

**Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology**  
**PHST-4500 Thomas on Substance**

**Spring 2019**

Instructor: John Thomas Mellein, O.P.

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Office Hours: by appointment

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This course meets on Mondays from 12:40 PM–03:30 PM in DSPT: 18.

**Course Description**

Thomas Aquinas holds that substance is the most important of the Aristotelian categories. Matter/form, essence, material beings, angels and God can, in some way, be called substance. This course will examine Thomas's account of substance and relevant metaphysical themes (e.g., essence/esse, analogy, subsistence, hypostasis, science, and definition) to argue for a consistent and coherent synthesis of Thomas's account of substance across the sciences of logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. Reading knowledge of Latin strongly encouraged. Format: Seminar discussion/lecture. Prerequisite: some course in Thomistic Philosophy of Nature or Thomistic Metaphysics.

Evaluation: class participation, 15-20 page research paper.

Intended audience: MA, PhD/ThD. [Faculty Consent required; 12 max enrollment; Auditors with faculty permission]

**Required Texts:**

The nature of this course requires examination of passages from many of the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Consequently no texts will be required for purchase. Students are advised to consult one of the following webpages to locate the relevant passages:

<http://dhspriority.org/thomas/> (English and Latin texts)

<http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/index.html> (Latin only)

Secondary sources will be available through the GTU Library electronic sources (e.g., Philosopher's Index). Some materials will be posted on Moodle.

**Course and Institutional Learning Goals:**

The main goal of this course is to gain familiarity with Thomas's account of substance, and to improve critical skills in reading and discussing medieval philosophical texts, as well as the secondary literature on the topics. Students are encouraged to relate these topics to contemporary issues, especially in their papers. A subsidiary goal is to grow in the critical skills of reading and discussing medieval philosophical texts.

The format of the course, especially the in-class discussions, will give students the opportunity to work toward the institutional learning goals: integrative thinking, intellectual humility, self-direction, and ability to collaborate. We will have a brief in-class discussion regarding the institutional learning goals, available here: <https://www.dspt.edu/our-mission>

## **Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students should have familiarity with the main philosophical issues concerning Thomas's account of person, and some of the contemporary scholarly discussion regarding the strengths and areas for improvement of Thomas's account. Students should be able to speak and write intelligently about some aspect of Thomas's account of person. Students will demonstrate subject-appropriate critical thinking skills by comparing passages from different Thomistic writings, and by assessing contemporary scholarship on Thomas's work. Students will demonstrate mastery of the material in class discussion and presentations, and in the 15-20 page research paper.

## **Course Requirements**

This seminar course will focus on close reading and in-class discussion of primary text passages. Students will take turns presenting on course readings and secondary sources. Each student will be required to give one in-class presentation. The student, in consultation with the professor, will select materials and make them available to the class the week before the presentation is to be given. Grading for the course will be based on class participation, in-class presentations, and the research paper. Class participation will be evaluated based on frequency and quality of participation, as this will give evidence of careful reading of primary and secondary sources. Papers will be evaluated based on coherence of argument, and on effective use of primary and secondary sources.

All sources in the final research paper should be cited using proper format as found in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Eighth Edition; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

## **Grade:**

Class Participation:	25%
In-Class Presentation:	25%
Research Paper (15-20 pages):	50%

Students are to abide by the the DSPT's policies regarding academic honesty as found in the *DSPT Student Handbook*. We will review the policy at the beginning of the course.

## **Class Outline**

February 4

Introduction to major themes of the course

February 11

Some modern accounts of Substance: Locke and Spinoza

February 18

Presidents' Day, no class

February 25

Thomas: What is Science? What is Definition?

March 4

Aristotle, Aquinas, and the Categories of Being

March 11

Quasi Definitio Substantiae: the metaphysical definition of substance

March 18

Essence or supposit? Metaphysical candidates for substance

March 25

Reading week, no class

April 1

Substance and analogy: substance as an analogical community

Working thesis of paper and 10-item annotated bibliography due to professor  
(more details to be provided)

April 8

Substance and logic: dialectic, demonstration, and the logical account of substance

In-class presentation of paper theses (more details to be provided)

April 15

Mobile being: Substance and natural philosophy

April 22

Easter Monday, no class

April 29

“Consubstantialem Patri”: Can ‘substance’ be predicated of God?

May 6

“*Et Incarnatus est*”: Substance and the Incarnation

May 13

“*Hoc est corpus meum*”: Substance and Transubstantiation

May 24

Finals week, no class

Papers due by email, 5:00 p.m.