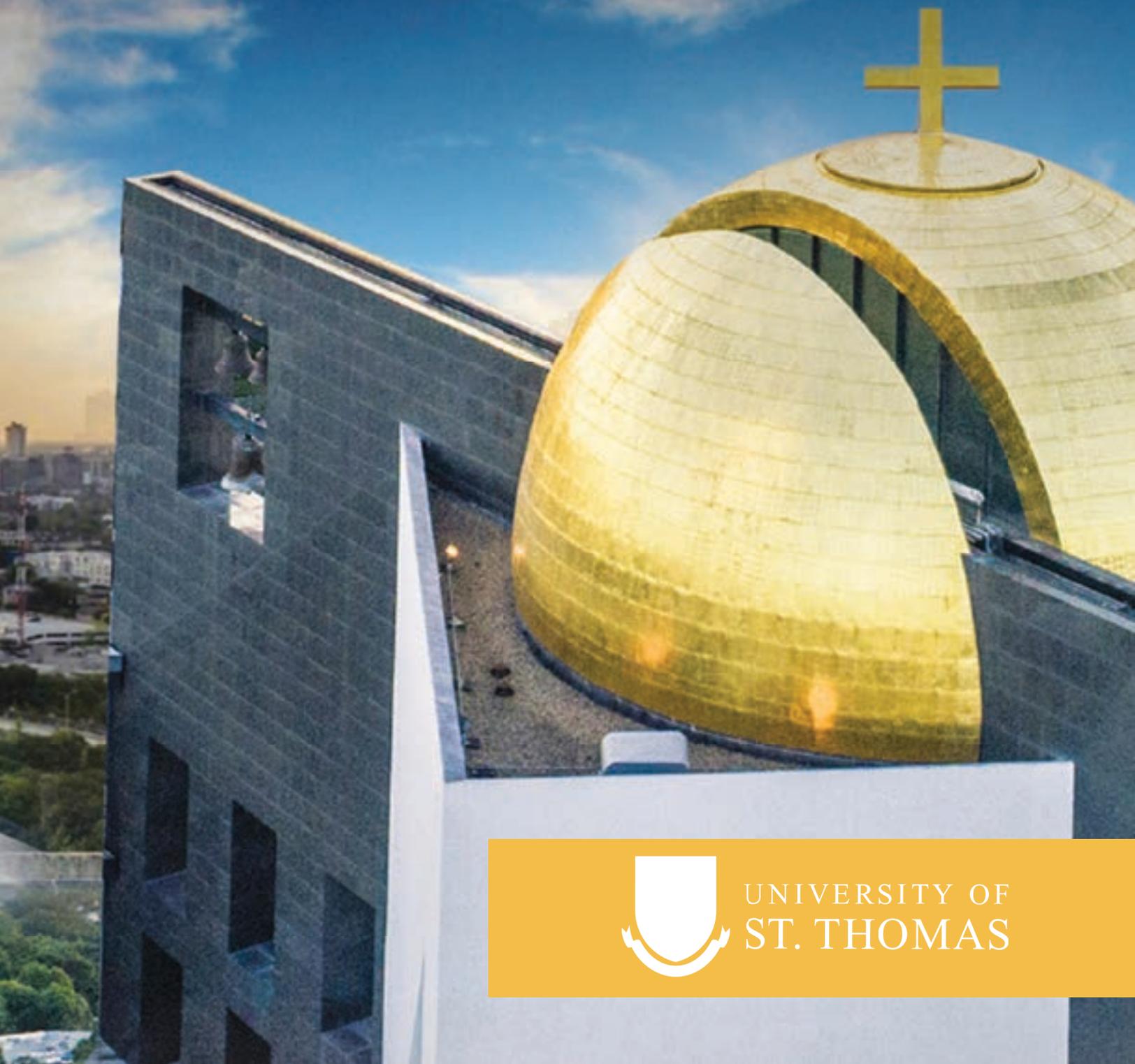


Created For A Purpose

THE CORE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS



UNIVERSITY OF
ST. THOMAS



We Are Born With A Purpose

Each of us receives, discovers, and brings to life our purpose. At the University of St. Thomas, our Core illuminates who we are—including our nature and purpose—and prepares us to fulfill our calling wisely and courageously.

Throughout the university years, we have the unique opportunity to grow in wisdom, goodness, and discipline so that we might embody our God-given purpose in the world. Informed by the Catholic intellectual and spiritual traditions, the University of St. Thomas offers a unique and integrated Core that can serve as a primary pathway for this journey of discovery and preparation.

WE DISCOVER THIS PURPOSE THROUGH FRIENDSHIP.

At the University of St. Thomas, we are a community born from wonder and faith, committed to a form of friendship that animates our common search for wisdom, a search that we pursue together—professors and students alike—seeking answers to life’s never-changing and fundamental questions.

WE PURSUE THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TOGETHER.

Before arriving at answers, however, we must clarify the questions. Our Core is oriented to articulating the questions that have animated human life for millennia. But we do not stop with the questions. Together, we seek to discover the wisdom—ascending on the wings of faith and reason—that enables us to answer them.

