

PHIL 400 - Senior Research Thesis and Defense

2022-23 Academic Year

Course Outline

Class Start Date & End Date

7 Sept, 2022 - 14 Apr, 2023

Class Meeting Time, Location, and Room

This course includes an integrative seminar in the fall semester, and a tutorial-style reading course culminating in a thesis submitted at the end of the winter semester. As such, each student must participate in the seminar and also meet several times over the year with their supervisor. See syllabus for further details.

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Course Description

During the last year of study, each student researches, writes, and presents a written thesis, the results of which they will defend orally before a panel of faculty members. Under the direction of a thesis director, students will explore critically a topic that arises from their program in Catholic Studies. The purpose of this cumulative exercise is to provide each student with an opportunity to develop and manifest what John Henry Newman called “an integrated habit of mind”.

Course Objectives

1. Critically assess principal themes, persons, literary and artistic works of Western Civilization as illustrated through representative ‘Great Books’, situate them in their historical context, and set them in conversation;

2. Distinguish the principal liberal arts and sciences by their proper subject matters, principles, methods, and modes of argument;
3. Define and correctly independently apply various research methodologies;
4. Write and orally present ideas in clear, persuasive, English;
5. Develop an integrated habit of mind.

Course Assignments and Evaluation

Integrative Seminar - 20% (participation) Six one-hour meetings during the fall semester. Each seminar will consider a single theme and focus on a short quotation and question related to that theme posed by the seminar leader in a way that models the distinct methodologies related to each domain. Students should prepare for the seminar by developing a logical analysis of the seminar's guiding question. See the rubric for more information.

Proposal - 20% (1-2 pages) The proposal must be submitted to the B.A. program director at the conclusion of the Fall Semester in the student's third year. Students will receive either approval or recommendation to revise, and any revisions must be approved by the start of the winter semester. The proposal must contain the following elements:

- a) The theme from the integrative seminar that the thesis will consider.
- b) The question that will serve as the focal point of the inquiry.
- c) An elaboration (one paragraph) of why the student thinks the question is significant.
- d) A plausible thesis proposed by the student. (It is expected that this thesis will be refined, or perhaps even change completely, throughout the course of the writing process.)
- e) An annotated bibliography that includes 2-3 primary sources that will frame the dialectical part of the inquiry, 3-5 additional secondary texts that may be relevant to the inquiry, and the author and text that will serve as the focal point for the main argument.
- f) The requested advisor.

The thesis proposal must be reviewed by the program director and the requested advisor. Final approval of the proposal and determination of a suitable advisor rests with the program director.

Thesis - 50% (12-20 pages total) The thesis must relate to one of the six themes identified in the integrative seminar and must provide a method of argument suitable for the theme, as determined by the thesis advisor. A thesis exploring literary, artistic, or pastoral questions may have a different methodology from one on scripture, philosophy, etc. Its main focus should be on primary sources, although students should demonstrate some facility in the use of the library and exploration of secondary literature. Students should consult the **thesis structural overview and rubric** for more details.

Students must submit a complete rough draft of their thesis to their advisor three weeks before the final draft is due. Final drafts must be submitted to their advisor and the program director, one week

prior to the defense, which will be held on the last Friday before exam week. The thesis will be graded by the advisor and one other faculty member, who will together form a “thesis committee,” and the final grade will be the average of the two grades. Students whose theses do not receive a passing grade will be given an opportunity to revise their written thesis according to specific recommendations of the committee. The revised thesis must be submitted before the start of the spring Intersession. Failed theses must still be presented publicly.

Presentation - 10%: The presentation will be conference-style, on a panel with several other student, and will be assessed by the thesis committee according to two components:

- a) Short oral presentation (7-10 minutes). The oral component should be from memory or from notes, but may not be read verbatim, and should overview all the salient points of the argument with a brief elaboration.
- b) Q&A with the audience, other panelists (approx. 30 minutes).

Both components are public.

All thesis presentations will take place on the last Friday before exam week in the winter semester and will be followed by a formal reception.

Advisor

A student must identify a thesis advisor prior to starting a thesis proposal, should develop the thesis proposal in consultation with the advisor, and must have the advisor’s approval in order to submit a proposal. Students may request an advisor from among any of the faculty members at NTC, although final approval rests with the program director. It is the responsibility of the student to find a faculty member willing to advise their thesis, although students having difficulty finding an advisor should meet with their academic advisor for guidance. Students are encouraged to start speaking with potential advisors near the close of their second year in the program, and should ensure that they have an advisor prior to reading week of the fall term. If they have not successfully found an advisor by this time, they must contact the program director.

Textbooks

The student must choose, as their main point of focus, a text closely linked with the core material for a class in the B.A. curriculum.

Recommended Reading

This will be developed in consultation with the Thesis Advisor in the form of the annotated bibliography. [See above for deadlines.]

Late Submission Policy.

