



CORE 1101

Catalogue Description

This first course in the University Core Curriculum seeks to forge a community of conversation inspired to explore perennial questions central but not exclusive to the Catholic intellectual tradition, broadly understood. People throughout the different cultures and traditions of the world strive to understand the transcendent mysteries of the human journey that are addressed by the world's religions, philosophies, art, music and literature. The first signature course invites students into this conversation via some of the important texts that focus on transformative journeys as they are portrayed in the Christian, including the specifically Catholic tradition, Greek, Hebrew, Hindu, and other traditions. Students are asked to reflect upon their own transformative experiences and envision their personal journeys in conversation with each other and the texts. This course is linked with the 1-credit University Life course, CORE 1001.

Questions addressed by the central texts

This course is a text-based discussion of the ideas each text raises. Students are expected to have read the assigned texts before class and to participate in each class in discussion of them, orally and in writing. The course is meant to introduce students to the habits of critical thinking and writing and to reflection on the profound issues of human life as an integral part of their university education. The texts are selected to further this reflection.

Note: as of 2016 we have a new edition of the textbook, with a new translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* and Augustine's *Confessions*. Students also must purchase the Oxford Annotated Bible to use, instead of having the selected Bible passages in the (new edition) textbook.

Nostra Aetate addresses the relation of Christian to non-Christian believers. It stresses a positive view of Judaism, the Jewish roots of Christianity, and positive aspects of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam and "whatever is true and holy" in other traditions. It asks us to reflect on our own tradition of belief in relation to other traditions that provide different answers to the great human questions we share. "Nostra Aetate" provides a good opening text for this course in that it raises fundamental questions that the remainder of the course will continue to explore.

Note: as of 2015 we have added the optional text by Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, with chapters 4 and 5 recommended (in their entirety or in selected parts). This text addresses some of the issues in *Nostra Aetate*, but geared to "our time" (i.e. "nostra aetate") in the twenty-first

century, second decade. Francis talks about how to keep and to spread the joy of the gospel, in light of temptations toward rigidity, routine, and materialism. Chapter 4 specifically addresses the challenge of social justice and “the tyranny of the market” in light of widespread inequality and severe poverty. He also talks about the Gospel’s heart of mercy, and how to interact with those of other faiths (key to *Nostra Aetate*).

Plato stands at the beginning of the Western philosophical tradition. Through the figure of Socrates he explicitly raises the question that is central to all the texts we will read in this course: What is the best way to live? He asks us to think about the difference between appearance and reality. He also puts us to the question: for what are we willing to die? How important is truth to us?

The Hebrew Bible represents a quite different answer to the question of the best way to live. If the notion of enlightenment and inquiry is the central focus of philosophy, the Bible insists that these notions be understood in the context of a community that orders its life in light of a divine revelation given by a God who is both creator and redeemer.

The Gospels are the foundational texts of the Christian tradition. Continuing the story begun in the Hebrew Bible, they proclaim that the ultimate mystery is transcendent, personal love, embodied in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Note: this year (2018) we are using Mark’s Gospel, following the liturgical calendar.

The *Bhagavad Gita* comes from the traditions of Hinduism. The *Bhagavad Gita* is the story of Arjuna as he decides whether to make war against his relatives and takes counsel from his God, Krishna. Krishna soon reveals to Arjuna different aspects of Hindu beliefs and paths of practice that move toward personal liberation. The *Gita* raises profound questions about the relation of duty to morality, the culturally inculcated desire for rewards through action, and what devotion to God might look like. The *Gita* also raises questions regarding the meaning of the body and soul, the meaning and purpose of life, the nature of liberation and the path to it, and even the nature of time and the world itself.

