

INTRODUCTION TO SACRED SCRIPTURE (BI150DE – Spring 2019)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to Sacred Scripture: its canon, its ideas, its historical and cultural contexts, and the dogmas that inform how the Catholic Church integrates it into the journey of faith. The course presumes no prior knowledge of the Bible, but it addresses common misconceptions people who are familiar with the Bible often have about it. The course approaches its topic thematically rather than book-by-book, highlighting biblical passages that play a key role in generating or grounding Church teaching. Emphasis is placed on the diversity of theological perspectives contained within Scripture and on the ways in which they developed over time. Attention is also given to the unity of the Testaments while inviting reflection on what makes the New Testament “new.” Following the directives of the Pontifical Council for Religious Relations with Jews, equal attention is given to exposing and correcting anti-Jewish interpretations of Scripture that have historically distorted proclamation of the Gospel.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The student who successfully completes this course will develop a basic

- knowledge of the contents and canonical arrangement of Sacred Scripture.
- knowledge of twenty major themes of Sacred Scripture (two per module, excluding the first and last).
- skill in theological reasoning (critical thinking about Scripture and Tradition).
- skill in theological communication (through weekly forum discussions).
- appreciation for the wisdom of magisterial teaching concerning the interpretation of Sacred Scripture.
- appreciation for the urgency of avoiding and counteracting misunderstandings of Sacred Scripture.

PARTICIPATION

You are expected to participate in each weekly forum discussion *within the time-frame prescribed in the course schedule*. Late posts will not be accepted without a valid excuse. If you have a legitimate reason for not contributing to a forum discussion on time, you must provide appropriate documentation to the instructor within seven days to be excused. If you are unable to complete coursework due to personal/emotional difficulties, please alert the facilitator as soon as possible.

MATERIALS AND ACCESS

All course materials are available through the course management page. You do not need to purchase any textbooks. We will be using the following texts, all of which are available electronically for free:

- *New American Bible, Revised Edition* (NABRE)
- *Dei Verbum*
- *Gaudate et Exsultate*
- *Lumen Gentium*
- *Gaudium et Spes*

COURSEWORK AND GRADING

There are three types of graded coursework, each of which will contribute to your final grade.

- **Quizzes (30%):** Each module of the course is accompanied by a 10-question quiz worth 2.5% of your overall course grade (2.5 x 12 modules = 30%). The questions are objective rather than interpretive and are designed to assess your understanding of key concepts of the module lecture and major elements of the reading. Quiz study guides can be found on the course management page. **Quiz study guides accompany each module of the course management page.**
- **Forum Discussions (48%):** The central learning activity of the course is online interaction with your peers. Each module contains a discussion prompt for you to reflect on and respond to. Discussion will be within small

groups assigned by the facilitator and will be conducted in the forums on the course management page. Each set of forum posts is worth 4% of your overall course grade (4 x 12 weeks = 48%). One member of the group will be responsible for writing up a summary of the group's discussion. Responsibility for writing the summary will rotate with each module. **Forum posting guidelines are available on the "Resources" section of the course management page.**

- **Essay (22%):** The culminating assignment for the course is a 1,000-word essay that further develops one of the forum discussions. You may complete this essay at any time during the course. **Essay guidelines are available on the "Resources" section of the course management page.**

No grading curve will be used for this course; instead, a consistent point-to-letter ratio will be applied. The standards used to translate the cumulative points earned for your coursework into a letter grade are as follows:

Letter Grade	Qualitative Measure	Quantitative Measure
A	Superior	93-100
B+	Excellent	90-92
B	Above Average	85-89
C+	Upper Average	80-82
C	Average	77-81
D	Below Average	70-76
F	Failure	0-69

COURSE SCHEDULE

MODULE 1: Orientation

- VIEW: Lecture 1a – Overview
- VIEW: Dei Verbum lectures (0-6)
- VIEW: History of Israel lectures (1-7)
- TAKE: Module 1 Quiz
- DISCUSS: How has history shaped the canon of Sacred Scripture? If the Christian dispensation is “the new and definitive covenant” (*Dei Verbum*, Article 2), how might Christians evaluate the rise of rabbinic Judaism and its canon?

MODULE 2: Creation and Evil

- VIEW: Lecture 2a – Overview
- VIEW: Lecture 2b – Creation and Chaos
- VIEW: Lecture 2c – Creation and Sin
- VIEW: Lecture 2d – Creation and Wisdom
- VIEW: Lecture 2e – Creation and Satan
- VIEW: Lecture 2f – Creation and Christ
- TAKE: Module 2 Quiz
- DISCUSS: How do biblical ideas about creation inform the Church's teaching concerning divine revelation in Chapter 1 (Articles 2-6) of *Dei Verbum*? How can these biblical ideas enrich our faith?

MODULE 3: Chosenness and Covenant

- VIEW: Lecture 3a – Overview
- VIEW: Lecture 3b – Grant and Treaty
- VIEW: Lecture 3c – The Pattern of Election
- VIEW: Lecture 3d – The Purpose of Election
- VIEW: Lecture 3e – Covenant and Creation
- VIEW: Lecture 3f – The New Covenant
- TAKE: Module 3 Quiz
- DISCUSS: In what ways does the Old Covenant “shed light on and explain” (*Dei Verbum*, Article 16) the New such that the Old remains “permanently valuable” (*Dei Verbum*, Article 14)?

