

**Thomas Aquinas on Truth PH 4211
Syllabus for 2018**

**Prof. J. Hilary Martin, O.P.
PH 4211 Fall 2018
Mon. 11:10am – 2:00pm
DSPT rm 3
Office Hours Tues. 1:30-2:30**

Course Description

What is truth? How do we get it? Can we ever to be truly sure about anything? Why is lying wrong? Is artificial intelligence possible? Is Divine revelation possible? Too today often, *spin*, the reshaping truth to fit the desires of the audience, has become more important than reality. In this course we will examine the basis for truth as Thomas Aquinas saw it making a careful and critical study of his, *Disputed Question, De Veritate* (On Truth) in order to understand his meaning which may become a springboard for our own thoughts about truth. Attention will be paid to Thomas's later elaboration on the topic and with attention paid to later authors as Occam, Descartes and Kant.

Method and Expectations:

We will read in Thomas's, *De Veritate, (About Truth)* a seminal work that examines truth in a number of ways. Only selected *Quaestiones* will be read that will cover the core of his teaching. Key texts will be assigned for study and for discussion in class. Discussions can be far ranging, involving contemporary issues like scepticism, the relative character of truth and the limits of objective knowledge. Each class students will have read the assigned texts beforehand to facilitate conversation about them and their place in Thomas's philosophic system.

Texts may be read in English or Latin, but Latin is *not* required. The Latin Leonine text of Thomas is available on line for students who wish to make use of Latin, but good English translations are readily available.

Assessment:

Participation in class discussion is essential and will help form the basis for our understanding. Four short, informal papers (2-4 pages) will be required either summarizing and/or critiquing the text assigned, 25%. There will be a final paper (75%)

Bibliography

1. Primary Sources: (that we will use)

Thomas Aquinas, *The Disputed Questions on Truth*, Trans., R.W. Mulligan, Chicago: Henry Regneri, 1952) 3 vols. (We will use only vol. 1)

Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, (editio Leonina) which is on line.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II selected questions, Leonine ed. or Blackfriars ed. vols 31 & 32

2. Secondary Sources (from Library or on Line)

Aertsen, Ian A., *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The Case of Thomas Aquinas*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996, esp. Intro. pp 1-17 & ch 6, p 243

Boland, Vivian, *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Leiden: 1996

The Cambridge Translations of Medieval Philosophical Texts. Vol. 3 ed. R. Pasnau, Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press, 2002, esp. chs 4 and 5

Dewan, Lawrence, "St. Thomas, Ideas and Immediate Knowledge," *Dialogue* 18 (1979) pp. 392-404.

Farthing, John L., "The Problem of Divine Exemplarity in St. Thomas," *The Thomist* 49 (1985) pp. 183-222

Pope John Paul II, *The Splendor of Truth* [Veritatis Splendor]: St. Paul Books & Media, 1993.

LaNave, Gregory, "God, Creation and the Possibility of Philosophical Wisdom: Perspectives of Bonaventure and Aquinas." *Theological Studies*, (Dec. 2008) v. 69.4, pp. 812-834.

Oliva, Adriano, "Philosophy in Aquinas' Teaching of Theology," *The Thomist*, (July 2002) v 76.3, p. 397.

Pasnau, Robert, "Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages," Cambridge Uni. Press: Cambridge 1997.

Soskice, Janet M., "Creatio ex nihilo: Its Jewish and Christian foundations," *Creation and the God of Abraham*, ed., D. B. Burrell et al, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p 24

Torrell, Jean-Pierre, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*: vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, trans., Robert Royal, (Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 1996) [from *Initiation à Saint Thomas d'Aquin* trans. by Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P. (Edition du Cerf) 1993]; *Thomas Aquinas Spiritual Master*, vol. 2, 2003.

Weisheipl, Athenaius, O.P., *Friar Thomas d'Aquino, His Life, Thought and Work*, New York: Doubleday, 1974.

Wippel, John F. "Thomas Aquinas and Participation," *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, v. 17, pp. 117, ed. John F. Wippel, Washington D.C., 1987: Catholic University of America Press,

Some of these materials are expensive. Consult, GTU or UCB Library or the GTU reserve. Some material can be downloaded

Requirements for the course

Reading

1. Each week a reading will be assigned to be read before class to facilitate discussions of Thomas text and its meaning
2. A short paper (2/5 pages) every other week outlining meaning and/or criticism of the text and its philosophical background. (a total of 4 short papers)
3. Active, informed participation in the discussions & papers 25% of final grade
4. A final paper on an approved topic, 75% of grade, the topic will be presented to the class before beginning the paper.