Saint Augustine's *Confessions* asks what it means to rightly praise and thank God, what it means to be a rightly ordered human being, how this might be achieved, and what obstacles stand in our way. Augustine draws themes and questions from Plato and from the gospels into a concrete personal journey that asks after the nature and purpose of being human, the source and nature of evil, and the role of divine love in our lives.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* incarnates a Christian journey of self-discovery that asks its readers to experience the iniquity of the world, the tragedies of human selfishness, the progress of conversion, and the extraordinary love of God for all creation. Dante raises issues of the nature of human iniquity, of justice both human and divine, of the relation between sensible and spiritual beauty, of the destiny of the human person, and the nature of God.

Note: as of 2015 faculty may teach either Augustine or Dante OR BOTH, and, in fact, we would encourage you to teach both, though it is entirely up to you. The two writers connect well with each other in terms of their confessional perspective, their sense of sin and also of God’s mercy and forgiveness, their “journey of transformation.” Students can be encouraged to look for

connections between the two writers. Both are also extremely important for other writings, both literary and theological.

Pope Benedict's *Deus Caritas Est (God is Love)* begins from the Christian doctrine that God is love and proceeds to reflect on different forms of human love in relation to this belief. In particular, he reflects on the nature of erotic love and its relationship to Christian understandings of love. He also discusses the relation between Christian charity and political justice, the relation between Church and state.

Delivered on the eve of his assassination, Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I've Been to the Mountaintop* speech makes prophetic allusion to the final days of Moses as he, before his death, glimpses the Promised Land from atop Mount Nebo. Situated within the context of the sanitation workers' strike in Memphis in 1968, and against the backdrop of the wider civil rights movement of the 1960s, Dr. King's speech focuses on racial and economic injustice, non-violent resistance, and the divine call to give one's life for another in need. Throughout this historically significant speech, which captures for us the final words publicly spoken by Dr. King, the question of what it means to be human is brought to the fore.

Note: as of this year (2018), MLK's Mountaintop Speech is one of the required texts for Journey. An audio version of the speech will be made available to students and faculty on blackboard (along with a written transcript of the speech). In an effort to acknowledge the oratory nature of this piece, and to better study / understand its rhetorical significance, students are to listen to the audio version of the speech. Excerpts from Bryan N. Massingale's *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* will also be available on Blackboard and can be used as optional / supplemental material.

Course Objectives

At the completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify and engage the issues and questions central to the Catholic intellectual tradition.
2. Discuss some core texts of this tradition, as well as essential texts from other traditions, with an eye toward understanding how they are similar and how they might differ with regard to ideas of personal and communal transformation.
3. Understand and appreciate a diversity of perspectives concerning fundamental questions about what it means to be human.
4. Demonstrate Freshman level proficiency in Reading & Writing, and in Critical Thinking.

The primary focus of this class is reading and discussion. Students are expected to demonstrate that they have read and are prepared to discuss the material prior to class.

Proficiencies

This course satisfies the requirements for both the Critical Thinking and the Reading/Writing proficiencies, which are required as part of the University Core Curriculum. In addition to the content, subject matter, and themes of the course, it is also crucial to work on those skills and practices that help us to develop our abilities to read carefully, understand precisely, and articulate our insights clearly. Not only are these skills cross-disciplinary; they are an essential component in our development as intelligent persons.

To satisfy the requirements for the Reading/Writing proficiency a course must include a significant amount of writing (both formal and informal) along with an expectation that there will be several hours of academic reading per week. Approximately 50% of the course grade will be based upon writing, whether in the form of papers, short assignments, quizzes, or exams. The requirements for the course have been designed with this goal in mind. Readings are taken almost entirely from primary sources. This approach is based on the conviction that it is good to read and analyze the authors' own words, rather than beginning with what others have written about them. A goal of the course is to increase your ability and confidence in being able to read and analyze primary texts.

