” (96-100%) is reserved for exceptional work that meets or exceeds the highest expectations of the course; “A-” (93-95.99%), for excellent work; “B+” (89-92.99%), for very good work; “B” (83-88.99%), for good work; “B-” (80-82.99%), for acceptable work; “C+” (77-79.99%), for below-average graduate work; “C” (74-76.99%), for poor graduate-level work; “C-” (70-73.99%), for deficient graduate-level work; and “F” (0-69.99%), for failure.

Texts and Resources

Due to the variety of the assigned readings, and to the cost-prohibitive nature of a course packet, I have made available on Canvas a number of the readings as downloadable/printable .pdfs. On the days for which they are assigned, these ***required Canvas readings should be printed out and brought to class*** for reference during lectures and class discussion. The following six texts are the only ones required for the course:

The Holy Bible (Revised Standard Version-Catholic Edition)
Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition [CCC] (USCCB, 2000)
Laurence Feingold, *Faith Comes from What Is Heard: An Introduction to Fundamental Theology* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2016)
Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* [ST], trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols. (Christian Classics, 1981)
Joseph P. Wawrykow, *The Westminster Handbook to Thomas Aquinas* [WHTA] (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005)
Dean Béchard (ed.), *The Scripture Documents: An Anthology of Official Catholic Teachings* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002)

Seminarians should be aware that the above English translation of Aquinas’s *Summa* is available for free online, including from the Thomistic Institute (<https://aquinas101.thomisticinstitute.org>) and the Aquinas Institute (<https://aquinas.cc>). In addition, please note that all assigned readings from Aquinas’s *Summa* will be made available as downloadable/printable .pdfs on Canvas.

COURSE SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW (2 weeks)

T Aug. 20: Course introduction

Readings: handout on theology as “faith seeking understanding” (in class)

F Aug. 23: How the rational creature comes to knowledge of God

Readings: Jn. 1:1-18; CCC, nos. 1, 26–73

Background: *Dei Filius*, pref. and ch. 1 (Canvas)

T Aug. 27: The transmission of divine revelation: Scripture and Tradition, and the Magisterium
Readings: 1 Cor. 15:1-11; CCC, nos. 74–141
Background: *Dei Filius*, ch. 2 (Canvas / Béchard)

F Aug. 30: Supernatural faith: human act, luminous virtue, and sacred deposit
Readings: Heb. 11; CCC, nos. 142–193
Background: *Dei Filius*, chs. 3–4 (Canvas)

UNIT I. DIVINE TEACHING AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THEOLOGY (3 ½ weeks)

T Sept. 3: Introducing St. Thomas Aquinas and his sapiential project
Readings: WHTA, “Introduction” (Canvas); excerpts from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* I.1–8 (Canvas)
Background: WHTA, “Preambles of Faith”; Feingold, ch. 4
Reading response feedback distributed

F Sept. 6: *Sacra doctrina* and the “science” of theology
Readings: ST I, q.1, aa.1–7 (Canvas); Feingold, ch. 5
Background: WHTA, “Sacred Doctrine,” “Subalternation,” “Theology”; ST I, q.14, aa.1–2, 5–6, 11, 13, 16 (Canvas)

T Sept. 10: By argument and authority: methods of that theology that belongs to *sacra doctrina*
Readings: ST I, q.1, a.8 (Canvas); Feingold, ch. 6
Background: WHTA, “Authority,” “Philosophy”

F Sept. 13: Divine pedagogy: God reveals, and humans learn, through sensible things
Readings: Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* II.1,1–7,11 (Canvas); Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chs. 1–2 (Canvas); ST I, q.1, aa.9–10 (Canvas)
Background: WHTA, “Scripture”

T Sept. 17: God’s natural, and supernatural, illumination of the human mind
Readings: ST I, q.12, aa.1, 11–13; ST I-II, q.109, a.1 (Canvas)
Background: WHTA, “Beatific Vision,” “Nature and Grace”; ST I, q.79, aa.1–4 (Canvas)

F Sept. 20: Gratuitous grace, prophecy, and the human teaching of divine things
Readings: 1 Cor. 12; ST I-II, q.111, a.1; ST II-II, q.171, aa.1–4; q.173, aa.2, 4 (Canvas)
Background: WHTA, “Gratuitous Graces”

T Sept. 24: The increase and unfolding of prophetic revelation across biblical history
Readings: ST II-II, q.174, aa.2, 4–6; q.175, aa.1, 3–4, 6 (Canvas)
Background: WHTA, “Prophecy”

