THEO 2301/3311: TEACHINGS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Fall 2015

“Theology is simply that part of religion that requires brains.” –G.K. Chesterton

Section C    Strake 107    MoWe 12:10–1:25
Section D    Strake 207    MoWe 1:40–2:55

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Office Hours: MoWe: 10:00–noon am, 3:00–3:40 pm; TuTh 10:00–10:50; or by appointment

Course Description

Course Catalog: “Introduction to the fundamentals of Catholic doctrine and life: revelation, scripture, tradition, and magisterium; creation; original sin; Christ and salvation; Trinity; grace; Church (structure, mark, and mission); Mary; sacraments and liturgy; moral principles (sin, conscience, etc.); the ten commandments; prayer.”

Course Objectives

- Acquire introductory level knowledge of the core teachings of the Catholic Church
- Acquire introductory-level knowledge of the difference the teachings of the Catholic Church make for living
- Develop good habits of slow, contemplative reading of theological texts appropriate to the 1300 or 3300 level
- Develop good habits of thinking sufficient to express those thoughts in writing appropriate to the 1300 or 3300 level.
- Develop a facility with discussing theology with the professor and with fellow students

Grading and Coursework

Grading will be based on two examinations (15% each), a final examination (30%), and two essays (20% each).

Attendance

Attendance in class is expected. Students who are frequently absent will have difficulty passing the examinations. If the student is going to be absent, he or she should notify the professor by e-mail before the beginning of the class the student expects to miss. Students are always responsible for lecture and other class materials missed due to absence, excused or otherwise. If the student is going to be absent, the student is responsible to make arrangements to be sure the student does not miss the material covered or information given during class.
Examinations

Examinations will include three sections: a multiple choice section that will include questions about the reading and important topics covered in class and definitions of terms, a brief, fill-in-the-blank section in which students will write out definitions of terms, and an essay or essays. Examinations will use Scantron forms, so students should make sure to bring #2 pencils to class on examination days.

Final examination

As per UST policy, the final examination is comprehensive. It will include material from previous examinations, a short section covering material from the most recent examination until the end of the semester, and an essay section.

Essay

Essays are 4 pages each. The student will write two essays in the course of the semester. Each student may choose essays from the list of topics handed out by the professor. The student will further choose which essay to hand in first and which essay to hand in second. As part of the Theology Department’s writing emphasis, students at the 2301 will understand a Catholic doctrine (or the connections between particular Catholic doctrines) at a genuinely theological level, and express their understanding in clear and effective analytical writing. This writing outcome focuses on analysis: the breaking down of things into their parts in order to understand the whole and the relationships of its constituent parts. Keep in mind that the final essay grade will be based largely on the student’s ability to demonstrate that he or she understands the doctrine being examined and can analyze it. Demonstration of a theological understanding of the doctrine and a thorough analysis of the doctrine should be your primary goal in writing the paper.

Do not use internet sources unless given express permission by the instructor. The one exception is any source from an online research database accessible through Doherty library.

Late essays are subject to a grade reduction of one full letter grade per class period late. After two weeks late, the paper is no longer eligible to receive any credit.

This course uses turnitin.com. The course ID is 10394576 and the password is “strake”.

Required texts for this course:

Frank Sheed, Theology and Sanity, Ignatius (San Francisco: 1993).

Walker Percy, Lost in the Cosmos (any edition).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Various materials posted on Blackboard (BB).

**Required Materials**

Students are required to bring any relevant course texts to each class along with materials to use to take notes.

**Don’t Bring Them To Class**

Students may not use electronic devices in class. Anything with a screen must remain in bags for the duration of class. All the best, most recent research shows a drop in student performance when using these devices in class.

**Academic Honesty**

Needless to say, the University of St. Thomas takes academic dishonesty very seriously. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing in any way will automatically fail the relevant assignment, and possibly receive a failing grade for the semester. Plagiarism includes any unattributed use of sources, whether word-for-word or paraphrased. If the student relies on another source to make an argument or for information of any kind, *that source must be cited*.

**Grading Standards and Scale**

A: 94–100  
A-: 90–93  
B+: 87–89  
B: 84–86  
B-: 80–83  
C+: 77–79  
C: 74–76  
C-: 70–73  
D+: 67–69  
D: 64–66  
D-: 60–63 (For official transcript purposes, the D- is simply listed as “D”)  
F: 0–60

A: Excellent. “A” work demonstrates truly extraordinary work, which goes well above and beyond the expectations of the assignment. A student who earns an “A” will demonstrate both extraordinary insight and have an extraordinary work and study ethic.