It is one thing to run your eyes over the words on a page; it is quite another to read attentively and critically. The Critical Thinking proficiency is geared toward developing your abilities to understand and think through the course readings. This means, among other things, learning to read texts carefully, being able to follow the author's train of thought, becoming attentive to nuance within a text, and being able to articulate your insights clearly and precisely, both in your writing and in class discussion. Critical thinking also means raising questions about what an author has to say. Is the author's point convincing? Why or why not? How does a particular author's point of view compare with that of another author dealing with the same issue? Who do you think is right? Not only is critical thinking an essential component in reading texts; it is also necessary to apply to your own writing, so that what you write comes across as clear, well-organized, and coherent. A number of course assignments are aimed at helping you develop the practice of critical thinking.

Course requirements

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| 1. Writing about the reading: daily writing and periodic syntheses | 20% |
| 2. Participation | 20% |
| 3. Paper(s) –at least one assignment to be submitted for revision | 20% |
| 4. Exams | 20% |
| 5. Defined by the instructor, including a substantial writing assignment | 20% |

Note: since this course is Reading and Writing Infused, fulfilling the Core Proficiency requirements in these areas, the assignments should reflect the guidelines for these proficiencies. Fifteen pages of formal writing (papers, journals, exams, etc.) must be assigned. At least one paper should be reviewed as a draft, handed back with comments, and then handed in for a formal grade, and also must include research and a Works Cited list, with sources cited within the text. Readings should follow the general format of the class, so students across sections are reading the same materials at (roughly) the same time.

The success of a discussion-based course depends upon all participants (students and teacher) being prepared. That means doing the reading carefully, coming to class prepared to discuss the readings, and having the required texts with you. What follows spells out some of the requirements that help to create the conditions for a successful seminar. Class participation is especially important in such a course, and each person's input is valuable. Come to class prepared to discuss the readings, even if that means just asking relevant questions about material you did not understand. Come to class prepared to be active and engaged. The participation grade depends on both the quality and the quantity of your participation. Everyone is expected to contribute each day. Obviously the most basic form of class participation is regular attendance. More than four unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for class participation; more than six unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for the course. For an absence to be considered excused you must have documentation from a medical professional or the Office of Student Affairs (or Athletic Dept. in the case of athletes) *indicating that you were unable to attend the particular class from which you wish to be excused*. In cases of an extended absence (due to serious illness or emergency) you must obtain documentation from the Office of Student Affairs indicating the reason for the absence. If you stop attending class it does not mean you have withdrawn from the course. In order to withdraw you have to fill out a withdrawal form (obtainable from the dean's office or the department office). Non-attendance is not withdrawal. Being late three times is the equivalent of one absence. If you are late, please take the nearest available seat by the door. Please take care of personal matters before class (e.g., bathroom, meals, etc.); apart from an emergency there is no good reason to get up and leave the classroom while class is going on. No eating in class. Be sure to bring the necessary texts/handouts with you to class. Cell phones and any other electronic devices should be turned off and stored away during class.

The following table spells out the criteria for class participation and the corresponding grade level:

Criteria	Grade range
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participates actively and voluntarily every class by contributing to classroom discussion - demonstrates familiarity with readings - insightful - answers questions knowledgably - asks questions relevant to readings and displaying intellectual curiosity - always brings relevant texts to class - responds to others' comments with respect and interest - takes responsibility for the success of the class on a daily basis 	<p>A</p> <p>(if all of these criteria are met most of the time)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participates voluntarily and actively most days and at least every week - shows some familiarity with readings - always brings relevant texts to class 	<p>B</p> <p>(if all these criteria are met most of the time)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participates occasionally and/or usually only when called upon - shows some familiarity with readings, but little specific knowledge - does not always have relevant texts in class 	<p>C</p> <p>(if most of these criteria are met most of the time)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in general, responds only when called upon 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - does not ask or answer questions - does not always seem prepared - does not always have relevant texts in class - takes no discernible active role in class - comes late to class - brings food to class, checks cell phone, does work for other classes - shows lack of respect to classmates or teacher 	D – F (the more of these criteria that are present, the lower the grade)
- has more than the equivalent of 4 absences	F

Volunteering to read in class is helpful and welcome, but it is no substitute for active class participation.