WE DISCOVER WISDOM IN COMMUNITY.

Through our comprehensive, integrated, and deeply Catholic core curriculum at the University of St. Thomas,

we—the students and professors in purposeful dialogue—come to know ourselves within a community, develop the skills of the mind and heart that are essential to a fully human life, and build a foundation of wisdom for a life well-lived.

WE ANSWER THE CALL TO A LIFE OF SERVICE THAT WILL LEAVE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

By opening our minds and hearts to all of reality—integrating both the natural and supernatural—our Core enables us to prepare ourselves to achieve the greatest goods for our families, society, and the world. Through our uncommon Core, one in which Faith and Reason make whole and give depth to the stories of our lives, we integrate our liberal education with professional preparation, and apprentice ourselves for a life of greatness and significance through service.



WELCOME TO A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY AND TRANSFORMATION THAT WILL PREPARE YOU FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

Here in the thriving city of Houston, at a university named for Saint Thomas Aquinas and founded by the Basilians, the University of St. Thomas invites her students to pursue an education unlike any other. By immersing themselves in an unparalleled integration of classical liberal learning and professional formation for the twenty-first century, our students prepare to flourish in this life and the next.

In a Core animated by wonder and the fundamental, ever-relevant questions, students engage with the greatest authors across three millennia, pursuing the wisdom, skills, and self-knowledge that transform us and prepare us to serve effectively in the world.

Where else can students enter the great conversation

across time with Dante, Thomas Aquinas, Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, and contemporary thinkers while also pursuing professional preparation for careers in engineering, business, nursing, education, and the humanities, among others?

Like our patron, Saint Thomas Aquinas, we engage with all that is real—everything True, Good, and Beautiful—in one of the most exciting cities in America, knowing that through such an encounter, we are transformed to fulfill the high calling given to each of us.

In an ethnically diverse and culturally rich community—one that reflects the face of the Church in the contemporary world—students embark on a four-year journey that forms them as complete human beings created for a life of transcendent purpose.

AT WHAT DO WE AIM?

THE GOALS OF THE CORE

We seek an understanding of ourselves as human persons endowed with intellectual and imaginative capacities and free will, so that we may be empowered to pursue wisdom and to cultivate virtues, in which our humanity is fulfilled.

We develop the intellectual skills that shape the life of the mind across multiple disciplines and enable us to grow intellectually toward an integrated vision, becoming more fully the persons we were created to be. These include, without being limited to, the ability to read and interpret, to draw conclusions from principles and data, to formulate accurate definitions, and to persuade others without manipulation or deceit.

We build up in our souls a reflective, philosophical habit of mind from the perspective of which the truths of all disciplines, of faith and of reason, can begin to be grasped as an ordered whole unified by underlying principles. This reveals itself in a healthy curiosity and a reverent wonder for truth in all its forms and in a keen interest in the underlying causes of things.

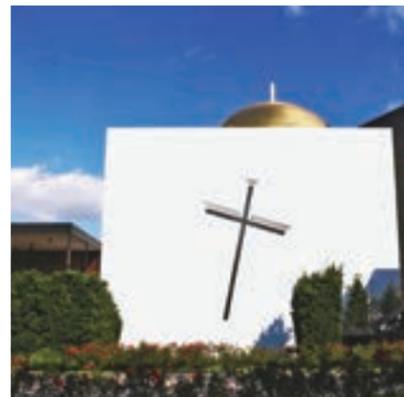
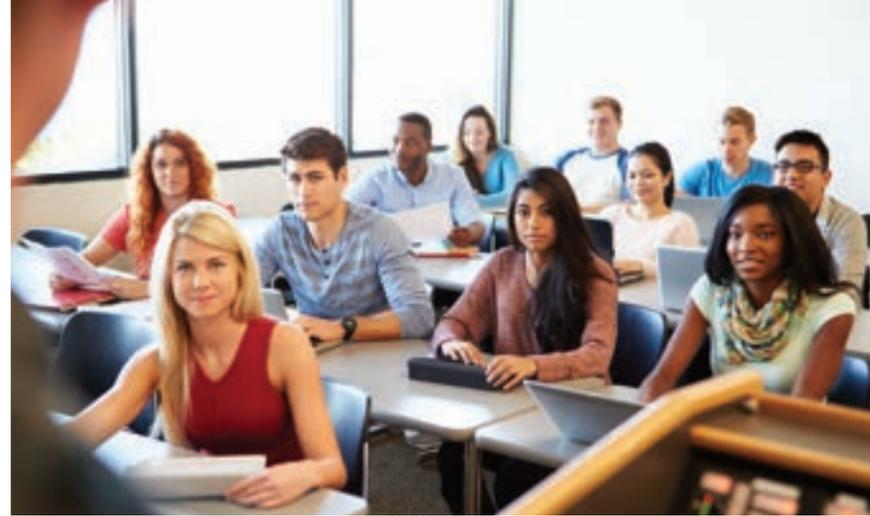
IN THE CORE AND AS A UNIVERSITY, WE ARE COMMITTED TO

The Catholic intellectual tradition, a tradition that (i) understands human persons as rational, imaginative, free creatures capable of fulfillment through wisdom and virtue, (ii) prizes the intellectual skills formed by the liberal arts that have always been foundational in Catholic universities, and (iii) understands all of created reality as intelligible through principles and causes.

