

CATALOG DESCRIPTION of MASTER'S IN THEOLOGY

Note to Prospective Students

This academic program serves a variety of students and is ministerial in focus. As such, it is chiefly directed towards preparing students to understand, live out, and share the Gospel with others.

Mission Statement

The objectives of the Master of Arts in Theology program are for students to obtain a graduate-level knowledge of theology, to be able to conduct theological research, and to be able to cogently communicate essential and theological concepts of the Catholic Faith with compassion. The program emphasizes the coherence and beauty of the Faith in itself on the one hand and, on the other, the compatibility and mutual enrichment of faith and reason.

Admission Requirements

Students desiring admission to the Master of Arts program will have:

1. A valid government-issued photo identification document (ID); (i.e. driver's license, passport)
2. A complete application form, fee and two letters of recommendation testifying to the student's aptitude for graduate studies from professors familiar with the student's undergraduate work.
3. An earned Bachelor's degree or its equivalent from an accredited institution. Students who don't have a sufficient background in theology at the undergraduate level must first complete THE 550 (Introduction to Catholic Theology) either before or during their first semester. This course will be counted towards the fulfillment of one of the two required electives.
4. Official transcripts from all institutions of higher education attended by the applicant
5. An undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher.

At the discretion of the Academic Dean, exceptions to this policy may be considered.

Length of Program

A limit of six calendar years is the maximum time allotted for the completion of all the requirements for the Master's degree. Graduate students who have not registered for a course in six years will be dropped from the program.

Degree Requirements and Required Coursework

Thirty-six (36) credit hours of course work (12 courses) are required to complete the Master's in Theology. Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA to remain in good standing. Students who choose to write a Thesis (in the last semester) must complete 33 credit hours of course work and 3 credits for the Thesis. Students who do not choose to write a Thesis must complete 36 credit hours of course work and successfully pass the Comprehensive Examination, which will be taken towards the end of the last semester he or she is in the program. In either case, coursework for all students must include 6 credit hours of Philosophy and 30 credit-hours of Theology.

Transfer Policy

Up to 15 credits in theology can be accepted from an accredited institution for transfer into the Master of Arts program, provided that the grade for the course submitted was a B (3.0 on a 4.0 scale) or better, and provided that the courses are compatible with the program's degree requirements and mission. Transfer credit from a non-accredited institution will be considered on an individual basis. Transfer of credit from this institution is at the discretion of the Dean and of the Chair of Theology.

Comprehensive Examination

The Comprehensive Examination is a written exam that evaluates the student's competence and knowledge of theological principles and developments (as established by the Magisterium, Tradition and Scripture), theological anthropology, the compatibility of faith and reason, and exegetical principles of biblical theology. Students may choose to write a thesis if they secure the recommendation of the faculty. Students writing a thesis must have a minimum GPA of 3.5.

Thesis

Students writing a thesis will need to decide on a topic and an advisor early in the first semester of their second year of studies. The thesis must be at least 60 pages long. The department will provide the student with instructions on how to submit the thesis. Two readers will evaluate the thesis and grade it as Pass or Fail. No student can graduate without earning a passing grade in the thesis.

Student Learning Outcomes

Graduates of the program are to be able to:

- 1) Demonstrate a synthetic knowledge of Catholic Theology including Scripture, Systematic, Pastoral, and Moral Theology
- 2) Demonstrate orthodox theological principles and apply them to pastoral ministry
- 3) Demonstrate the ability to reconcile faith and reason
- 4) Demonstrate the ability to conduct research using appropriate resources

Evaluation of student achievement will be via assessment of student's written assignments and examinations. Rubrics to assess student achievement of the Comprehensive Examination and the Thesis have been developed by program faculty. A student satisfaction survey, based on the instrument used currently for the Bachelor's Degree program, will be administered to determine student satisfaction.