Grading Scale

95-100=A, 90-94=A-, 86-89=B +, 83-85=B, 80-82=B-,
76-79=C +, 73-75=C, 70-72=C-, 66-69=D +, 60-65=D, 0-59=F

Course schedule

Being called

- Week 1 Nostra Aetate
- Week 2 Plato, Allegory, Apology
- Week 3 Plato continued
- Week 4 Hebrew Bible: Genesis 12-25:18; Exodus 1-24; Ruth
- Week 5 Hebrew Bible, Mark (the Gospel for this year’s liturgical calendar)
- Week 6 Mark

Seeking a Path

- Week 7 Bhagavad Gita
- Week 8 Augustine
- Week 9 Augustine/Dante (OR you may spend the whole time on one or the other of these writers)
- Week 10 Dante

Contemporary journeys, perennial questions

- Week 11 Benedict XVI, God Is Love
- Week 12 Martin Luther King, Jr., “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop”

Week 13	Modern text(s) (You may choose ONE or TWO from the list below)
Week 14	Modern
Week 15	Modern

Required Texts

***Journey of Transformation* (Hayden-McNeil/MacMillan, 2016)**

This is the required reader for the course. Additional texts may be required by the instructor from the list of approved modern texts (see below).

Bible, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. (required)

Modern texts: Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* and Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (both in the textbook). However, you may decide to use one or two of the following texts, which must be ordered from the bookstore for your class(es):

Dorothy Day's *Loaves and Fishes* or *The Long Loneliness*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Malcolm X's *Autobiography*, Victor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*, Shusaku Endo's *Silence*, Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, Pedro Calderon de la Barca's *Life is a Dream* (seventeenth century, but still considered "modern").

"Students at Seton Hall University who have a physical, medical, learning or psychiatric disability, either temporary or permanent, may be eligible for reasonable accommodations at the University as per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. In order to receive such accommodations, students must identify themselves at the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS), provide appropriate documentation and collaborate with the development of an accommodation plan.

The DSS phone number (973) 313-6003. For further information, please go to the Disability Support Services website"

Violations of Academic Integrity

CHEATING means the giving, receiving, taking, or purchasing of any information or written work not your own during exams or on any written assignments.

PLAGIARISM means copying the ideas and/or language of any source without acknowledging that source, without proper quotation of any language (even single words or short phrases) taken directly from that source, and without citation of all paraphrased as well as quoted ideas from that source. Plagiarism occurs when anyone attempts to

present the published or unpublished work (ideas and/or language) of any person as his or her own.

PENALTIES: It is up to the judgment of the instructor to determine the degree of guilt in cases of cheating and plagiarism. Those found to be guilty of cheating or plagiarism the first time will receive a 0 (zero) for the assignment; the second time, automatic failure for the course; the third time, recommendation to the dean for expulsion.

TIPS for students who wish to avoid unintentional plagiarism:

ACKNOWLEDGE: Any ideas, facts, or language taken from a source must be acknowledged. We acknowledge the work of others by providing a "Works Cited List" (bibliography) and by citing (providing author's name and relevant page numbers) all paraphrased ideas and quoted language. The English Department requires usage of the MLA methodology of parenthetical citation on all written work. If you are unfamiliar with this, see the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers in the bookstore or library, consult your grammar handbook; or ask your professor.

QUOTE: Any language taken from your original source, even key words or short phrases, must be within quotation marks and quoted accurately. Reorganizing a sentence, substituting a synonym, or altering a word or two does not make it your own work!

PARAPHRASE: Paraphrasing means summarizing the source in your own words. Remember: paraphrased ideas must still be acknowledged! Good paraphrasing requires: 1) reading carefully enough to thoroughly digest ideas; 2) being careful not to paraphrase during the note-taking stage (i.e. take notes in direct quotes and paraphrase in the draft stage); 3) not writing with the source in front of you; 4) proofreading carefully to be sure no language from the source has slipped in unintentionally.