UNIT II. FAITH AS THE BEGINNING OF ETERNAL LIFE (3 ½ weeks)

F Sept. 27: “It is to your advantage that I go”: the purpose of the visible sending of the Son

Readings: Jn. 9, 16, 20; ST I, q.43, aa.1, 3, 5, 7; ST III, q.1, a.2; q.57, a.1 (Canvas)

Background: WHTA, “Missions,” “Viator”

UNIT I QUIZ

T Oct. 1: “Partakers of the divine nature”: sanctifying grace and the theological virtues

Readings: Rom. 4–5; ST I-II, q.62; q.110, aa.3–4 (Canvas)

Background: WHTA, “Grace,” “Theological Virtues”; ST I-II, q.51 (Canvas)

F Oct. 4: The interior act of faith—“to believe”—and what it entails

Readings: Gal. 5; ST II-II, q.2, aa.1–2; q.3; q.4, aa.2–3 (Canvas)

Background: WHTA, “Charity,” “Faith”; ST I, q.82, aa.1–4 (Canvas)

/// FALL BREAK ///

T Oct. 15: The object of faith: what, and whom, is believed?

Readings: ST II-II, q.1, aa.1–5; q.2, aa.3–6 (Canvas)

Background: WHTA, “Articles of Faith”

Reading response feedback distributed

F Oct. 18: The articulation and creedal expression of the faith

Readings: ST II-II, q.1, aa.6, 8–10 (Canvas)

Background: WHTA, “Pope”

T Oct. 22: The “same faith” of Old and New, and the necessity of belief in Christ and the Trinity

Readings: ST I-II, q.107, a.1; ST II-II, q.1, a.7; q.2, aa.7–10 (Canvas)

Background: WHTA, “Merit”; ST I-II, q.114, aa.1–6 (Canvas)

F Oct. 25: Consolidation and clarification by contrast: faith and unbelief

Readings: Acts 10; ST II-II, q.4, a.1; q.5, a.3; q.6; q.10, aa.1–4 (Canvas)

Background: WHTA, “Facienti quod in se est”; ST I-II, q.109, a.6 (Canvas)

AQUINAS PAPER DUE

UNIT III. THE WORD OF GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF SALVATION (6 weeks)

T Oct. 29: Revelation as the deepest truth about God and salvation

Readings: *Dei Verbum*, ch. 1 (Canvas / Béchard); Feingold, ch. 1

Background: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus* (Canvas)

UNIT II QUIZ

F Nov. 1: Solemnity of All Saints; no class

- T Nov. 5:** Sacred Tradition and the role of the Church's Magisterium
Readings: *Dei Verbum*, ch. 2 (Canvas / Béchard); Feingold, ch. 9
Background: Feingold, chs. 7–8; Avery Dulles, “The Response Due to the Magisterium” (Canvas)
- F Nov. 8:** The inspiration and inerrancy of Sacred Scripture
Readings: *Dei Verbum*, ch. 3 (Canvas / Béchard); Feingold, chs. 10–11
Background: Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus* (Canvas / Béchard); Pablo Gadenz, “Magisterial Teaching on the Inspiration and Truth of Scripture” (Canvas)
- T Nov. 12:** The interpretation of Sacred Scripture
Readings: Feingold, ch. 12
Background: Pontifical Biblical Commission, “Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” (Canvas / Béchard)
- F Nov. 15:** Day of recollection; no class
- T Nov. 19:** The apostolic origins and historicity of the gospels' witness to Christ
Readings: *Dei Verbum*, ch. 5 (Canvas / Béchard); Feingold, chs. 14–15
Background: Joseph Ratzinger, “Biblical Interpretation in Conflict” (Canvas); Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus*, 84–101 (Canvas)
- F Nov. 22:** Typological interpretation of Scripture and its foundations in Scripture and Tradition
Readings: Lk. 24; *Dei Verbum*, ch. 4 (Canvas / Béchard); Feingold, chs. 16–17
Background: Robert Louis Wilken, “How to Read the Bible” (Canvas)
- T Nov. 26:** Society of Biblical Literature conference; no class

/// THANKSGIVING BREAK ///

- T Dec. 3:** The Church's reading of Scripture and the fittingness of typological exegesis
Readings: *Dei Verbum*, ch. 6; Feingold, ch. 18; excerpts from Augustine, *Contra Faustum* XII.7–37 (Canvas)
- F Dec. 6:** Course wrap-up
Reading response feedback distributed
- TBD:** Final exam, on all course material