The dialogue between faith and reason, which depends upon the reflective, philosophical habit of mind our curriculum fosters.

The Basilian core values of goodness, discipline, and knowledge, virtues through which our students' humanity is fulfilled and which enables students to understand the relationship between the different parts of human knowledge, making possible constructive collaboration across different disciplines.

The unity of all knowledge, insofar as the truths of all disciplines can be grasped as an ordered whole unified by underlying principles, forming our graduates to think critically, communicate effectively, succeed professionally, and lead ethically.



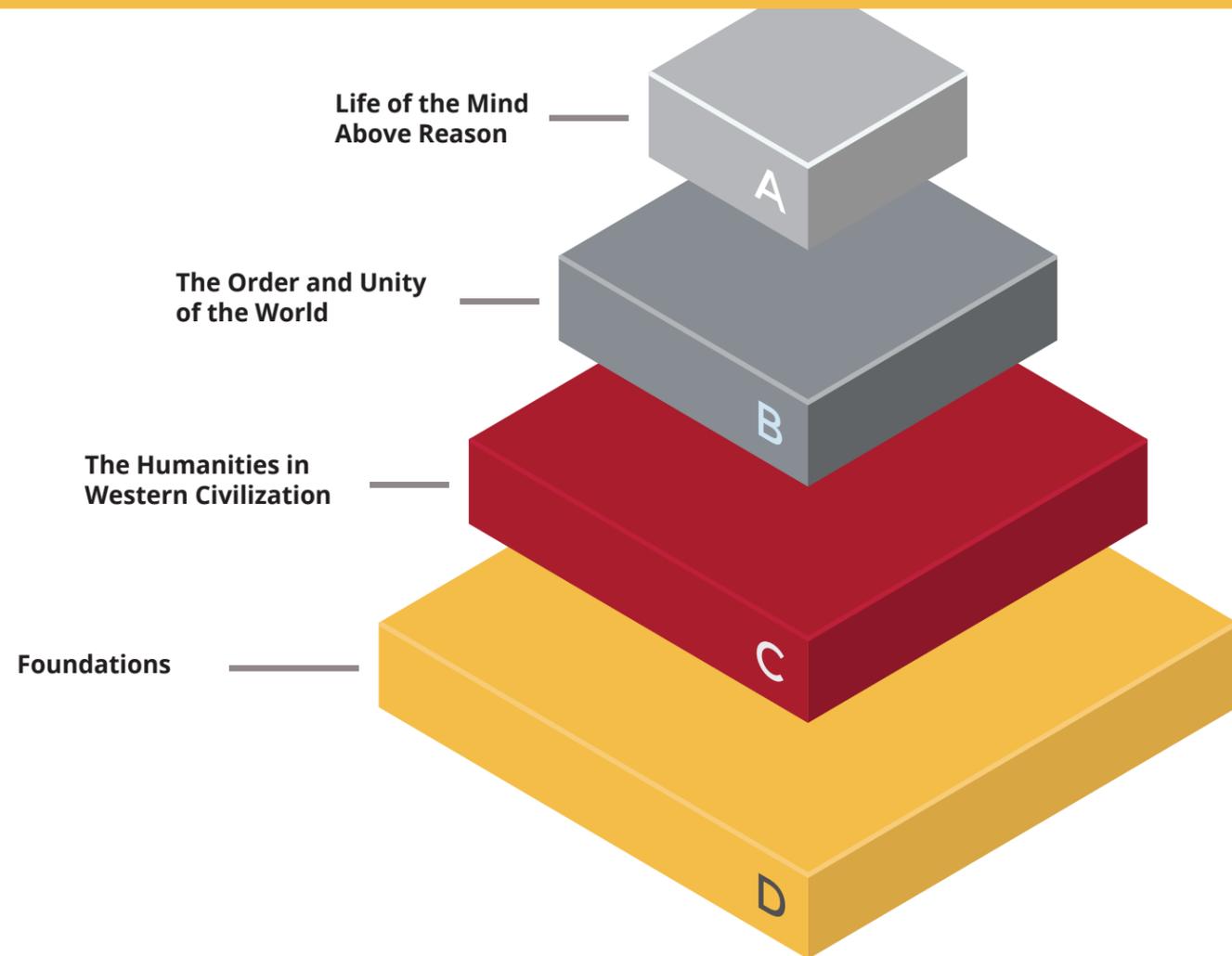
“

**But my desire and will were
moved already — like a wheel
revolving uniformly — by the
Love that moves the sun and
the other stars.”**

