

# Department of Theology

*Associate Professors:* Christopher Klofft, Ty Monroe (Chairperson); *Assistant Professors:* Rachel Coleman, Douglas Finn; *Visiting Assistant Professors:* Fr. Roger Corriveau, A.A.; Timothy Troutner.

## 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

- Recognize Catholic theology's distinctive claim about the fundamental relation of Christian faith and human reason
- Appreciate Catholic theology's intellectual and spiritual relation to other theological traditions
- Read theological texts closely and carefully in context
- Write clearly, insightfully, and in a well-ordered manner
- Engage thoughtfully and respectfully in theological debate

## 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 Theology Major prepares students for graduate work in theology and philosophy and provides the educational background needed by directors of religious education, elementary/high school teachers of religion, and those working in Catholic media and publishing.

## REQUIRED COURSES (11)

- THE-100 Introduction to Theology. This course is required of all students as the first theology course in the Foundations Program.
- Six courses from the following 200-level theology courses:
  - THE-200 Faith and Reason
  - THE 202 Moral Theology
  - THE 203 The Early Church
  - THE 207 Christ, Yesterday and Today
  - THE-234 Sacraments: Encounters with Christ
  - THE-250 The Bible
  - THE-253 Revelation Ancient and Modern
  - THE-255 Creation and Ecology
  - THE-286 Catholicism and World Religions
- Any three courses selected from the Department's 300-level offerings
- THE-450 Seminar in Theology

## 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	One from: THE 200, 202, 203, 207, 234, 250, 253, 255, 286

### Sophomore Year

Fall	Spring
One from: THE 200, 202, 203, 207, 234, 250, 253, 255, 286	Two from: THE 200, 202, 203, 207, 234, 250, 253, 255, 286

### Junior Year

Fall	Spring
Two from: THE 200, 202, 203, 207, 234, 250, 253, 255, 286	Two from: THE 310, 341, 342, 352, 355, 362, 371, 381

### Senior Year

Fall	Spring
One from: THE 310, 341, 342, 352, 355, 362, 371, 381	THE 450

## ADVISING TIPS FOR THE MAJOR IN THEOLOGY

- Although 11 courses are required for the major, students may take up to 14 Theology courses.
- With the Chairperson's approval, majors may take an independent study (THE 499) to gain specific research experience in areas of personal interest.
- To maintain the academic integrity of the major, transfer courses are approved under strict conditions. Students should consult with the Department Chairperson before registering for courses outside of Assumption University's day school.

## MINOR IN THEOLOGY (6)

The Minor in Theology is designed to broaden the student's educational and theoretical background and enable a student to see how his/her major field of study relates to the universal claims made by reason and revelation.

## REQUIRED COURSES (6)

The requirements for the minor consist of six 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 Foundations Program.
- At least two courses from the following 200-level theology courses:
  - THE-200 Faith and Reason
  - THE 202 Moral Theology
  - THE 203 The Early Church
  - THE 207 Christ, Yesterday and Today
  - THE-234 Sacraments: Encounters with Christ
  - THE-250 The Bible
  - THE-253 Revelation Ancient and Modern

- THE-255 Creation and Ecology
- THE-286 Catholicism and World Religions
- At least one 300-level course
- Two electives at 200-level or above

## COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

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### 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. This course fulfills the first theology requirement in the Foundations Program. (Fall, Spring)

*Staff/Three credits*

#### **THE 200 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 a Foundations Program requirement. (Fall, Spring)

*Staff/Three credits*

#### **THE 201 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. Prerequisite: THE 100. This course fulfills a Foundations Program requirement. (Fall, Spring)

*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. This course fulfills a Foundations Program requirement. (Fall, Spring)

*Klofft/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. This course fulfills a Foundations Program requirement. (Fall, Spring)  
Corriveau, Finn, Monroe/*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. This course fulfills a Foundations Program requirement. (Fall, Spring)

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. This course fulfills a Foundations Program requirement. (Fall, Spring)

Corriveau, Monroe/*Three credits*

### **THE 233 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." Prerequisite: THE 100. This course fulfills a Foundations Program requirement. (Fall, Alternating Years/Odd Years)

Corriveau, Monroe/*Three credits*

### **THE 250 THE BIBLE**

This course provides students with an introduction to the Christian Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments. As *Dei Verbum* notes, "God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion" about "divinely revealed realities." THE 250 accordingly examines the Christian Scriptures from a variety of historical, literary, and especially theological perspectives in an effort to deepen students' appreciation of the Bible's foundational role in Catholic theological reflection.

Klofft/*Three Credits*

### **THE 253 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 pre-modern religious thinkers. Prerequisite: THE 100. This course fulfills a Foundations Program requirement and is a requirement in the Core Texts and Enduring Questions Program. (Fall, Spring)

Coleman, Monroe/*Three credits*

### **THE 255 CREATION AND ECOLOGY**

The word ecology stems from the Greek "oikos", meaning "house" or "home"; while ecology as a scientific discipline studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they exist, ecology also has a more expansive meaning that has deep roots in the Catholic tradition. In Catholic theology, ecology has always been connected to study of and care for our common home—that is, creation. Since one of the central tenets of Catholic theology is the doctrine of creation—that the triune God creates the world out of nothing—this course explores both what the doctrine of creation is and means for the Catholic intellectual tradition, and whether approaching the study of the world—scientific or otherwise—is or should be affected by our

understanding of the origin of our world. In short: does it matter that the world is created? The course will approach this topic through the lens of ecology, which does not exclude the study of the environment and the organisms therein, but asks its interlocutors to deal with the question of the natural world through a holistic worldview.

*Coleman/Three Credits*

#### **THE 274 THEOLOGY AND LITERATURE**

Stories matter. That seemed to be the point of view of Jesus, one of the greatest storytellers ever. He used them to offer his listeners a window on reality - his stories make claims about what is real, what life is about, how one should live. Often, they are not overtly religious or particularly pious, but they cut to the bone—the Story of the Prodigal Son being a prime example. This tradition of imaginative literature seeking to understand life from a theological standpoint continues today. This course concerns itself with examining theology—notably Christian—claims about life, about reality, about the good, about truth, through the study of imaginative literature: fiction, poetry, drama. To this end, we will read and discuss such writers as Bernanos, Greene, O'Connor, Lewis, Tolkien, L'Engle, Donne, Herbert, Kazantzakis, Eliot, Percy, Powers, and many others. (Fall, Spring)

*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. Prerequisite: THE 100. This course fulfills a Foundations Program requirement and a requirement in the Core Texts and Enduring Questions Program. (Fall, Alternating Years/Even Years)

*Finn, Guerra, Monroe/Three credits*

#### **THE 286 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. Prerequisite: THE 100. This course fulfills a Foundations Program requirement. (Spring, Alternating Years/Odd Years)

*Finn /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 second Cornerstone THE course in the Foundations Program. (Spring, Alternating Years/Even Years)

*Coleman/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 second Cornerstone Theology course in the Foundations Program. (Fall, Alternating Years/Even Years)

*Klofft/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. Prerequisite: THE 100. This course fulfills a Foundations Program requirement. (Spring, Alternating Years/Odd Years)

*Klofft/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 second Cornerstone THE course in the Foundations Program. (Rotating)

*Staff/Three credits*

**THE 450 SEMINAR IN THEOLOGY**

[HAS NOT RUN IN THE RECENT PAST, BUT WILL RUN WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS. NEED A DESCRIPTION, PERHAPS FROM HEATHER'S FILES/ARCHIVES]

*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 second Cornerstone THE course in the Foundations Program. (Offered when warranted.)

*Staff/Three credits*