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Office Hours: Tues & Wed 8:00 – 11:30
(For a legitimate reason, can be available by appointment at other times.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An introduction to the nature, method, sources, and structure of theology within the Roman Catholic tradition for the purposes of understanding its specificity and of enabling the student to eventually contribute to the field through their own research. Focuses on the contribution made in this area by the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and their reception. This subject necessarily touches upon the relationship between philosophy and theology, the theology of revelation, and the role of scripture, tradition, magisterium, faith, and reason in theology. The student will be apprenticed into the theological methodology through research and writing assignments, culminating in a final research paper (3.00 units).

COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES:

Through this course, students will come to an introductory grasp of key issues in fundamental theology, concerning theological method, revelation, scripture, and tradition; they should also become better able to discuss these issues in oral and written form, to engage in dialogue about them, and to engage in independent academic research on them. Specifically, upon successful completion of the course, students will become better able:

- to describe and to apply the principles of theological method;¹
- to describe the place of Scripture, tradition, Magisterium, faith, and philosophy in theology and to apply them in their own theological work;¹
- to present theological subjects to peers and instructors and to lead them into discussions about it;²
- to use Church documents and the work of St. Thomas Aquinas for theological research.³

¹ DSPT MATH Program Outcomes: 1. *Foundations*; 2. *Writing*, and 4. *Presenting*. (See page 15.)

² DSPT MATH Program Outcomes: 4. *Presenting* and 5. *Integrating*. (See page 15.)

³ DSPT MATH Program Outcomes: 1. *Foundations*; 2. *Writing*, and 5. *Integrating*. (See page 15.)

FORMAT:

Seminar-style discussions about the readings and the subject matter—moderated at times by the instructor, at times by students on a rotating basis—fueled by short presentations of research and readings given by both the instructor and students.

MODALITY OF THE COURSE:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, DSPT courses for Fall 2020 will be offered online. For those who are not residing at St Albert Priory, 100% of class time of this course will consist of Zoom Meetings.

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS:

Due to Covid-19, most students will need to submit their written assignment and taken-home exams electronically, and these should be submitted using a word document sent by an email attachment. The filename of the saved file must begin with the date, followed by student's own surname and a brief title (example for a student named Neal Emery: "2020-10-25- Emery- Initial Proposal"). The main-body text should be in 12-point type and double-spaced with 1" page margins. Smaller fonts (11 or 10-point) and lesser line-spacing (1 or 1.5 lines) can be used on block quotes and endnotes.

INTENDED STUDENT PARTICIPANTS:

This is an introductory level Master's course, intended for MDiv and MA students (and auditors with my permission). Although introductory, much of the subject matter is inherently difficult, due to its necessarily fundamental, theoretical, and philosophical nature. Thus, the course requires significant attention on the part of each student.

ASSIGNMENTS AND OTHER REQUIRED ACTIVITIES:

Students will be required to attend class and participate in class discussions, to prepare oral presentations, to submit written assignments, and to take written exams.

Specifically, students will be assessed on:

1. Attendance and Participation (10% of grade)

Students' attendance and active participation in class lecture and discussion are integral parts of the course. Any student who misses three or more classes cannot receive a grade for the course. Quizzes on the assigned readings may also be given. Quizzes and Brief Assignments are not listed on the "Plan for the Semester" given below.

2. Oral Reports with Annotated Bibliographies and a Presentation Outline (10% of grade)

Students will be assigned (or, in some cases, will choose) texts from the assigned readings that they are to present to the class as Oral Reports. The student must prepare an Outline (no more than one side of one page) for each Oral Report, along with an Annotated Bibliography of between 7-15 entries related to the material. The bibliography should identify the resources needed to substantiate the claims made by the reading and to further investigate the subject matter. Each bibliography entry should include a 2-8 sentence summary of the contribution of that resource to the subject. The bibliography is to be submitted to the instructor one week in advance of the presentation, prior to class, and may be submitted earlier if the student wishes to discuss potential resources with the instructor in advance. A copy of the Outline is to be submitted to the instructor at the same time as the presentation. The number of students taking the class may affect how many times each student must prepare such reports. Each student should count on offering a report two to six times over the course of the semester. These Oral Reports are not listed on the "Plan for the Semester" given below.

