

Department of Theology

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Fall 2009**
Instructor: Michael Anthony Novak
Course #: THEO 1001
Sections: 113 and 115
Course Title: Introduction to Theology

Description:

“Introduction to Theology” is intended as a basic introduction for undergraduates to the subject of Christian Theology, particularly in Catholic perspective. Theology is something of a mystery today. Perhaps one of the strangest things about it is that although it is one of the classic sciences, it has largely been removed from public discourse and understanding. In order to understand first what Theology is, we will first look at its recent history as a cultural phenomenon, and in so doing, we will come to some understanding about how it is that Theology as a discipline came to be culturally censored. Once we can come to understand Theology’s recent history, we can normalize the subject and speak of it without some of its more recent cultural “baggage” that makes some people fearful or irrational at the mere mention of the subject.

The bulk of the course will then be devoted to a familiarization with the principle documents of the Jewish and Christian spiritual heritage, those books collected into the library we call the Bible. The significance, function and formation of this literature, which forms the core of all of Western culture – film, literature, music, poetry, visual art – will take the first half of our course. The second half of the course will cover the robust spiritual and cultural development of the Christian heritage through the readings of a variety of texts gathered from the 20 centuries since the time of Jesus of Nazareth. Our intention will be not only to gain specific knowledge of the shape of theology over the centuries, but in doing so, to come to understand the variety of forms “Theology” appears in: not just formal reflective and systematic investigation, but also in the inner drama of human life, in public liturgy and worship, in the exercise of logic and reason, in the insights of mystical experience, in the expressiveness of the arts, in the course of human history itself, and in the quest for justice in the world. In conducting these examinations, we will also become more sensitive to the differences between perspectives past and present, and thereby become more skilled in the reading and use of both.

In doing so, we will be functioning within the Marquette Core Course intentions for Theology, that students will be able to: 1) Describe theologically the basic content of the Catholic faith in relation to other Christian and religious traditions as well as other world views. 2) Interpret theological texts and frameworks in their historical contexts. 3) Articulate implications of Christian faith for growth in holiness and the promotion of justice in the contemporary world. To put those intentions in other words, the entire course will function within the broad intention of Jesuit spirituality, that outlook that has made them the most gifted and effective group of educators in the history of the planet: “to find God in all things.” Whatever our own backgrounds, we should be able to sympathetically examine this intellectual, spiritual, and cultural tradition.

Required texts:

- Laurance, S.J., John D., editor. *Introduction to Theology*, 2nd Edition. Pearson Custom Publishing, 2006.
- Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. Introduction by Kathleen Norris. HarperSanFrancisco, renewed 1980. 2001 edition.
- Senior, Donald and John J. Collins, eds. *Catholic Study Bible*, 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press, 2006.