B: Very good work, which demonstrates that the student has a thorough mastery of the subject matter. A student who earns a “B” will have either an extraordinary work ethic or an extraordinary depth of insight; alternately, a “B” student will have very good work and study habits as well as very good insight.

C: Adequate work. The student has demonstrated a sound grasp of subject matter without making serious errors.
D: Deficient work. The student demonstrates a grasp of the subject matter, but has made serious errors as well.

F: Inadequate work. The student has failed to demonstrate any grasp or mastery of the work and/or has failed to complete the assignment within the parameters given.

0: Work has not been turned in.

**Extra Credit**

There is no extra credit available in this course.

**Note Bene:**

Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to speak with me as early as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities will also need to contact Counseling and Disability Services in Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-2169 or x6953.

**A further note on this course**

This course is a reading intensive course, which requires the student to devote a minimum of two hours of study time outside of class to prepare for every one hour of class, not including exam prep or paper writing time. For the purposes of our class, that means the student will devote 5 hours per week to class preparation. The student will also be expected to take detailed notes on lectures and class discussions. Attentiveness in the classroom and great care in reading to prepare for the course are absolutely essential to succeed in this class. A successful student will need to have a memory for detail, a depth of understanding about the course texts and their subject matter, and an ability to bring the different elements of the course into synthesis in an overarching grasp. Two suggestions I can offer: thorough, detailed lecture notes will be of enormous help to you in studying for exams. Also, takes notes on your reading.

**Course readings and assignment schedule**

Note: FS = Frank Sheed; T&S: Theology and Sanity; BB = Blackboard; CCC= *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Reading and Assignments Schedule

1. Aug. 24 Course Introduction
2. Aug. 26: Our Predicament
   a. Reading:
      i. Book of Ecclesiastes (Old Testament)
      ii. Pascal, “Diversion,” from *Pensées* (BB)
   b. Questions for Reading:
      i. What does Ecclesiastes mean by “vanity”?
      ii. Where is Qoheleth, the narrator of Ecclesiastes, performing his investigations?
iii. Why does Qoheleth counsel us to “Eat, drink, and be merry”?  
iv. Why isn’t even the king happy, for Pascal?  
v. Why can’t we tolerate quiet and rest, for Pascal?  
vi. What does the hunter desire to get out of his hunt?

3. Aug. 31: On Being Lost in the Cosmos  
a. Reading  
i. Walker Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, Preliminary Short Quiz  
ii. Walker Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*, Questions 1-2, 4-5, 9-10  
b. Questions for Reading  
i. According to Percy, who is the only alien creature in the Cosmos?  
ii. Be ready to discuss each of the questions in Percy’s preliminary, short quiz.  
iii. Why does the Self want to get rid of itself?  
iv. Why does the Self try to inform itself by possessing things which do not look like the things they’re used as?  
v. Why are we subject to fashion?  
vi. Why can we look at a full closet and think, “I have nothing to wear”?  
vii. Why are we afraid of being stuck with another Self?  
viii. Why are we secretly pleased at others’ misfortunes?  
ix. Why do we get bored?

4. Sept. 2: Angelism and Bestialism  
i. Questions for Reading:  
1. What does Percy mean by the Transcending Self?  
2. Which characters do you identify with?  
3. What is the significance of the feeling of transcendence?  
4. Why do artists and writers, some technologists, and also most people have so much trouble living in an ordinary world?  
5. Which reentry option do you prefer?  
6. Why does Percy call scientists “exempted”?  
7. What is Percy’s argument that the scientist is a leftover from his own theory?  
8. What does Percy say is behind our desire to communicate with animals, or at least, to try to prove that animals can speak?  
9. Who is Carl Sagan?  
10. Why is Carl Sagan so anxious to contact extraterrestrials?

5. Sept. 9: How to Look For (and Maybe Even Find) a Way Out of Our Predicament  
i. Why does Percy write his essay about a castaway?  
ii. What is “news” according to Percy?  
iii. What is the difference between “knowledge” and “news”?  
iv. Why does he say we might need news?  
v. How can we go about telling whether news is reliable?  
vi. What is the difference between “island news” and “news from across the sea”?  


vii. Why is the “apostolic character” of Christianity important, for Percy?

6. Sept. 14 Why Study Theology?
   a. Reading: St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, q. 1, a. 1 (BB)
   b. Questions for Reading:
      i. What are the reasons St. Thomas gives for the necessity of sacred doctrine?
      ii. What is the relationship between faith and reason St. Thomas sketches out in this article?

