

## SYLLABUS

### Thomas Aquinas on Truth PH 4211

#### Syllabus for 2020

Prof. J. Hilary Martin, O.P.

PH 4211 Fall 2020

Fri. 2:10-5:00pm

On Zoom

Office Hours TBA

### Course Description

What is truth? How do we get it? Can we ever be truly sure about anything? Why is lying wrong? Is artificial intelligence possible? Is Divine revelation possible? Too often, *spin*, the reshaping of truth to fit the desires of an audience has become more important than reality. In this course we will examine the basis for truth as Thomas Aquinas saw it by making a careful and critical study his Text, *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 later authors such as William of Occam, Descartes and Kant.

#### Method and Expectations:

We will read Thomas's *QD De Veritate* a seminal work, that examines truth in a number of ways. Selected Questions from his text will read that cover the core of his teaching, for the text is too long for one semester. Key texts will be assigned for discussion in class, such discussions can be far reaching involving issues like skepticism, the relative character of truth, and the limits of human knowledge. Before each class students will have read the sections assigned to facilitate conversation about them and their place in Thomas's philosophic system.

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

#### Assessment:

Participation in class discussion is essential and will help form the basis for final assessment. Short, informal papers (4 pages) will be turned in summarizing the text under discussion (25%). There will be a final paper (75%)

**Class Meetings** Class will meet Fri 11:10am -2:00pm

## Bibliography

### 1. Primary Source: (we plan to use)

Thomas Aquinas, *The Disputed Questions on Truth*, Trans., R.W. Mulligan, Chicago: Henry Regneri, , 1952) 3 vols. (We will use vol. 1) and/ Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, (editio Leonina) either download this or use of a xeroxed text of the Leonine edition will be expected.

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

### 2. Secondary Sources

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 Companion to the Summa Theologiae*, ed. P. McCosker and D. Turner, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2016.

*The Cambridge Translations of Medieval Philosophical Texts*. Vol. 3 ed. R. Pasnau, Cambridge Univ. 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's Books and 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: 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, 1996) [from *Initiation à Saint Thomas d'Aquin* 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.

### **Activities expected of students for the course**

1. Each week there will be a reading assigned which should be read before class to facilitate discussion of Thomas text and its meaning
2. Three short papers (2/4 pages) outlining the meaning of the text.
3. Active, informed participation in the discussions & papers 25% of final grade
4. A final paper on an approved topic, approval discussed in class 75% of grade

### **Written Work**

1. Short papers on assigned readings.
2. A Final Paper 16 pages. A short written proposal for the final paper will be presented in class 7-9 weeks before the end of term for discussion, criticism and friendly peer support.

### **Course Goals**

To instruct students about how to read a university text by significant medieval philosopher-theologian and, secondly, to analyze the concept of truth as Thomas understood it. To be aware of criticisms of his approach.

1. To achieve understanding of the grounding of truth in reality as a major medieval philosopher-theologian saw it using the weekly papers as evidence of an **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 defining truth and so help the students acquire an **intellectual humility** as they look into the past.
3. The papers, and the final paper will encourage students to look beyond merely reporting about a particular text but to seek out its overt and/or covert influence on contemporary thinkers and so develop a sense of **self-direction**.
4. No paper should be written by a student entirely in isolation even in a pandemic. The discussion of papers on zoom during class and the discussion of the 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 what it might mean for us now.
2. To **communicate** the fruits of their reading with scholarly writing even during a pandemic lockdown
3. The ability to see a medieval text as offering solutions, or at least values for **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 Criteria**

- “A” Shows ability to read medieval philosophical texts, knows how they were constructed and the position they held in medieval universities. To know what St. Thomas had to say about truth, about the way the mind comes to know universal truth abstracted from particular sense data. Awareness of how the mind can organize sense and intellectual data, the possible relations of reason to faith. The ability to relate these ideas to our contemporary philosophic scene. To be aware of the secondary literature in the bibliography.
- Faithfulness to class discussion and the papers. The ability to write a clear and concise final paper on the approved topic.
- “A-“ Shows ability to read a medieval philosophical text, knows what Thomas had to say about truth, about major issues such as, the possibility of universal truth,

how the mind comes to know, possible relation of faith and reason, but with some gaps in our understanding. Fails to recognize contacts with contemporary philosophy.

Faithfulness to class discussion and papers. The ability to write a clear and concise final paper on the topic chosen

“B+” Ability to read and use medieval texts. Some lack of clarity about what Thomas has to say about truth and the intellectual awareness. Gaps in relating Thomas’s thought to modern considerations.

Missing class discussions and/or papers. The final paper lacking a clear thesis, lacking clear conclusions

“B” Lacking of understanding the medieval texts we had been reading. Unclear and/or mistakes about what Thomas had to say about how truth can emerge from knowledge of the physical world. Uninformed discussion of contemporary viewpoints with little awareness of medieval ideas or, on the other hand, a narrow discussion of medieval ideas with no connection to modern challenges.

Lack of faithfulness to class discussion and papers. The final paper not on the topic we had agreed on. The paper largely journalistic, or an exchange of opinions without an awareness of the issues involved.

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** plagiarism. Your paper may have a long string of quotes and little more, but all you can be accused of is not being very original.