Courses listed by the Learning Outcomes

Outcomes 1

All courses in the program

Outcome 2

THE 556 Fundamental Moral Theology (3)

THE 557 Liturgy and Sacraments (3)

THE 579 Catholic Social Teaching (3)

Outcome 3

THE 550 Introduction to Theology (3)

THE 552 Faith and Reason (3)

THE 579 Catholic Social Teaching (3)

Outcome 4

All courses in the program

Required Courses

Given that solid “philosophical thinking contributes in fundamental ways to faith and theological learning” (*Fides et Ratio* 57), we require 6 credit hours of Philosophy, as well as 21 credit hours of Theology.

These are to be fulfilled by the following required courses:

- (PHI 517) Philosophy of God
- (PHI 512) Philosophical Anthropology
- (THE 551) Four Pillars of the Catechism
- (THE 552) Faith and Reason
- (THE 553) Trinity and Christology
- (THE 554) Biblical Theology
- (THE 555) Prayer, Asceticism, and Catholic Spirituality
- (THE 556) Fundamental Moral Theology
- (THE 557) Liturgy and the Sacraments
- (THE 558) Anthropology, Sin and Grace

Electives

- (THE 550) Introduction to Theology
- (THE 588) Bioethics
- (THE 579) Catholic Social Teaching
- (THE 590) Readings in Catholic Theology
- (THE 599) Thesis

Course Description

- **PHI 517 Philosophy of God (3 credit hours)**

A graduate level study of the philosophy of God also known as "natural theology." To be considered are various theories regarding the possibility of knowing God and/or the divine nature and a selection of attempted proofs of God's existence.

- **PHI 512 Philosophical Anthropology (3 credit hours)**

A graduate level study of human nature in the light of the Catholic philosophical tradition and of contemporary reflection. To be considered will be questions of personhood, reason, will, freedom and the natural law.

- **THE 550 Introduction to Theology (3 Credit hours)**

Students who do not have a sufficient background in theology at the undergraduate level must first complete THE 550 (Introduction to Catholic Theology) either before or during their first semester. This graduate-level class familiarizes students with Christian theology as "faith seeking understanding." This course helps students think theologically, ultimately in order to arrive at greater intimacy with God in Christ, who is himself the Truth. Students will learn the relationship between the Word of God and theology, how it is possible to speak about God and the limitations of religious language, the role of the Magisterium, the distinction of kinds of magisterial teachings and their weights, the vocation of the theologian, and theology as a habit of thought oriented toward eternal life.

- **THE 551 Four Pillars of the Catechism (Creed, Sacraments, Decalogue, Prayer; 3 credit hours)**

As the *General Directory on Catechesis* observes, "the wealth of the patristic tradition and the tradition of catechisms comes together in the actual catechesis of the Church, enriching her in her own concept of catechesis and of its contents. These traditions bring to catechesis the seven basic elements which characterize it: the three phases in the narration of the history of salvation (the Old Testament, the life of Jesus Christ and the history of the Church) and the four pillars of its exposition (the Creed, the Sacraments, the *Decalogue* and the *Our Father*)." This course explores the four pillars (see also, CCC 13).

- **THE 552 Faith and Reason (3 Credit hours)**

This course will explore the compatibility of faith and reason as expressed by Thomas Aquinas, defined by Vatican I's *Dei Filius*, affirmed by Vatican II's *Dei Verbum*, elucidated by John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio* and confirmed

by Francis in *Lumen Fidei* (32-34). While contrasting this view with that proposed by authors who counterpose faith and reason, the importance of the Catholic teaching will be made manifest.

- **THE 553 Trinity and Christology**

A graduate level study of two of the foundational mysteries of the Catholic Faith. Includes readings from Sacred Scripture and some Ecumenical Councils as well as ancient and modern commentators. Given the development of terminology and the need to understand this development in context, some aspects of the course are heavily historical in nature.