All assignments, unless otherwise noted, are due at the start of class on the specified day. Late assignments are docked 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. B to B-) per day, excluding Sundays and Holy Days, up to a maximum of 5 days after which the assignment will be deemed incomplete.

Course Schedule

Sept 9	Thesis Orientation Session Leader: <i>Fast</i>	
Sept 23	Integrative seminar: <i>Truth</i> Leader: <i>West</i>	
Oct 7	Integrative seminar: <i>Beauty</i> Leader: <i>Topping/Bryce</i>	
Oct 21	Integrative seminar: <i>Goodness</i> Leader: <i>Fast</i>	
Nov 4	Integrative seminar: <i>Justice</i> Leader: <i>Fast</i>	
Nov 7-11	Reading Week - Notify program director of your requested advisor	
Nov 25	Integrative seminar: <i>The Human Person</i> Leader: <i>Topping</i>	
Dec 9	Integrative seminar: <i>God</i> Leader: <i>West</i>	
Dec 12	Thesis proposal due.	
Dec 19	Approval of thesis proposal	
Jan 9	Revised proposals due	
Mar 10	Rough Draft of Thesis Due	
Mar 31	Final Draft of Thesis Due	

Apr. 14	Presentation Day Slot 1: 8:30 - 9:50 Slot 2: 10:00 - 11:20 Slot 3: 1:00 - 2:20 Slot 4: 2:40 - 4:00 Reception: 4:00 - 5:00 Dinner: 5:00	
Jun 9	Last date to submit a revised thesis	

General Academic Information

Course Attendance

This is an intensive reading course. Students must meet with their faculty advisors at least twice prior to the submission of their rough draft and once before the completion of their final draft.

Leave of Absence and Policy for Incompletes

Extensions to an incomplete grade may be granted in extenuating circumstances, but may not exceed 16 weeks following the end of the course. Students who fail to complete course work by the agreed deadline will have a grade assigned which is based on work completed.

Academic Integrity

Acts of academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) are subject to an appropriate penalty. The grade "F" may be assigned to a student guilty of such acts by the professor of the course in which the infraction occurred. A second offense against academic integrity renders the student liable to automatic dismissal from NTC. Further details are available in the Student Handbook in the Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Grievances

Students may appeal grades received; the procedure is outlined in the Student Handbook in the Grade Appeal Policy. For other grievances, students will refer to the Student Grievances Policy also outlined in the Student Handbook.

NOTE: The GPA is computed on the basis of cumulative grade point (letter) values, not percentage values. All courses are included in this calculation except those exceeding degree requirements and/or received as transfer credits from other recognized institutions.

Grading System

Undergraduate Studies		
Grade Meaning	Grade	Grade Point
Excellent	A+	4.0
	A	4.0
	A-	3.7
Good	B+	3.3
	B	3.0
	B-	2.7
Adequate	C+	2.3
	C	2.0
	C-	1.7
Marginal	D+	1.3
	D	1.0
Fail	F	0.0

Graduate Studies		
Grade Meaning	Grade	Grade Point
Excellent	A+	4.0
	A	4.0
	A-	3.7
Good	B+	3.3
	B	3.0
	B-	2.7
Adequate	C+	2.3
	C	2.0
	C-	1.7
Fail	D+	1.3
	D	1.0
	F	0.0

Written Assignments - Style and Format

Newman Theological College requires that all written work be submitted in acceptable academic format and style. Please note the following regulations:

Regulations

Research papers, book reports, article summaries, reflection papers, and essays should be double-spaced, printed on one side only, and submitted on white, 8.5" x 11" paper.

A standard type style, such as Times New Roman, with a 12-point font size, must be used. The instructor will specify the most recent edition of the style manual to be used:

1. Kate Turabian, "A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
2. Joseph Gibaldi & William Ahters, eds., "MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers" (New York: Modern Language Association of America).

3. American Psychological Association “Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association” (Washington: APA Publications).

Copies of these standard references may be purchased in the NTC bookstore.

Ignorance of standard form is not considered an acceptable excuse for deviation from required standards of format and style.

Academic Regulations

The following Academic Regulations are located in the Academic Calendar for your reference:

- Changes in Registration: Add/Drop/Withdraw Notice
- Course Work
- Final Examination Schedule
- Incomplete Grade Policy
- Inclusive Language

Related Academic Matters

The following Related Academic Matters are located in the Academic Calendar for your reference:

- Grade Reports & Posting
- Glossary of Academic Terms

Other Related Policies

The following policies are located in the Student Handbook for your reference:

- Academic Misconduct Policy
- Grade Appeal Policy

Recording of Lectures

Audio or video recording of lectures, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior consent of the instructor. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Student Accessibility Services:

A student with special needs that could affect their performance in class should contact their professor during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. They should also register with Student Services by contacting Dr. Francis Fast at 780-392-2450 ext. 2216; email francis.fast@newman.edu

Bibliography (Will be developed in consultation with the thesis advisor.)