MODULE 4: Law and Love

- VIEW: Lecture 4a – Overview
- VIEW: Lecture 4b – Love and Fear
- VIEW: Lecture 4c – Agape and Eros
- VIEW: Lecture 4d – Commandments
- VIEW: Lecture 4e – Law and Halakah
- VIEW: Lecture 4f – A New Law?
- TAKE: Module 4 Quiz
- DISCUSS: How might God’s eternal commandments to Israel fit into *Dei Verbum*’s account of the purpose of the Old Testament (Articles 15-16)?

MODULE 5: Holiness and Purity

- VIEW: Lecture 5a – Overview
- VIEW: Lecture 5b – Priestly Holiness
- VIEW: Lecture 5c – Ritual and Ethics
- VIEW: Lecture 5d – Israel and the Nations
- VIEW: Lecture 5e – The Example and Teachings of Jesus
- VIEW: Lecture 5f – Holiness, Purity, and the Church
- TAKE: Module 5 Quiz
- DISCUSS: Can biblical ideas of holiness and purity help us avoid the pitfalls of Gnosticism and Pelagianism (*Gaudate et Exsultate*, Articles 35-62)? If so, how? If not, why not?

MODULE 6: Atonement and Forgiveness

- VIEW: Lecture 6a – Overview
- VIEW: Lecture 6b – Decontaminating the Tabernacle
- VIEW: Lecture 6c – Repairing the World
- VIEW: Lecture 6d – Redemptive Suffering
- VIEW: Lecture 6e – Jesus as Priest and Sacrifice
- VIEW: Lecture 6f – Atonement, Forgiveness, and the Church
- TAKE: Module 6 Quiz
- DISCUSS: If atonement and forgiveness were possible before Christ (as God himself declares in the Old Testament), what’s “new” about the atonement and forgiveness effected by Christ’s death?

MODULE 7: Kings and Prophets

- VIEW: Lecture 7a – Overview
- VIEW: Lecture 7b – Manifesting Sovereignty
- VIEW: Lecture 7c – Proclaiming Judgment
- VIEW: Lecture 7d – Messianic Expectation
- VIEW: Lecture 7e – Jesus as Prophet and King
- VIEW: Lecture 7f – Manifestation, Proclamation, and the Church
- TAKE: Module 7 Quiz
- DISCUSS: How does the development of messianic expectation in early Judaism and Christianity illustrate the interplay of Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium articulated in Chapter 2 (Articles 7-10) of *Dei Verbum*?

MODULE 8: Exile and Eschatology

- VIEW: Lecture 8a – Overview
- VIEW: Lecture 8b – Theologies of Exile
- VIEW: Lecture 8c – Theologies of Restoration
- VIEW: Lecture 8d – Theologies of Resistance
- VIEW: Lecture 8e – Gospel and Kingdom
- VIEW: Lecture 8f – Apocalypse When?
- TAKE: Module 8 Quiz

- DISCUSS: How does biblical eschatology inform Church teaching in Chapter 7 (Articles 48-51) of *Lumen Gentium*?

MODULE 9: Male and Female

- VIEW: Lecture 9a – Overview
- VIEW: Lecture 9b – Human Unity and Sexual Difference
- VIEW: Lecture 9c – Love and Marriage
- VIEW: Lecture 9d – Homosexuality
- VIEW: Lecture 9e – The Example and Teachings of Jesus
- VIEW: Lecture 9f – Church and Society
- TAKE: Module 9 Quiz
- DISCUSS: By what criteria ought we to evaluate St. Paul’s teachings concerning gender roles? How do we distinguish what is culturally specific from what is universally valid in his teachings?

MODULE 10: Faith and Reason

- VIEW: Lecture 10a – Overview
- VIEW: Lecture 10b – Agnosticism
- VIEW: Lecture 10c – Skepticism
- VIEW: Lecture 10d – Materialism
- VIEW: Lecture 10e – Universalism
- VIEW: Lecture 10f – The Example and Teachings of Jesus
- TAKE: Module 10 Quiz
- DISCUSS: In what respects do Job and Qoheleth anticipate modern atheist critiques of religion as summarized by Articles 19-21 of *Gaudium et Spes*? Do these sacred authors, like modern atheists, fail to perceive, or even reject the possibility of, an “intimate and vital relationship with God” (*Gaudium et Spes*, Article 19)?

MODULE 11: Scripture and Tradition

- VIEW: Lecture 11a – Overview
- VIEW: Lecture 11b – Inner-Biblical Exegesis
- VIEW: Lecture 11c – Radical Textuality
- VIEW: Lecture 11d – Mosaic Discourse
- VIEW: Lecture 11e – Jesus as Tradent, Spirit as Tradent
- VIEW: Lecture 11f – The Apostolic Voice
- TAKE: Module 11 Quiz
- DISCUSS: How does Scripture itself illustrate the interplay of Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium articulated in Chapter 2 (Articles 7-10) of *Dei Verbum*?

MODULE 12: The Church and Israel

- VIEW: Lecture 12a – Overview
- VIEW: Lecture 12b – The Teaching of Contempt
- VIEW: Lecture 12c – Judaism as Antithesis
- VIEW: Lecture 12d – Jews as Scapegoats
- VIEW: Lecture 12e – Israel as Prologue
- VIEW: Lecture 12f – Dialogue and Proclamation
- TAKE: Module 12 Quiz
- DISCUSS: How can Christians proclaim the Gospel without perpetuating anti-Jewish stereotypes?