— Dante Alighieri, Poet and Pilgrim



CORE CURRICULUM MAP



- Foundations**
 Foundations of Liberal Learning
 History of Western Culture and Ideas
 The Philosophy of Nature and the Human Person
 Faith, Reason, and Revelation
- The Order and Unity of the World**
 Mathematical Models in Science
 History and Philosophy of Science
 Metaphysics
 Art and Contemplation
- The Humanities in Western Civilization**
 Literature: Classical Tradition
 Literature: Middle Ages & Renaissance
 Literature: Modern World & American Expressions
 Ethics
 Politics and Society
- Life of the Mind Above Reason**
 Scripture and Salvation History
 The Return to God



The Core Curriculum is the vital heart of a UST education. In their journey through the Core, students build themselves up as persons. They come to understand themselves as free and intellectual beings, hone their skills in reasoning, persuasion, and more, and cultivate the beginnings of wisdom via a holistic perspective on the individual disciplines they study. At the same time, the University’s new core explicitly focuses on integrating the tradition of liberal education with students’ professional aspirations. These two goods: the person and the profession, are not opposed. Rather, building yourself up as a person is an investment that prepares you for building up your career.

“The very life of beings with intelligence is to think, to exercise this intelligence actively, on what is. A knowing being lives most acutely, most vividly, when it thinks about what is.”

— James Schall, S.J., *The Life of the Mind*



FOUNDATIONS

FOUNDATIONS OF LIBERAL LEARNING

“Then that book altered my state of mind . . . and made my wishes and desires into something else entirely . . . I began to long for the immortality of wisdom, with unbelievable fervor of heart.”

— *St. Augustine, Confessions 3.4*

This course opens the door to the core curriculum. In this course, students develop facility in reasoning and communicating, with a focus on honing these skills for success in their subsequent studies. Students will be introduced to what a liberal arts education means, how it differs from other educational experiences, and why it is important.





Human history obviously unfolds in a horizontal dimension within space and time. Yet it also has a vertical dimension. It is not only we who write our history: God writes it with us.

— Pope St. John Paul II,
Memory and Identity



HISTORY OF WESTERN CULTURE AND IDEAS

Through this course, students develop a sense of historical awareness via the study of European history and culture, brought into conversation with other cultural traditions. In so doing they will better understand themselves and come to grasp the importance of historical consciousness as an essential endowment of a free person.



[We speak of] each man in all the unrepeatability of what he is and what he does, of his intellect and will, of his conscience and heart. Man who in his reality has, because he is a ‘person,’ a history of his life that is his own and, most important, a history of his soul that is his own.

— Pope St. John Paul II,
Redemptor Hominis §14



PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE AND THE HUMAN PERSON

Here, students will be introduced to what makes them distinctive in comparison to irrational animals, and the reasons why this distinctiveness is important. Thus, they will come to understand themselves as persons endowed with innate dignity, freedom of choice, and the capacity for rational reflection. Self-knowledge thus serves as the foundation of the philosophical habit of mind and heart that animates their journey through their liberal education.

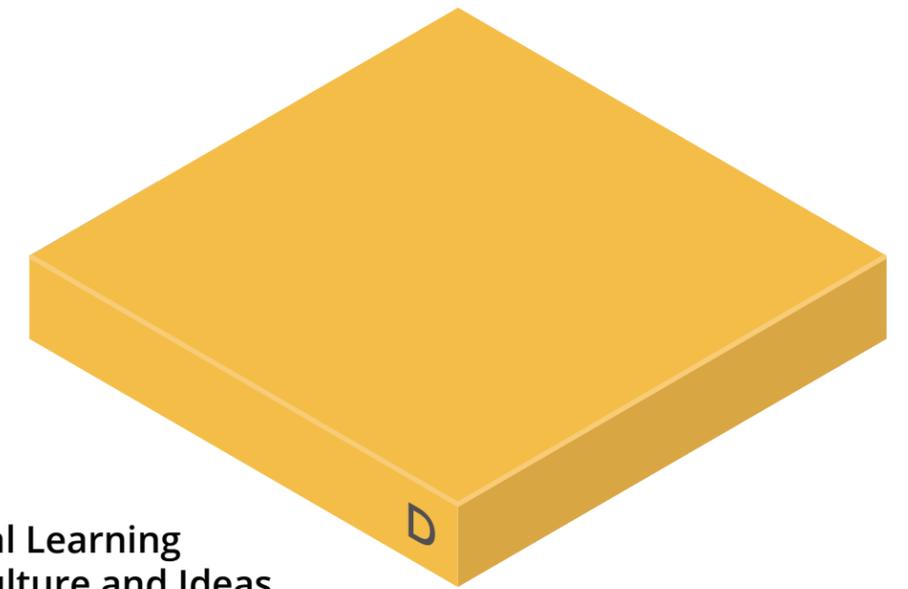


FAITH, REASON, AND REVELATION

“Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.”

— Pope St. John Paul II,
Fides et Ratio

In this course, students will be introduced to what Catholic theology is, what its distinctive features and principles are, and why Catholic belief is reasonable. In so doing they will deepen their understanding of themselves as rational, free beings, capable of affirming what is true and of freely embracing the purpose of their existence.