Aquinas Paper Guidelines

For this assignment, you will write a 5–6pp. paper on a topic of your choosing, drawn from the *Summa theologiae*'s treatise on faith (*ST* II-II.1–16). This is a *text-based* paper, which means that it is to have the character, in the first place, of a critical exposition of the text(s) in which your chosen topic is addressed. While other factors will be taken into account (e.g., mechanics), this paper does *not* require outside research or engagement with secondary scholarship, and in fact, you are encouraged to focus solely on the text(s) you have selected. (Certainly, if your paper happens to make use of other scholars' work, e.g., Wawrykow's very valuable handbook, you *must* acknowledge your debt with a footnote reference; plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and will result in a grade of zero for the paper.)

You may write on any topic and text(s) from the *Summa*'s treatise on faith that you wish, though in making your choice you should be aware of the limits of what a 5–6pp. paper can accomplish. As indicated by the list of suggested topics and texts (see reverse), the focus of your exposition should be trained on no more than one or two articles, with any additional inclusion of relevant material from elsewhere in the treatise (or the *Summa* at large) being aimed at shedding light on these articles. When in doubt, opt for quality of exposition over quantity of examined texts.

Once you have selected your topic and text(s), you are ready for the 'first step' in writing your text-based paper, which is not writing, but *reading*: Read the text(s), re-read the text, and leave your mark on it, literally. As long as it belongs to you (i.e., it's not a library book), you should highlight or underline important words or phrases, circle key terms, draw arrows between connected ideas, jot notes in the margins or question marks where you're confused, etc.—in short, do whatever helps you to engage the text in greater depth and with greater attentiveness.

In preparing your written exposition of the text(s), it may be useful to pose your own 'reading question(s)' about the text, so as to direct others' attention to what you have identified as being most important. Such questions might call attention to potential ambiguities or problems in the topic or text under consideration, or relatedly, to specific issues that Aquinas seeks to resolve.

The structure of your paper should track with the following basic movements: 1) *introduction of the topic* (perhaps in the form of a question to be answered) and identification of the main text(s) to be examined; 2) *consideration of the context* of the main text(s), that is, where it falls within a given question, and within the treatise on faith; 3) *exposition of main text(s)*, undertaken with an eye to resolving any issue(s) raised in the introduction, and incorporating supplemental consideration of other relevant passages as needed; and 4) *synthetic conclusion* that summarizes and consolidates the major gains of your textual exposition.

With regard to the more technical details of the assignment, it should be typed in double-spaced 12-pt. Times New Roman font, it should adhere to the Turabian style-sheet, and it should be free of grammar and spelling errors. Notwithstanding the Seminary's general preference for footnote citation (which *should* be used in citing secondary scholarship), your citations of Aquinas should be given parenthetically and in abbreviated fashion (e.g., *ST* II-II.5.2ad3). As noted above, the due date for the paper is Friday, 10/25, and it should be submitted by the start of class *both* by electronic upload to Canvas (in either .doc or .pdf format) *and* in hard copy.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of ideas for short paper topics:

- the truth (q.1, a.3) and/or certitude (q.4, a.8) of faith
- the articulation (articles) of faith and their order in the creed (q.1, aa.6, 8)
- the unchanging substance and increasing articulation/explicitation of the faith (q.1, a.7)
- the fittingness and necessity of creeds/symbols of faith (q.1, aa.9–10)
- the act of faith (q.2, aa.1-2)
- the necessity of belief about the incarnation (q.2, a.7) and/or the Trinity (q.2, a.8)
- the meritoriousness of the act of faith (q.2, a.9; cf. *ST* I-II, q.114, on merit)
- the definition of faith given in Hebrews 11 (q.4, a.1)
- the faith of the angels (q.5, a.1) and/or demons (q.5, a.2)
- the implications of a heretic's denial of an article of faith (q.5, a.3)
- 'lifeless' faith (q.6, a.2)
- fear and/or purity of heart as the effects of faith (q.7, aa.1-2)
- the gift of the Holy Spirit that is understanding (q.8, aa.1, 6; cf. *ST* I-II, q.68, on the gifts)
- the gift of the Holy Spirit that is knowledge (q.9, aa.1-2; cf. *ST* I-II, q.68, on the gifts)
- the compulsion of non-believers to the faith (q.10, a.8)
- baptizing children of non-believers against their parents' will (q.10, a.12)
- the species of unbelief that is heresy (q.11, aa.1-2)
- the Church's treatment of heretics (q.11, aa.3-4)