

Theology and Wisdom Master Syllabus

Cluster

Wisdom, Faith, and the Good Life

How do faith and reason help us to know what is good and true? What does faith have to offer reason, and what does reason have to offer faith? Faith opens new horizons for reason, and reason challenges faith to greater understanding and refinement. *Theology* is the free, rigorous, and methodological study of God's self-revelation in the person of Jesus Christ encountered in community. *Philosophy* is the free, rigorous, and methodical use of logic and argument in search of truth. The courses in this cluster introduce students to the experience of doing philosophy and theology, both where they converge and where they diverge. The experience of doing philosophy well is of discovering new, surprising, wonderful, and sometimes baffling depths and complexities to existence, our lives, and our beliefs. The aim of theology is the good life as informed by the critical study of sacred scripture, the lives and ideas of people who search for God, and the moral investigation of the personal and common good. Theology integrates the methods of many disciplines such as philosophy, history, literature, and science. This cluster plays a special role in the Catholic mission of King's College to transform minds and hearts with zeal in communities of hope.

Core Goals Served in this Category

Goal 2: To lead students to become conversant with the Catholic intellectual tradition

Goal 3: To enable students to recognize, formulate, and address matters of moral significance and concern

Core Learning Outcomes

A student successfully completing the Theology and Wisdom category will be able to

1. Identify and explore ideas of faith, reason, and meaning (Core Goal 2.1)
2. Critically analyze some of the Catholic intellectual tradition's major texts, themes, concepts, figures, and histories (Core Goal 2.2)
3. Engage in interfaith dialogue (Core Goal 2.3)
4. Construct and defend an argument on wisdom, faith, or the good life (Core Goal 2.4).

Catalogue Description / Introduction

Theology is faith seeking understanding. Seeking to understand faith means, on the one hand, carefully studying the foundational sources of Christianity as encountered in the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, and on the other hand exploring the living traditions of the Catholic and broader Christian community, traditions that change as histories and cultures

change. Theology courses will explore issues and questions of faith, introducing some of Christianity's long history of such exploration, and engaging in dialogue with a variety of other perspectives, from the Jewish traditions from which Christianity sprang, to questions that arise from today's global and interfaith world.

Intangibles / Aspirations / Other Category-Level Elements

In addition to the outcomes assessed in this category, other Core outcomes might be developed and addressed by various courses in Theology and Wisdom. Skills, competencies, and dispositions relevant to the subject of theology might also be cultivated in this category.

- To help students develop the foundational skills and competencies of written communication, critical inquiry and analysis, and technological competency and information literacy (Core Goal 1)

Teaching Methods and Assessment

Student learning will be assessed using a four-part rubric, typically using exams or papers.

Texts

Each instructor will choose the texts for her/his course, addressing the topic and goals of the course category and course description. All theology I courses will address at least some biblical texts, since the Bible is the root source of God's self-revelation, as they explore theological concepts and reflections. Similarly, all biblical studies courses will address the ways scripture contributes to the development of at least some theological concepts.

Additional Information / Resources for Instructors

Courses

THEO 150: Catholic Theological Perspectives (3)

What does it mean to live in the world as a Christian and as a Catholic? How does it make sense to believe in a creator God, in Jesus Christ who suffered and died for us, and in the church as the living body of Christ? Especially in this day and age, how does it make sense to hope for the coming of the kingdom of God — a world in which justice and righteousness reign and there is no more suffering and no more tears? This course examines central Catholic hopes and beliefs and explores how to engage them in the joys and sorrows of the contemporary world. In this work, the common ground between Catholicism and other Christian communions is highlighted.

THEO 151: Biblical Sources: Old Testament (3)

This course studies the principal themes, historical framework, geographical setting, and literary background of the Old Testament. The development of the faith of Israel from its beginnings in the earliest tribal migrations to the emergence of Judaism just prior to the time of Jesus will be discussed.

THEO 152: Biblical Sources: New Testament (3)

This course studies the writings of the New Testament with special focus on the Four Gospels, The Acts of the Apostles, and the Pauline Letters. The course also covers the history and methods for interpreting the New Testament, especially in light of the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum* (1965). Theological themes, historical framework, geographical setting, text criticism, and literary background will be explored.

THEO 153: Biblical Themes (3)

The Bible tells the story of the beginnings of the relationship between God and human beings, but it does so by telling many different stories from many different times. This course provides an introduction to the Bible by examining central theological themes that connect these stories, such as creation, covenant, sin, prophecy, and salvation, as well as the historical roots of these stories, such as the Exodus, the Davidic Monarchy, the Exile, and the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. At times, this course will also explore the way other disciplines, such as literature, have richly engaged biblical themes.

THEO 154: Mystery of God: Belief & Unbelief (3)

This course addresses the serious option facing modern people: to believe in God or not. It explores a number of questions: What do we mean when we speak of "God"? Can we know if God exists? What is the difference between "the God of the philosophers" and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Is it reasonable to believe in God? How are particular understandings of God connected to understandings of the human person and the human community? How is human action shaped by different convictions about God? Students will study questions and responses given by major philosophers, theologians, and writers and will explore their own questions and responses.

THEO 155: The Church (3)

This course studies the origin and development of the church; its doctrinal struggles, sacramental practices, and a variety of the contemporary challenges it faces. Particular attention will be given to the theology of the Church (and its ecumenical implications) expressed in the thought of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and by contemporary theologians and Christian churches.

THEO 157: Who is Jesus? (3)

This course explores the many answers to the question Jesus asks his disciples: "Who do you say that I am?" Christians call Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, the King, and the Savior of the World, among many other titles. Jesus is also a figure of enduring fascination in cultural history. To gain a fuller theological understanding of Jesus, students will study such topics as first-century Messianic expectations, New Testament depictions of Jesus, theological understandings of the Son of God, Jesus as both fully divine and fully human, soteriological explanations and arguments about how Jesus saves, and the quest for the historical Jesus. The course will also explore modern questions about Jesus, from liberation or feminist theological perspectives, to other religious perspectives.

THEO 158: Spiritual Practices/Spiritual Quests (3)

While some people explore faith primarily in terms of theological concepts, other people explore through spiritual experience and practice. Spiritual searchers and practitioners seek to experience relationship with God and with life itself in ways that can seem to transcend ordinary concepts and perceptions. Such religious experience is often central to the development of faith and moral commitment. Spiritual practice can yield powerful sensations, from ecstasy to fear, and it can also produce significant questions, from how to understand such experience to how to teach, evaluate, criticize, or change it. Different versions of this course will take different approaches to spirituality, from considering historical forms like the “Mystical Tradition,” or thematic topics like the “spirituality of the body,” or “spiritual autobiographies.” The course will typically consider some important examples of Catholic spiritual quests and practices, and some different perspectives, such as those from different cultural contexts or different religious faiths.

THEO 159: Topics in Systematic Theology (3)

This course will take up a focused topic in systematic theology. A course could focus on a particular theme in systematic theology, like grace or eschatology, or could focus on a particular type or period of theology, such as medieval mysticism or the ecumenical movement.