Foundations

Foundations of Liberal Learning
History of Western Culture and Ideas
The Philosophy of Nature and the Human Person
Faith, Reason, and Revelation

THE HUMANITIES IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION

“*Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality. There are mass emotions which heal the wound; but they destroy the privilege. In them, our separate selves are pooled and we sink back into sub-individuality. But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do.*”

— C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*

THE CLASSICAL TRADITION, MIDDLE AGES AND RENAISSANCE, MODERN WORLD AND AMERICAN EXPRESSIONS

Through these courses, students will approach reading and writing as two halves of the same endeavor. Reading will be undertaken as a means of honing our capacity to inquire, to interpret, to develop the interior life, and to experience reality in all of its multi-layered richness. Writing, the other half of the equation, is indispensable to our growth in wisdom and our capacity for beauty. We have to be able to communicate what we know to others, and to do so through a compelling, artful style that conjoins winsomeness and wit with logic and design.

“The Classical Tradition” lays the foundation for the rest of the core curriculum in Literature through an introduction to some of the most beautiful and life-altering poems and philosophical works of the classical world. In turn, “The Middle Ages and Renaissance” and “Modern World and American Expressions” build on the foundation of “The Classical Tradition.”

ETHICS

“Which way of life would make living most worthwhile for each of us?”

— Plato, *Republic 344e.*

As long as there have been human beings, morality has been a question—its foundations, its nature, its forms, and its very possibility. By studying classic works of philosophy, especially Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, and St. Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae*, together we engage with the most fundamental questions that motivate ethical reflection: What does it mean to be human? What makes for a good life? How shall we live? What is the relationship between morality and happiness? The course will focus particular attention on the riches of the Catholic intellectual tradition and its emphasis on practical reasoning, the dignity of the person, virtue ethics, and the natural law.

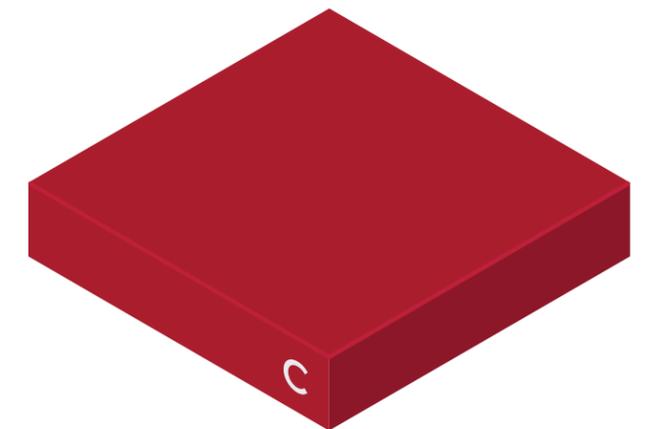


POLITICS AND SOCIETY

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

Building on the course in ethics, “Politics and Society” explores the political and social order with an emphasis on the American context, presenting theories and their real-life application. Themes include natural law, civil rights and civil liberties, and forms of social and economic organization. Along the way, we address such fundamental questions as what forms of political and social organization best contribute to human flourishing, what fundamental rights belong to individuals vis-à-vis the common good and political institutions, and what role the family plays with respect to the political regime and the human good.



The Humanities in Western Civilization

- Literature: Classical Tradition
- Literature: Middle Ages & Renaissance
- Literature: Modern World & American Expressions
- Ethics
- Politics and Society



THE ORDER AND UNITY OF THE WORLD

ART AND CONTEMPLATION

“Art and Contemplation” focuses on how works of art—music, painting, drama, sculpture, dance, photography, and film—reveal aspects of reality that surprise, startle, and provoke us to think. The poet, Dante Alighieri, considered art as the grandchild of God inasmuch as men and women are His creations, and they in turn fashion earthly materials in forms that reflect the beauty of God. Such creation turns our gaze to beauty, and thereby to our Creator God. Students will come to embrace as their own Fyodor Dostoevsky’s famous words, “Beauty will save the world.”

“

ONLY IN THE CONTEMPLATION OF BEAUTY IS LIFE WORTH LIVING.”

— PLATO



MATHEMATICAL MODELS IN SCIENCE

“Models employed in the sciences are a kind of metaphor in which a familiar structure or mechanism is used as an analogy to interpret natural phenomena ... To have achieved a scientific explanation is to have rendered intelligible something that was not self-intelligible.”

— Jude Dougherty, *The Nature of Scientific Explanation*

In this course, we explore the widespread practice of devising and applying models in mathematical and scientific domains, developing essential cross-disciplinary and problem solving skills. We also consider questions of how inductive empirical methods of knowledge and degrees of abstraction relate to the order of things as understood in classical metaphysics.

HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Through this course we reflect on the nature and purpose of science. By looking at how it has worked throughout history, we come to know more concretely its methods and gain insight into science as a search for truth. In turn, we address the prevalent and persistent misunderstandings of science in contemporary discourse, particularly as to its scope and methods.

METAPHYSICS

“It is necessary to work towards a higher synthesis of knowledge, in which alone lies the possibility of satisfying that thirst for truth which is profoundly inscribed on the heart of the human person.”