7. Sept. 16: The Catholic Mind
   a. Reading:
      i. James V. Schall, “The Mind that is Catholic,” from The Mind that is Catholic: Philosophical and Political Essays
      ii. Frank Sheed, Theology and Sanity, 21-37
   b. Questions for Reading
      i. What kind of things does the Church teach?
      ii. Why does the Church teach?
         1. Why these things? Just because?
      iii. What does FS say is the import of the doctrine of creation from nothing?
      iv. Why does FS say knowledge of God is important?
      v. How is it related to love of God?
      vi. What is the job of the imagination?
      vii. What is the limitation of the imagination? What can’t it do?
      viii. What is the significance of Schall’s quotation of C.S. Lewis: “All get what they want: they do not always like it,” for a discussion of theology?
      ix. What does Schall say the purpose of our intellectual lives is?
      x. What is the significance of the quote from St. Thomas More, “God helpeth us to eat also but not yet without our mouth”?
      xi. What does Schall say is the relationship between faith and reason?
      xii. For Schall, what ultimately defines the “Catholic mind”?

8. Sept. 21 Mystery
   a. Reading:
      i. Frank Sheed, Theology and Sanity, 37-44
      ii. Frank Sheed, Knowing God, 40-53 (BB)
   b. Questions for Reading
      i. FS says that one option, when confronted with mysteries, is to make a large act of faith, accept them, and then think no more about them. What does FS think about this option?
      ii. One reaction to the realization that there are many people who have not heard Christian revelation is to say, “Well, if they haven’t heard it, then they are sinning by living the way they are.” How does FS criticize this attitude?
      iii. FS says “To act without vision is a formula for chaos.” How so? How does that apply to what he calls “society and sanity”?

9. Sept. 23 Spirit
   a. Reading: Frank Sheed, Knowing God, 54-77 (BB)
   b. Questions for Reading
i. What is the difference between “soul” and “spirit”?

ii. What evidence does FS give for thinking that we have spirits?

iii. How is this sense of spirit different from the way we normally hear the word “spiritual” being used?

iv. How does the technical sense of “simplicity” differ from the way we normally hear the word used?

v. What is the problem with “space” when using our minds?

10. Sept. 28 Theology and Revelation
   a. Reading: Frank Sheed, Knowing God, 78-102
   b. Questions for Reading
      1. Why does FS say we need God’s aid to explore his revelation?
      2. What is the point of the Church’s teaching? That is, why does the Church teach?
      3. Many people are impatient with what they see as the Church’s hairsplitting tendencies in its precisely formulated doctrines, which can oftentimes seem to be at odds with the Church’s simultaneous claim that Christianity is about a relationship with God rather than intellectual propositions. What would FS say in response?
      4. What are the limitations we have in speaking about God?
      5. What are some arguments FS uses to show that the Scriptures need the teaching Church? Do you agree with him?
         1. What did Christ mean when he said, “I still have much to say to you” in the Gospel of John 16:12?
         2. Why do the Gospels report so often that Jesus taught, but almost never report the content of his teaching?
      6. How does Luke begin his gospel? Why does FS say he begins this way?
      7. How many sources of revelation are there?
      8. How do we know what is in the Bible?
      9. How do we know the Bible is authoritative?

11. Sept. 30 Exam 1

12. Oct. 5 He Who Is and The Mind Works on Infinity
   a. Reading:
      1. T&S: 47-60
      2. T&S 61-76
      3. Book of Exodus, chapter 3
      4. CCC #203-209
      5. Supplemental reading: CCC 1849-1851
   b. Questions for Reading
      1. What does it mean to be sinful?
      2. Summarize Aquinas’ argument from contingency.
      3. Why does FS say the question, “Who made God” is a mistake?
      4. What are the consequences of God being “He Who Is”?
         1. Why do these flow from his being He Who Is?
      5. What are the consequences of God being personal?
      6. Why does FS say having parts is a limitation?
vii. Why does FS say there is no time in God?
viii. What is the difference between changeless and stagnant?