- **THE 554 Biblical Theology**

The Second Vatican Council taught that the study of the Bible ought to be, as it were, the "soul of all theology" (OT 16; see DV 24) in part because St. Jerome rightly argued that "ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." This class leads the student of Theology to undergo all theological studies by rooting them in the Word of God and constantly looking to it for inspiration and guidance. While a primary objective of the course is certainly content-oriented to ensure the student knows the basic historical trajectory of the Old and New Testaments, it is also intended to enable the student to have a firm grasp of solid principles of exegesis in keeping with the Church's patrimony (as manifested in the biblical documents of the last century (e.g., *Providentissimus Deus*, *Dei Verbum*, *Interpretation of the Bible in Church*, etc.) and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*).

- **THE 555 Prayer, Asceticism, and Catholic Spirituality**

This course investigates foundational elements of Catholic Spirituality. Due to their important role, prayer and asceticism will receive special attention, but also to be discussed will be the role of Christ and the Church in the spiritual life, the universal call to holiness as expressed in Vatican II, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the role of the Sacraments and the virtues.

- **THE 556 Fundamental Moral Theology**

A graduate level study of the main principles and themes of moral theology. The final goal or aim of Christian actions, the role of the virtues, the different kinds of virtues, their relationship to the Commandments, and role of healing and liberating grace will in enabling Christians to be conformed to Christ will all be considered.

- **THE 557 Liturgy and Sacraments**

A graduate level study of the liturgical and sacramental life. All Christian prayer, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, is a participation in Christ's own prayer and, therefore, both the source and goal of all Christian prayer (1073). In order to participate in Christ's prayer, however, transformation has to occur and that comes about "in fullness" through the Sacraments (1074). This course will delve into these mysteries in view of the Scriptural foundations and the organic development that took place over the centuries in the Church's living Tradition.

- **THE 558 Anthropology, Sin and Grace**

As the Psalmist worded it, humans are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14). The very ability that men and women have to perceive this is due to the nobility of their nature, which is at the intersection between the realm of the material and that of the spiritual. Interestingly, they are not only connected in a unique way to all of creation but are also able to participate in God's nature thanks to having been made in His image and likeness. This course investigates the nature of humans, their goodness as creatures of God, their mysterious ability to sin, and the need for grace to heal, enlighten, and elevate them as they respond to their "supreme calling" to eternal beatitude (see *Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

- **THE 579 Catholic Social Teaching**

A graduate level study of the role Christians have in society and their duties towards others in keeping with the will of Christ. Special attention will be given to the Church's teaching regarding the poor, the weak and the marginalized (including the unborn and the elderly), though we will also consider the importance of the family and discuss political, environmental, and economic issues. The major papal encyclicals of the Church from the time of Leo XIII to today will provide the template for our considerations.

- **THE 588 Bioethics**

A graduate level overview of medical ethics from a Catholic moral perspective. Some of the more salient issues to be discussed will be cloning, abortion and stem cell research, though pride of place will be given to those issues pertaining to the end of life such as euthanasia, suicide, and methods of palliative care (e.g., "proportionate and disproportionate" or "ordinary and extraordinary").

- **THE 590 Readings in Catholic Theology (3 Credit hours)**
An in-depth graduate level study of one or more influential Catholic authors. Details will be provided any given semester to enquiring students.
- **THE 599 Thesis**

Plan of Studies

SEMESTER 1

PHI 517 (Philosophy of God)
Anthropology)
THE 552 (Faith and Reason)
Sacraments)
THE 554 (Biblical Theology)
Catechism)

SEMESTER 2

PHI 512 (Philosophical
THE 557 (Liturgy and the
THE 551 (Four Pillars of the

Elective

SEMESTER 3

Elective
THE 553 (Trinity and Christology)
Theology)
THE 558 (Anthropology, Sin, and Grace)
Examination plus Elective

SEMESTER 4

THE 556 (Fundamental Moral
THE 599 or Comprehensive