Written Work

1. 4 short bi-weekly papers on assigned readings.
2. A Final Paper c. 15-18 pages.
A short written proposal of the final paper presented in class 5-8 weeks before the end of term for discussion, criticism and peer support.

Purpose, Outcomes and Grading rubrics for the course.

Course Goals

A goal of this course to instruct students how to read a medieval university text and how to analyse a concept of truth as Thomas understood it.

1. To achieve understanding of the grounding of truth in reality as a major medieval philosopher-theologian saw it using the short papers as evidence of **intellectual integration** of the material
2. Promote a realization by students that the medieval community, represented by Thomas, was quite aware, as we are today, of the difficulty of finding

objective truth and so help the students acquire an **intellectual humility** as they look past efforts to do so

3. The weekly papers, and the final paper will encourage students to look beyond mere reporting about a text, but help them learn to become aware of influences on contemporary thinkers and so develop a sense of **self-direction**.

4. No paper should be written by a student entirely in isolation. The discussion of weekly papers during each class and particularly the discussion of their proposal for the final paper in the presence of friendly classmates is designed to foster a sense of **intellectual collaboration**.

Course outcomes

1. The ability to read and construe a medieval academic philosophical text. To read a text with a **critical understanding** of what it meant at the time it was written and how it can be interpreted now.

2. To learn to **communicate** the fruits of their reading with scholarly writing.

3. The ability to see that a medieval text can offer insight into **contemporary epistemological problems**.

4. To remind students that Thomas and other medieval authors derived many of their ideas from **non-Christian sources**, particularly philosophers of the Muslim Near East.

Grading Rubrics

“A” The student shows ability to read a philosophical text, knows how they were constructed and the authority texts commanded in medieval universities. To know what St. Thomas had to say about truth, about the way the mind comes to know universal truth as abstracted from particular sense data. Awareness of how the mind can combine sense and intellectual data, the possible relations of reason to faith. The ability to relate these ideas to our community. The student was aware of the secondary literature in the bibliography, was faithful to class discussions and papers. Showed ability to write a clear and concise final paper on their topic chosen.

“A-“ The student shows ability to read a medieval philosophical text, knows what St. Thomas had to say about truth, about major issues such as, the possibility of universal truth and how the mind comes to know truth, but with some gaps in understanding of Thomas.

He student was not very much aware of contacts with contemporary philosophy, could have been more faithful to class discussion and to weekly papers. The ability to write a clear and concise final paper was good but needs improvement.

“B+” Ability to read and use medieval texts. Some lack of clarity about what St. Thomas has to say about sense and intellectual knowledge. Gaps in relating Thomas’s thought to modern understandings. Missing class discussions and/or the short papers.

The final paper lacked a clear statement of the problem chosen, the conclusions were unclear, and/or was not on the topic previously agreed upon.

“B”/”B-“ The student failed to understand the medieval texts we had been reading. Lack of clarity and/or mistakes about what St. Thomas had to say, esp., about how truth can emerge from knowledge of the physical world.

Uninformed discussion of contemporary viewpoints about truth and with little awareness of medieval point of view. Lack of faithfulness to class discussion and missing the short papers. The final paper not on the topic we had agreed on. The paper was too journalistic

Gaining a “B” in the first semester indicates the student shows promise, but needs to see the advisor for basic instructions about what is expected.

“C” You will get three credits for this course on your transcript, but the work is below graduate level.

Plagiarism

This is taking credit for the work of another without giving credit to your source.

Sometimes this is *unintentional*, but you will have to prove that, you will be assumed to be guilty if you use someone else’s material without attribution. Plagiarism includes, paraphrasing texts, lifting ideas from another without citing your source. The academic penalties for plagiarism are severe. Zero or an F for a grade is common.

Remember if you quote the *full name of the author and the title of the work* you are **not committing** plagiary. Your paper may be a long string of quotes and little more, but all you can be accused of is not being very original.

