

Department of Theology

Professors: J. Brian Benestad, Marc D. Guerra (Chairperson); *Associate Professors:* Kathleen M. Fisher, Christopher Klofft; *Assistant Professor:* Matthew Briel; *Visiting Assistant Professor:* Fr. Roger Corriveau, A.A.; *Lecturers:* Fr. Chi Ai, A.A., Fr. Jerome Lively, A.A.

MISSION STATEMENT

Theology is the intellectual exercise of faith seeking understanding. As an academic discipline, theology seeks to understand God and God's relation to human beings and the world human beings inhabit. Informed by an understanding of theology that traces its roots back to St. Augustine, the Department of Theology invites students and faculty to engage in a dialectical investigation of the Catholic theological tradition and to reflect on this tradition's ongoing engagement with other theological traditions and other disciplines' distinctive claims to human knowledge. As part of its mission, the Department of Theology is deeply committed to bringing contemporary theological reflections into genuine dialogue with the various intellectual, political, and spiritual currents of thought that have shaped, and continue to shape, our modern world.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understanding the relation of Catholic theology to fundamental enduring human concerns
- Understanding Catholic theology's basic theological relation to other theological traditions
- Reading theological texts closely and carefully in context
- Writing clearly, insightfully, and in a well-ordered manner
- Communicating persuasively in discussion and in writing

MAJOR IN THEOLOGY (11)

The Major in Theology introduces students to the rich, variegated, and continuing tradition of Christian and Catholic theological reflection. Examining the enduring and irreducible theological questions that human beings are inescapably led to ask about their origins and end, the Major in Theology systematically introduces students to the Biblical and theoretical foundations of theology's distinctive exercise in faith seeking understanding. The Major prepares students for graduate work in academic theology and provides students with the educational background and foundation needed to pursue a career as a director of religious education or an elementary or high school teacher of religion.

Required Courses (11)

The requirements for the major consist of eleven courses, distributed as follows from among the offerings of the Theology Department:

- THE 100 Introduction to Theology. This course is required of all students as the first theology course in the core curriculum.
- One 150-level theology course. This course is required by all students as part of the core curriculum.
- One of the following second-level theology courses:
 - THE 202 Moral Theology
 - THE 203 The Early Church
 - THE 204 Catholicism Today
 - THE 207 Christ, Yesterday and Today
- Six courses selected from the department's upper-level course offerings
- Two additional courses from any of the Theology Department's offerings, THE250 or higher

RECOMMENDED FOUR-YEAR PLAN FOR THE MAJOR IN THEOLOGY

The Theology Department recommends the following semester-by-semester course plan to its majors. The major is structured to accommodate those students who are simultaneously pursuing another major along with a Theology Major and those students who plan on studying abroad. Students can, with some ease, start to pursue a major in theology as late as the spring semester of their sophomore year. Students who intend to go to graduate school are strongly encouraged to study a foreign language along with their theology courses, most especially, Latin.

First Year

Fall	Spring
THE 100 Introduction to Theology	One course numbered in the THE 150s

Sophomore Year

Fall	Spring
One of the following: THE 201; THE 202; THE 203; THE 204; and THE 207	One of the following: THE 201; THE 202; THE 203; THE 204; and THE 207
	One course numbered THE 250-THE 299

Junior Year

Fall	Spring
One course numbered between THE 250-THE 299	One course numbered THE 250-THE 299
One course numbered THE 300+	One course numbered THE 300+

Senior Year

Fall	Spring
One course numbered THE 300+	One course numbered THE 300+

DOUBLE COUNTS IN THE CORE FOR THEOLOGY MAJORS

First Theology Course THE 100
Second Theology Course THE 150s
Great Conversation THE 200-THE 299

ADVISING TIPS FOR THE MAJOR IN THEOLOGY

- Although 11 courses are required for the major, students can take up to 14 Theology courses.
- Senior Theology majors may take an independent study (THE 499) to gain more research experience.
- To maintain the academic integrity of the major, transfer courses are approved under strict conditions. Students should consult with the department chair before registering for courses outside the day school of Assumption College.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