13. Oct. 7 He Who Is Continued
   a. Additional Reading: Rémi Brague, *On the God of the Christians*, 52-63 (BB)

   a. Reading:
      i. Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity*, 88-98
      ii. Rémi Brague, *On the God of the Christians*, 63-68 (BB)
      iii. *CCC* #253-256
   b. Questions for Reading:
      i. Why does Brague say the concept of monotheism is “vague”?
      ii. What is the difference between the question of the *number of the gods* versus the *concentration of the divine*, for Brague?
      iii. What is the problem with saying that God is one, and simply resting content, according to Brague?
   c. Questions for Reading
      i. Why does FS say the Trinity is so important to think about? What difference does it make?
         1. Why would we want to know God?
      ii. What are FS’ four statements about the Trinity?
      iii. What is the relation between person and nature?
      iv. Why does FS say we cannot say 3 “separate” persons? Or that they “share” the divine nature?
      v. Why can’t we say “3 gods”?
      vi. What would it mean for us to say “3 gods”?
      vii. What distinguishes each Divine Person of the Trinity from the others, according to Brague?
      viii. In what manner is God one, according to Brague?

15. Oct. 19 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*Essay #1 is due today*)
   a. Reading:
      i. T&S 98-123
      ii. *CCC* #257-260
   b. Questions for Reading
      i. Why does FS say that some theologians dislike to use the term “produced” to talk about how the Son comes from the Father?
      ii. What does God know, first and foremost?
      iii. How does FS say the “Word” adds to our knowledge of the procession of the Second Person over and above “Son”?
      iv. What provides for the equality of the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit with the other two Persons?
      v. If the Son is the image of the Father and therefore the Son is wholly equal to the Father; and the Son and the Father put themselves fully into their act of loving so that the Holy Spirit is also equal, what provides for the distinctness of the 3 Persons?
vi. What does FS say the purpose of appropriation is?

16. Oct. 21 God as Creator and The Created Universe
   a. Reading:
      i. T&S 127-135, 139-151
      ii. CCC #291-301, 356-361
      iii. Book of Genesis, chapter 1
      iv. Supplemental reading: CCC #362-373
   b. Questions for Reading
      i. What is the difference between the question how the world came about when the theologian asks it than when the physicist asks it?
      ii. What does FS say nothing is? What is it not?
      iii. What does it mean to say we are “primarily receptive”?
      iv. What does FS mean by a “perfection”?
         1. Do we have “perfections”?
      v. Can you explain why FS says spirit “is” or “be-s” more than matter?
         i. Can you explain the difference between eternity, aeviternity, and time?

17. Oct. 26 Angels, Matter, Men and The Testing of Angels, Matter and Men
   c. Reading:
      i. T&S 158-190
      ii. Letter to the Romans 1:18-32
      iii. Book of Genesis, chapter 2
   d. Questions for Reading
      i. What does FS mean that the “lesser gulf” impresses us more than the greater gulf?
      ii. What does FS mean by a “moral law”?
      iii. How does FS say that each thing made by God is meant to serve God?
      iv. What does FS mean that sin is ludicrous?
      v. Explain in your own words what FS means by freedom in its second sense.
      vi. What does it mean to say that death was not part of man’s original design?
      vii. What is the difference between natural and supernatural life?
         i. What is the difference between a creature and a child of God?

18. Oct. 28 The Fall of Man
   e. Reading:
      i. T&S 190-207
      ii. Book of Genesis chapter 3
      iii. CCC #397-406
   f. Questions for Reading
      i. What are the two deaths FS talks about?
         1. How are they related?
      ii. What is the difference between avenging justice and the reparation or fixing of right order?
      iii. After sin, why would right order need to be restored?
      iv. What is the difference between original sin and personal sin?
v. What does FS say the devil is like?
   i. Is it fair that Adam’s sin affects his descendants?

19. Nov. 2 Between the Fall and the Redemption and The Mission of Christ

g. Reading:
   i. T&S 208-221, 231-242
   ii. Book of Genesis 4-11
   iii. Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon (BB)
   iv. CCC #464-468
   v. Supplemental reading: CCC #54-64, 456-460, 469-478

h. Questions for Reading
   i. What are the derangements of religion FS lists?
   ii. What is meant by the Incarnation?
   iii. Does the Incarnation mean that God himself has changed into a man?
   i. When Christ does something, who is it who does the action?

20. Nov. 4 The Redeemer and The Redeeming Sacrifice

i. Reading:
   i. T&S 242-268
   ii. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 56 (BB)
   iii. CCC #651-655
   iv. Supplemental reading: CCC #606-618, 638-650, 659-654

j. Questions for Reading
   i. Why would Jesus have prayed, if he was God?
   ii. Why would Jesus have prayed, if he was God?
   iii. Why does FS say it is best to study both man and God in Christ?
   iv. What does the agony in the Garden tell us about the character of Jesus
   i. Does Sheed say the Resurrection actually happened or not?