— *Pope St. John Paul II, Ex Corde Ecclesiae §16*

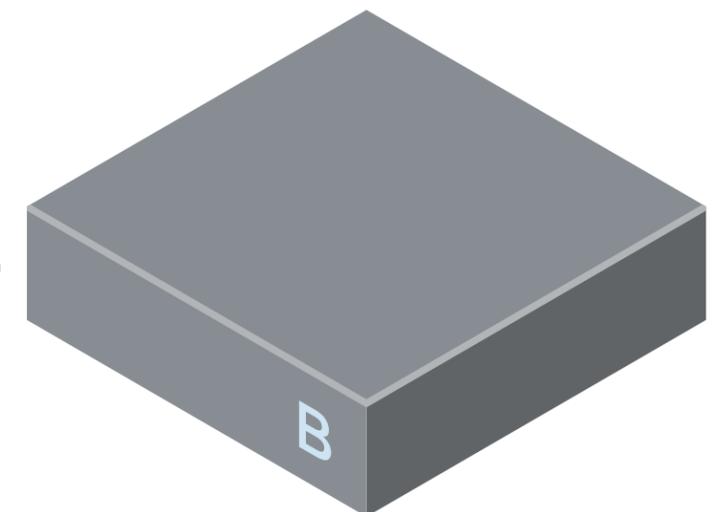
Through the study of metaphysics, we consider how the different subjects of the university, including our major disciplines, are related to one another and how they are related to a fulfilling human life. Together we address the big questions about the nature of reality and the existence and attributes of God.

“The peculiar problem of the age lying ahead of us will be to reconcile science and wisdom in a vital and spiritual harmony. The very sciences themselves seem to invite the intelligence to take up such a task. Today they are ridding themselves of the remains of a materialist metaphysic which disguised their true features, they are calling out for a philosophy of nature.”

— *Jacques Maritain, Science and Wisdom*

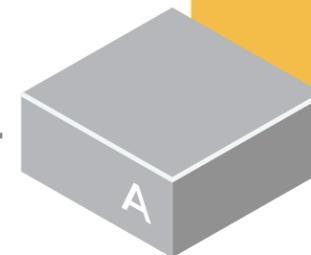
The Order and Unity of the World

- Mathematical Models in Science
- History and Philosophy of Science
- Metaphysics
- Art and Contemplation



LIFE OF THE MIND ABOVE REASON

Life of the Mind
Above Reason



“

THE GLORY OF GOD IS MAN FULLY ALIVE, BUT THE LIFE OF MAN IS THE VISION OF GOD.”

—ST. IRENAEUS, AGAINST HERESIES IV

SCRIPTURE AND SALVATION HISTORY

“In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

— *Hebrews 1:1*

Through this course, we trace, in Christian Scripture and theology, a thorough and coherent outline of salvation history from the creation narrative through the coming of Christ and the birth and development of the Church. We also consider the Church’s core doctrines and beliefs concerning Christ, Trinity, and the Sacraments and consider how the notions of revelation and inspiration do not oppose science and rationality, but indeed support them.

THE RETURN TO GOD

“You have made us for yourself O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

— *St. Augustine, Confessions, I*

Guided by the riches of the Catholic intellectual and moral tradition, in this course we acquire the knowledge and skills needed to confront, formulate, and answer the question of what makes our lives, at bottom, unified and meaningful, and to see a Christian answer to that question as a serious and persuasive one. We also

learn how in the concrete sacramental and spiritual theology of the Church, such a meaningful life might realistically be pursued, culminating in the final end of the human person: the contemplative vision of God.



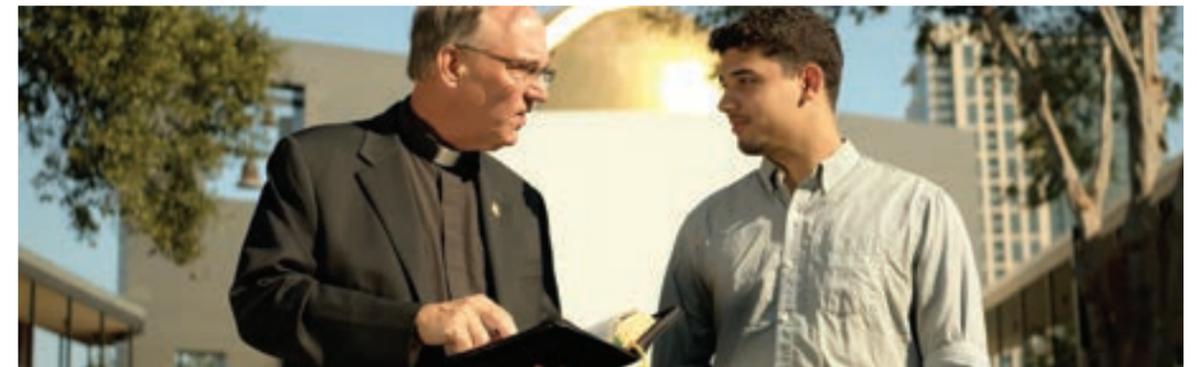


WHAT IS CATHOLIC EDUCATION?