THEOLOGY (THE)

THE 100 INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY

This course introduces students to the intellectual challenge posed by the academic study of Catholic theology. Through the study of selected classic and contemporary texts, the course familiarizes students with the nature, foundations, history, methods, and ends of Catholic theology. Students will become familiar with some of the distinctive movements and thinkers of the Catholic theological tradition, as well as the dialogue between Catholicism and other theological traditions. Each section of this course examines a book from the Old and a book from the New Testament, St. Augustine's *Confessions*, the thought of a medieval and the thought of a modern Catholic theologian, and the thought of a non-Catholic theologian. (Fall, Spring)

Staff/Three credits

THE 150 THE PROBLEM OF GOD

This course uses a variety of theological, philosophical, and literary works, including Augustine's *The City of God*, to examine what the twentieth-century American theologian John Courtney Murray called "the problem of God." That problem focuses on the challenge that the idea of God, in general, and the Christian understanding of God, in particular, poses to the human mind. This course fulfills the second theology requirement in the core curriculum program.

Staff/Three credits

THE 151 FAITH AND REASON

Catholic theology both presupposes the compatibility of faith and reason and argues in defense of this compatibility. This course introduces students to Catholic theology's traditional understanding of: 1) the nature of faith and reason; 2) their basic relation to each other; and 3) some of the various ways that theologians have historically approached the question of faith and reason. The course also introduces students to some contemporary debates involving the question of faith and reason. Each section of this course includes some readings taken from Augustine's *The City of God*. Prerequisite: THE 100. This course fulfills the second theology requirement in the core curriculum program.

Staff/Three credits

THE 153 REVELATION ANCIENT AND MODERN

This course introduces students to the major distinctions that typically differentiate ancient and modern theological understandings of the nature, status, and import of divine revelation. Through close readings of a series of classic, primary texts written by Jewish, Catholic, Islamic, and Protestant thinkers, this course familiarizes students with the fundamental questions and concerns that have traditionally animated the theological debates that modern religious thinkers have carried out with premodern religious thinkers. Prerequisite: THE 100. This course fulfills the second theology requirement in the core curriculum program.

Staff/Three credits

THE 202 MORAL THEOLOGY

No one can live a genuinely human life without asking the question "How should I live and what kind of life will make me happy?" This course introduces students to the unique way in which theology goes about answering the question of human flourishing. Moral theology is not so much preoccupied with drafting ethical and legal codes, but rather with shedding light on those actions that respond to the deepest aspirations of the human heart. Beginning with the premise that human beings need to be related to God if they are to be truly happy, this class invites students to think about what it would mean to live a morally serious human life. Prerequisite: THE 100 and one THE150s course.

Staff/Three credits

THE 203 THE EARLY CHURCH

We examine how the Christians of the first five centuries worked out the implications of their original profession of faith in Jesus Christ. What was the relationship between Christian discipleship and Judaism? How did the early Christians envision their role within their social, cultural, and political surroundings? We look back to the earliest Christian writings in order to see how the Christian Church came into existence and to grapple with issues that continue to be important today: the nature of God and Christ, grace and salvation, the use and interpretation of the Bible, and the practice of faith and the sacraments. Prerequisite: THE 100 and one THE150s course.

Staff/Three credits

THE 204 CATHOLICISM TODAY

Catholics do not live their lives within a Catholic bubble, a hermetically sealed world in which everyone and everything is shaped by the teachings of Catholicism. Christ himself said this would not be the case, informing his disciples that in this world they would have to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God that things that are God's. As a result, the Catholic Church has always had to find some way of engaging the world in which it currently finds itself. This course introduces students to Catholicism's ongoing engagement with the world today, paying particular attention to both the main currents in contemporary thought and the representative social movements that shape the modern world. Prerequisite: THE 100 and one THE 150s course.