3. Research Paper Proposal:

Students are to do preparatory work as if for a research paper with 5000-7000 words in the main text,⁴ without writing the paper itself. It is to be on a topic pertaining to the course's goals and outcomes, to be agreed upon by each student and me. The research must include not only the collection of bibliography, but also a significant amount of reading in the topic, so that an adequate Proposal, including a hypothesis, may be developed. The Proposal is to be completed according to the following assigned progression:

a. Topic Suggestions: Each student must put forward, orally in class, one to three potential themes or topics of interest for the student's own work, including possible thesis statements (hypotheses) for each. Each student must be prepared to discuss these suggestions in class. Each topic (i) must concern one of the issues central to the nature or method of theology, and (ii) must involve some kind of comparison, such as a comparison of theologians on a topic, of the respective theological methods of two theologians, or of some other aspect related to the topics covered in the course. The topic or topics should suit the goals of the course and the

⁴ This works out to about 16-20 pages when using Times New Roman font, 1.5 line spacing and 1" margins. (See <https://wordcounter.net/words-per-page>)

student's own learning goals.⁵ Each student must then consult me to obtain approval for the topic to be pursued. (5% of grade)

b. Initial Proposal: With one topic approved, the student must next submit the Initial Proposal electronically, with 400-600 words in main text, i.e., not counting Outline or Bibliography (or notes, if any). The Initial Proposal is to follow the DSPT's MA Thesis Proposal Guidelines form (found at the DSPT website), using that format (with exceptions to be explained below). Thus, it is to begin with an Information header that includes student name, title of paper, date, and course number ("**ST-1091**"); an explanation of the Scope and Nature of the paper, including relevant background; a Thesis Statement (in this case, a hypothesis that could be revised as one pursued writing a research paper); Description, including **(a)** a description of methodology (a very brief description, of one to two sentences in length) and **(b)** a description of the project to be done, including a formal description of the kinds of primary sources to be consulted (not a bibliography, but a description of the criterion or criteria used to select the sources, e.g., "all of the author's writings in which our topic is treated extensively"), as well as secondary sources, naming the reasons, in both cases, for choosing that kind of source, and **(c)** a brief outline (normally, as simple as a mere list of about three to five section headings); the likely Significance of the work, to the field, to Church and/or society; an initial Bibliography including all primary sources and 10-15 secondary sources (not meant to be exhaustive, but targeted at the needs of the paper), including at least some journal articles and some books, all in "Turabian" format.⁶ This corresponds to DSPT's *MA Thesis Proposal Guidelines* form, except for two differences: first, your proposal must include a brief section Outline; and second, the specification of the number of sources is different. No Initial Proposal will be accepted without a thesis statement (or hypothesis). The student must then submit (electronically) the Initial Proposal for editing, to me and to **two** other students in the class ("respondents"), assigned by me.

c. Suggested Edits to Other Students' Proposals: Each student will receive two Initial Proposals (from other students). Each student must then edit each of these received documents, making comments and corrections regarding substance, style, structure, spelling, grammar, etc. The student must then give two electronically Edited Copies, one for each of the two Initial Proposals, to both the writer and me. Please add "-ed" + your initials to the end of the original filename (example for a student named Cheryl Smalley for the Initial Proposal example above: "EmeryN-InitProposal-edCS".) I will evaluate each respondent on the quality of his or her editing and comments. Among other things, responses may: 1. point out insights that one has found to be particularly noteworthy; 2. indicate problems or offer criticisms in a helpful and constructive manner; 3. suggest a solution to a difficulty, either in the ideas discussed or in the manner of the presentation. Respondents' comments should be concise; a single sentence should normally suffice for each comment. The respondent may include an overall evaluation (comment and critique) of no more than 100 words. The total amount of

⁵ Advice for topics: Make sure the **topic** is precise and very limited. It may seem so small as to be insignificant, but, in fact, you will need to understand a great deal about the topic in order to do research on one particular area.

