

Major Courses, Fall 2022

HISTORY

Tradition and Reform in Christian Culture – Dr. FitzGerald

This course considers how Christians have reflected on history and on the role that past events, traditions, and people play in their lives. Focusing primarily on the period from the late Roman Empire through the Reformation, we will consider how Christians have sought a connection with their past by preserving traditions, even as they have continually felt the call of reform, which often disrupts established norms.

The course will examine important events such as the Investiture Controversy, the debates over the legacy of St. Francis of Assisi, the Western Schism, the Renaissance recovery of classical learning, the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, and the dissolution of the English monasteries. At the same time, we will consider how older ways of thinking about the past compare with those of our own day, in which notions of 'modernity' and 'progress' loom large. The course will therefore raise questions about the meaning of history, as well as how the past should figure in one's thinking about the present and the future.

LITERATURE

The Russian Novel – Dr. Mumbach

In this course students take up the fiction of Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy. A special emphasis is accorded the theme of the abrupt and relatively belated confrontation of Christian society with European modernity.

PHILOSOPHY

God and Being (Metaphysics) – Dr. van Versendaal

This course is an exercise in that most characteristically philosophical act: the contemplation of what it means to exist at all. According to the great witnesses of the tradition, this act begins in wonder and, if followed through faithfully, ends in rejoicing. Together with classical and medieval authors, we will ask basic questions about the things we experience: what does it mean to be one complete thing? To have a nature and to change? To be related to other finite substances and to God? To be caused and to cause others in turn? In view of such questions, we'll also consider how metaphysics sheds light on the phenomenon of bodily life and on the integrity of the organism.

Thinking philosophically about reality in light of a Christian confession of God as Creator will lead us to ponder the structure of interpersonal gift-giving as an expression of how the finite world comes into being in the first place. We'll find that in our present age the meaning of gift is both most directly challenged and most lucidly articulated. We will accordingly turn our attention to rejections, revisions, and recoveries of metaphysics among modern authors, and will

explore how a Thomistic account of being can respond to and account for legitimate concerns voiced in our day.

The course will end by placing the many principles discussed over the semester at the service of understanding the constitution of the human person, man and woman, in whom the full meaning of being as gift is unfolded.

THEOLOGY

Leo XIII and the Social Teaching of the Church – [Deacon Cooper]

This exploration and close reading of the encyclicals of Leo XIII will enable students to master the sources that have informed the contemporary social doctrine of the Church. Projects will include an original application of the thought of Pope Leo XIII, e.g., the ethical participation in civil government and the practice of truth as a virtue.