21. Nov. 9 Redemption and The Kingdom

k. Reading:
   i. T&S 268-289
   ii. CCC 763-766, 770-776, 857-862
   iii. John 20:17-37
   iv. Supplemental reading: CCC #75-79

l. Questions for Reading
   i. When Christ offers his sacrifice, what is it that he offers?
   ii. What is the difference between Redemption and salvation?
   iii. How are Adam and Christ both heads of the human race?
   iv. What does it mean to be the “moral” head of the race?
   v. Why aren’t we all automatically affected by Christ’s actions as we are by Adam’s?
   vi. How does FS describe the Church? What is its relationship to Christ?
   vii. Why did Christ choose the Apostles?
   viii. How do the Apostles continue Christ’s work?
   ix. What does FS say the role of Peter is in the Church?
   i. What happens without Peter playing that role?
22. Nov. 11 30 Dispensing the Gifts

m. Reading:
   i. T&S: 289-310
   ii. Gospel of Matthew 16:13-20
   iii. CCC #888-892, 1115-1116, 1127-1129
   iv. Supplemental reading: CCC #84-87, 91-95, 874-887, 893-903

n. Questions for Reading
   i. For FS, does infallibility destroy intellectual activity?
   ii. Why does FS say there is a combination of spiritual gift and material thing in each sacrament?
   iii. Explain the twin dangers FS lists for the being that is a composite of body and soul.
       1. Which is more dangerous according to FS? Do you agree?
   iv. Is the Church the only instrument God uses to bestow his gifts, according to FS

23. Nov. 16 Exam 2

24. Nov. 18 The Mystical Body of Christ and Life in the Body

   o. Reading:
      i. T&S 311-336
      ii. CCC #487, 502-507, 1365-1369
      iii. Supplemental reading: CCC #488-501, 781-798, 1066-1076, 1324-1327,

   p. Questions for Reading
      i. What is the difference between saying, “I am x” and “I have x”?
      ii. What is the difference between organism and organization?
      iii. Why does FS say we are united to Christ’s humanity?
      iv. What does FS say Mary’s representative function is?

25. Nov. 23 Life After Death

   q. Reading
      i. T&S 336-347
      ii. CCC #1005-1009,
      iii. James V. Schall, “The Brighter Side of Hell” (BB)

   r. Questions for Reading
      i. State the 3 possible states after death
      ii. What is a venial versus a mortal sin?
          1. What are the conditions for a mortal sin? What might examples of each be.
      iii. What is the basis of FS’ explanation of the need for Purgatory?

26. Nov. 30 Life After Death, Continued (ESSAY 2 IS DUE TODAY)

   s. Reading:
      i. Kenneth Baker, S.J., “Eschatology” (BB)
      ii. Second Letter of Peter 3:1-11
      iii. Letter to the Ephesians 2:1-10
      iv. CCC #988-991, 1002-1004, 1021-1022, 1038-1041

   t. Questions for Reading
i. Why does Baker say that man is by nature mortal, yet were originally exempted from the law of death?

ii. Why can’t someone in heaven commit a sin?

iii. What kind of reality is Hell?

iv. Why does the Church believe in Purgatory?

v. What is the difference between Hell and Purgatory?

vi. What does Baker say will happen to the world on the last day?

27. Dec. 2 The Life of Grace

u. Reading

i. T&S 401-420

ii. Letter to the Hebrews 11:1-3

iii. CCC #36-38, 1720-1723, 1812-1832

iv. Supplemental reading: CCC #1803-1811, 1987-2005

v. Questions for Reading

i. What is the distinction between God’s presence and indwelling?

ii. What is the difference between the end and the object of an action?

iii. What is the difference between an actual grace and sanctifying grace?

iv. What is faith?

v. Explain the difference between the soul working by grace and the eye by a microscope.

vi. How are presumption and despair related to hope?

vii. What does love mean for FS?

viii. What is the difference between viewing love as an act of will and as an emotion?

i. What are moral virtues? List them

28. Dec. 7 Course finale: Why Catholicism?


b. Questions for reading:

i. How does he diagnose our present age?

ii. Why would Catholicism address the predicament of modern, or post-modern, man that Percy uncovers?

iii. Why does he say he is a Catholic?

iv. What are the “signs” that Percy says are left in post-modern times?

v. Why does the present age find them so offensive?

29. Final Exam