⁶ See Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, 9th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

time spent on editing each Initial Proposal (including reading, correcting, and commenting on it) should be no more than one hour. (5% of respondent's grade)

d. Annotated Bibliography: The bibliography should include between 10-20 entries, identifying the resources needed to substantiate the matter being investigated by the proposal and to explore the subject matter further, beyond the limits of proposal. Each bibliography entry should include a 2-8 sentence summary of the contribution of that resource to the subject. The bibliography is to be submitted to the instructor two weeks prior to the student's presentation, prior to class, and may be submitted earlier if the student wishes to discuss potential resources with the instructor in advance. (5% of grade)

e. Presentation: Each student is to give a very brief (5 min.) Presentation to the class on his or her own Initial Proposal's hypothesis. Students are free to ask questions and to make constructive comments on the substance of the proposal. (5% of grade)

f. Final Proposal: The Final Proposal (submitted electronically) is then to be sent to me. It should include any needed revisions based on advice from me and from the other students. (20% of grade)

4. Written Exams (35% of grade)

Two Written Exams on the course content, addressing the central issues of the course, will be given, to be completed by the students at home with strict time limits as specified by each exam. The expected answers should be both factually correct and extensive in length, but not necessarily exhaustive. The answers need not include technical footnote-style information or data; however, referring to a document's author, title, and any natural way of referring to a part of it, is encouraged, as the student can best recall in a way suited to memory (e.g., "In the Vatican II document Dei Verbum, in a section discussing Tradition, ..."). Use of abbreviations is permitted provided that the first instance of use is explicitly noted (e.g., "In number 2 of Dei Verbum (DV), the concept of revelation is... Later in DV, the document says that...").

Computers are to be used to respond to the exam question, with the student working uninterrupted, alone, offline, without any other programs running and without the aid of any notes. Immediately after finishing, the exam is to be submitted to the instructor as a word document in an email attachment. See the "Grading Criteria," later in this syllabus, for further details on what is expected. (Midterm=10% of grade, Final=25% of grade)

5. Written Assignments:

Written assignments are to be submitted to the instructor as a word document in an email attachment. It must include the student's name, date, course number and title, professor's name, and title of assignment; with page numbers on each page (beginning with the second page). The main-body text should be in 12-point type and double-spaced with 1" page margins. Smaller fonts (11 or 10-point) and lesser line-spacing (1 or 1.5 lines) can be used on block quotes and endnotes. See the "Grading Criteria," later in this syllabus, for further details on what is expected. (5% of grade)

5. Brief Assignments

Certain Brief Assignments may be given, depending on the interests and abilities of the students, at the request of an individual student or group of students. Brief Assignments and Oral Reports are not listed on the “Plan for the Semester” given below. (Grading: **Extra Credit**, for no more than 5% of the total grade)

EXPLANATION OF GRADES

No late work of any kind will be accepted except, at my discretion, and only for very serious reasons.

A summary of grade composition is given in the following table:

1. Attendance and Participation :	10%
2. Oral Reports, Outlines, & Annotated Bibliographies:	10%
3. Research paper Proposals	45%
3a. Topic Suggestions (with brief presentation):	5%
3b. Initial Proposal (with brief presentation):	5%
3c. Suggested Edits (to Other Students' Proposals)	5%
3e. Annotated Bibliographies:	5%
3d. Presentation:	5%
3e. Final Proposal:	20%
4. Written Exams	35%
4a. Midterm Exam:	10%
4b. Final Exam:	25%
<hr/> Total: 100%	

The descriptions below are not exhaustive. They offer a general idea of the standards

Grading Scale:

A+ = 100	(4) Excellent.
A = 98	
A- = 96	
B+ = 93	
B = 90	(4) Good
B- = 88	
C+ = 87	
C = 83	(2) Satisfactory
C- = 77	
D+ = 73	
D = 70	(1) Deficient
F = 0	(0) Unsatisfactory

The following table describes how grades are applied to students' work

<u>General Description</u>	<u>Grading Criteria</u>	
A Deep understanding and insights are expressed in a clear, penetrating, and engaging manner, with virtually no errors.	many "E"s	no "U"s
B Content, structure, and expression are all adequate, free of significant faults.	mostly "E"s	few or no "U"s
C Significant errors or shortcomings are present, although many basic elements of the assignment are done adequately.	few or no "E"s	some "U"s
D Many serious deficiencies in content, structure, and expression are present, although at least a few basic elements of the assignment are done adequately.	few or no "E"s	several "U"s
F There is a failure to execute the most basic elements of the assignment.	no "E"s	mostly "U"s (or no work submitted)