Staff/Three credits

THE 207 CHRIST, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

We study the different theological interpretations of Jesus of Nazareth. The course focuses on the significance of Jesus, the Christ, asking such questions as: whether he is only a man, only God, or both; what the original experiences of men and women were in the presence of Jesus, before his Resurrection and afterward; what the subsequent experience of his presence is within the Church; and what difference the identity of Jesus makes for the idea of salvation. Prerequisite: THE 100 and one THE150s course.

Staff/Three credits

THE 285 SAINT AUGUSTINE'S CITY OF GOD

Christians have long struggled with Christ's injunction to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." For it is not immediately clear what things legitimately are Caesar's and what things legitimately are God's. It is also not clear what Christians are supposed to do when Caesar's things come into conflict with God's things. St. Augustine's *The City of God* takes these kinds of problems as its point of departure, as it goes on to outline the origins, natures, and ends of what Augustine calls the earthly city and the City of God. This course helps students learn to read Augustine's rich text, engage critically the enduring questions and tensions it raises, and reflect on the ways that Augustine's classic work can still speak to us today. Prerequisites: THE 100 and one THE 150s course.

Staff/Three credits

THE 305 CATHOLICISM AND THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

This course explores the theology, practice, and current status of interreligious dialogue between Catholicism and the world's major religions. It examines the Church's response to religious diversity and its teachings about Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Using the methods of comparative theology, students examine the Church's participation in interfaith dialogue on fundamental theological questions and its work with other religions on problems of global peace and social justice.

Prerequisites: THE 100 and one THE 150s course.

Staff/Three credits

THE 333 THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

This course examines Catholics' understanding of themselves as the Church and the difference that makes in their fundamental interpretation of human existence. Is the Church more than a social phenomenon? How is its mission part of God's plan for humanity? How is it the channel of God's relationship to humanity? In addition to exploring such questions, this course will examine Vatican Council II's concept of the Church as "the universal sacrament of salvation." Prerequisites: THE 100 and one THE150s course. (Spring)

Staff/Three credits

THE 341 MORAL ISSUES IN MEDICINE

An introduction to medical and health care ethics. Assisted by the writings of health care professionals, moral thinkers, and theologians, and in the distinctive light of Catholic morality, the course includes a study of the significance of conscience, prudence, and moral character, as well as competence in the health care professions, and an exploration of the many biomedical issues that have arisen as a result of the impact of modern science and technology. Prerequisites: THE 100 and one THE 150s course.

Staff/Three credits

THE 342 A THEOLOGY OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

This course seeks to clarify what God has revealed about the nature and the purposes of human sexuality. Beginning with a study of Christian moral principles and moving to an examination of biblical teachings on the subject of sexuality, the course will then address the topics of masturbation, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, and birth control from the perspective of a theology of marriage.

Prerequisites: THE 100 and one THE 150s course.

Staff/Three credits

THE 343 THE SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

A study of the social teachings of the Church, based on the writings of early Christian, medieval, and modern authors. The aim of the course is to discover and understand the distinctive principles of Catholic social teaching and to reflect on current critical issues in the light of those principles. Prerequisites: THE 100 and one THE 150s course.

Staff/Three credits

THE 371 RELIGION AND MODERNITY

This course invites students to think dialectically about the fundamental relationship between religion and modernity's original account of itself. It examines the fundamental claims that Christianity, in general, and Catholicism, in particular, make about human beings, human life, and the world that human beings inhabit. Prerequisites: THE 100 and one THE150s course.

Staff/ Three credits

THE 391 SPECIAL TOPICS IN THEOLOGY

This course offers a study at an advanced level of theological issues, themes, and/or theologians not covered by other thematic courses. The subject matter changes according to the interests of the professor and the needs of students. Prerequisites: THE 100 and one THE 150s course.

Staff/Three credits

THE 499 INDEPENDENT STUDY

Available only to highly qualified students who wish to develop a special interest but cannot find a suitable course among the regular offerings. Prerequisites: THE 100 and one THE 150s course. (Offered when warranted.)

Staff/Three credits