Though the preceding pages have focused on the Core Curriculum of the University of St. Thomas, the Core exists within a larger vision of Catholic education. What is that vision of Catholic education that animates our university?

While it would be difficult to come up with a definition of Catholic education on which everyone would agree, we can begin by offering one for consideration: “Catholic education proposes to form the whole person—mind, heart, and hands—for flourishing in this life and the next.”

Note two essential features: this definition places the complete and integrated person at the center and orders the activity of education toward a purpose that is at once natural—“in this life”—and supernatural—“and the next.” This purpose is also normative, it is rooted in and reflects “the truth of things.”



CATHOLIC EDUCATION FORMS THE MIND

At the very center of Catholic education is the intellectual life. Indeed, this is the lion’s share—or should be—of what we mean by Catholic education. There are many metaphors for teaching and learning that could be employed to characterize the intellectual life and even fundamental variations within the tradition. Some approach teaching and learning reductively as a simple transfer of information. This is a model that we reject as distorting and simplistic. Such a model might work if one wishes to learn to fry an egg or operate a tractor, but it is far from representative of the larger tradition.

Socrates seemed to suggest that in learning there was an element of remembering those things which have been long forgotten and yet

somehow reside within us, if only the teacher can draw them out once again as a midwife brings to birth a newborn.

Another image, one also outlined by Socrates, suggests that education is more like being set free from a cave and moving from darkness into light, a process that culminates in a vision of the Good. But even this process requires someone to initiate the journey from the depths of the cave: someone must break the chains and guide the half-blind prisoner—sometimes with resistance by the prisoner—from shadows to a vision proper to human life. (And it should be noted that most frequently those enchained don’t want to leave because they cannot imagine anything better.)

In addition to the image of a journey from darkness into light, we also see the importance of the teacher as guide and mentor, the



“

ACCORDING
TO THE
CATECHISM
AND
SCRIPTURE,
“IT IS THE
HEART THAT
PRAYS.”

communal nature of the intellectual journey. This nature is clearer in the image of the “great conversation” that unfolds across time between authors, students, and teachers.

And there is still one other model worthy of consideration at this beginning. Some have compared education, particularly in its liberal forms—as an ascent to a mountaintop: having grown up in a village near a mountain, a village as familiar as one’s own home, a person decides to finally climb the mountain that has always been part of the horizon, engaging a guide to secure success. Following the arduous climb, the person achieves a broader, integrated, and astonishing vision of the land that once seemed familiar, including the village he thought he knew so well. The climber sees new horizons—beckoning for further exploration—and notices everything that once seemed familiar within a new light. And then, following the return to the village, our climber finds that everything has changed. All that was once taken for granted as well-known is now mediated by a vision of the whole. Nothing will ever be the same. Regardless of which images we adopt, the intellectual formation of Catholic education—understood in its broadest terms—will lead students from a state of ignorance to a state of knowing, from folly to wisdom both about particular, contingent, and

local things as well as about the most important things we could consider. Whether the allegory is that of a cave or a mountain ascent, one’s vision is transformed, parts become integrated into wholes, and the journey is not undertaken alone.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION FORMS THE HEART

As central as intellectual formation is to Catholic education, in most contexts it is also complemented by other dimensions of formation, the heart and the hands.

According to the *Catechism* and Scripture, “it is the heart that prays.” It is the heart that is the seat of a person’s reflective interior life, the hidden center to which we withdraw that stands beyond our powers of reason, beyond the searching of others, and a place that often remains hidden even to ourselves. Ultimately, it is where we make the most important decisions and the place where we encounter God. (*Catechism* 2562-2563)

It is this center, our core, that Catholic education also forms, albeit indirectly, as a complement to the formation of the intellect. While Catholic education will call students to the study of the great texts of the Catholic intellectual tradition born from poetry, philosophy, theology, and the other disciplines, it also invites them to enter into the practices that lead to communion with God and with those created in his image. A Catholic institution devoted to comprehensive education will offer ample opportunities for its students to live lives animated by the sacraments and prayer. And its leaders—teachers, administrators, and staff—will serve as role models



for the students as they strive to be lovers of wisdom seeking an ever-deepening communion with Christ.

In his address to Catholic educators at the Catholic University of America in 2009, Benedict XVI stated that “First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth” (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 4). In Catholic education, we create the conditions for such an encounter by forming hearts that will be receptive.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION FORMS “THE HANDS”

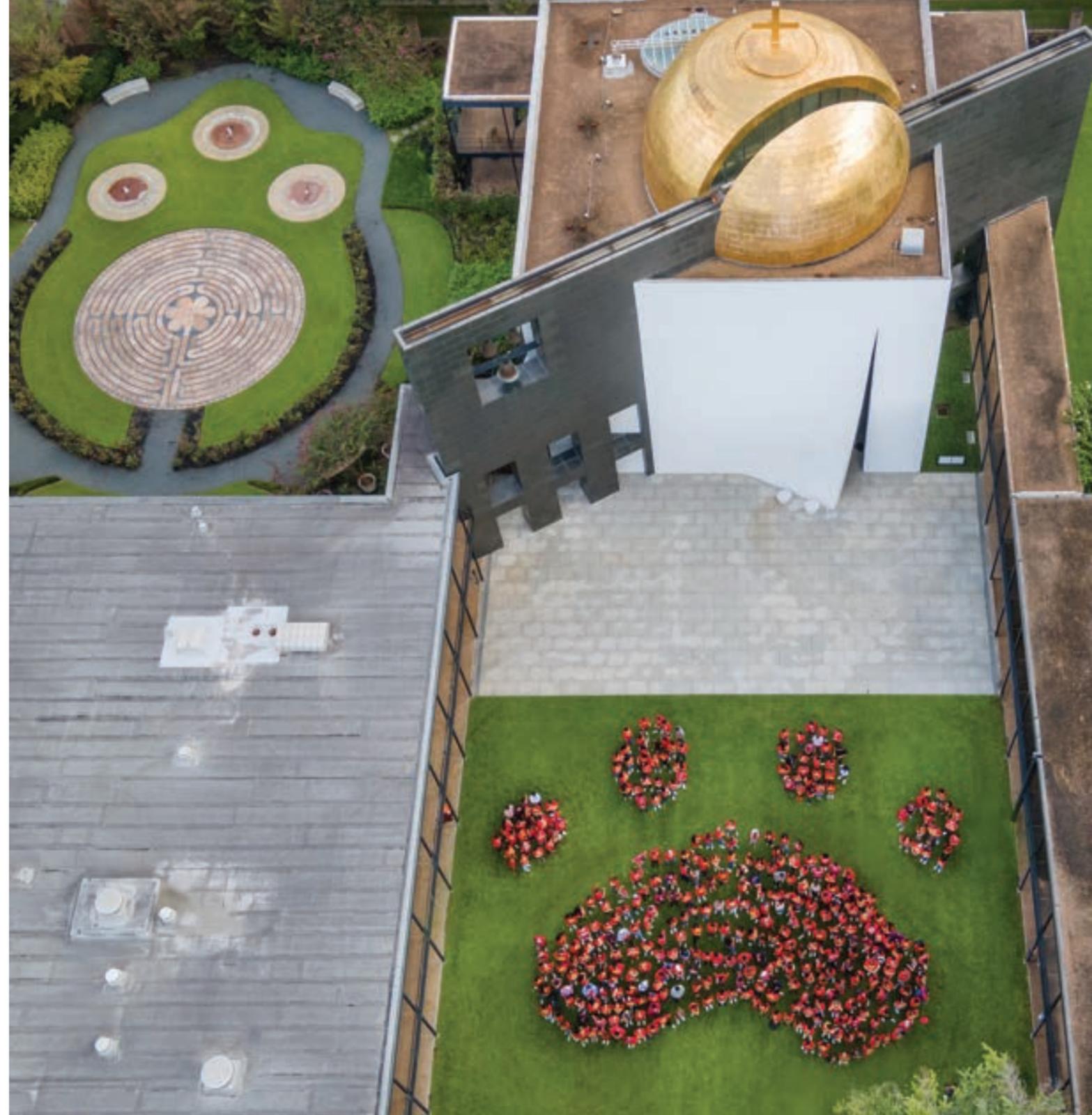
And there is a third dimension. Catholic education also forms “the hands” of its students, with “hands” suggesting three aspects of our students (and ourselves): our embodiment as creatures uniting soul and body, our desire to serve others—often through the corporal works of mercy and building up the culture of life—and the call to fulfill our vocations in the world.

The students whom we form through Catholic education are embodied creatures and their embodiment is good and an essential dimension of what it means to be human. If our institutions are residential—and even if they are not—we will attend to the needs and gifts that come from this embodiment. Students need to rest, exercise, and eat well. They will need physical rest and true leisure to renew bodies and minds. The limits and opportunities that come with embodiment will shape policies and rhythms of the institution’s educational life.

Our hands also remind us that we are created for communion with others and given some part of the creation in which to serve and cultivate “the garden of the world.” While resisting with all vigilance any efforts to reduce Catholic education to mere training for work, Catholic education—by “forming the hands” of its students—prepares students to fulfill their vocations in the world by serving God and others through their work. Just as our first parents tended the garden in its prelapsarian state as a part of the stewardship of creation, the gift of work and the joys that come from answering the call of one’s vocation will animate this formation.

This formation of “hands” will take on different forms in different contexts. Some institutions offer service programs in which students creatively give to their larger communities through the corporal works of mercy. They may comfort distressed young mothers or lonely grandmothers. Students may tend a greenhouse or gardens in which they can grow food—cultivating their own part of “the garden” of the world. Or they may offer seminars to help students think about their future careers in terms of vocation and then guide them to apply this vocational vision in concrete ways while still students. However we approach it, Catholic education forms the whole person for flourishing—i.e., blessedness—in this life and the next. This is our vision at the University of St. Thomas.

■ *George A. Harné, Ph.D., Executive Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences*



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