

SCRIPTURES AND SPIRITUALITIES
THEO 239-1 – Fall Quarter 2025
Wednesdays, 6:00 – 9:00 pm, Kenna Hall, Room 308

Instructor: Robert W. Scholla, S.J.

Offices Hours: I will be available to have “Zoom” meetings by appointment: Days and times will be clarified in late September.

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Course Description:

The author of 2 Timothy asserts, “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (3:16-17). It is for this reason that observant Jews and practicing Christians habitually attend to their sacred texts.

Through an overview of the biblical canon, this course explores the relationship between historically diverse communities of believers and their sacred texts, and introduces students to complex and diverse spiritualities which emerge from the sacred writings of Judaism and Christianity. To do this, this course must examine the relationship between Divine revelation and its transmission through written texts, which present and express the historical and cultural context of believers through the centuries. As such, this course initially considers the watershed document that was formulated in the Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, and its articulation of the dynamic character of God’s self-disclosure and the transmission of Divine Revelation, as well as its treatment of the inspiration and authentic interpretation of God’s Word, and how this privileged experience of God is ultimately realized in the life of believers—as individuals and communities.

Text and Context

In attending to the scriptures, believers do not encounter a text merely as a product of past cultures and peoples. For Judeo-Christian communities, God’s Word summons its hearers to growth, change and newness of life. In their attending to God’s Word, God dynamically convokes and constitutes *ekklesia*. As such, the scriptures challenge hearers—as individuals and as communities—to a continuous openness to God’s desire for communion with every generation.

- How do scriptures shape a community’s pattern of worship, its teaching and ethical discourse?
- How do scriptures call forth and support the identity of a believer as well as that of a believing community?

God's Word is not disclosed in solitary fragments of text, but is illuminated by texts in relationship with each other, text by text, each clarifying and interpreting the other. Consequently, a fragmentary or reductionistic reading of sacred texts risks an excising of God's Word from the inner life and unity that is conveyed through the entirety of the scriptures. To understand how the Catholic community's religious imagination and identity are enriched and shaped by through scriptures—as well as through liturgical seasons and religious celebrations, this course will continually draw its examples from the Lectionary used by the Roman Catholic Church.

Course and Classroom Context

THEO 239 may become a mixed/blended graduate course where some students meet on campus, while others will participate online. Whatever the case, some course material needs to be presented in an asynchronistic format, at the same time course material must also be engaged in synchronistic mixed setting where on campus and online students will create a blended learning community. To create a genuine learning environment, **students who are taking this course as an online are asked to keep their cameras “on” during class time.**

Required Texts for THEO 239 – Scriptures and Spiritualities

Barbara E. Bowe, with contributions by Laurie Brink and John R. Barker, *Biblical Foundations of Spirituality: Touching a Finger to the Flame*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017. ISBN 978-0-7425-5961-5

Thelma Hall, *Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina, with 500 Scriptural Texts for Prayer*, Mahwah, New York: Paulist Press, 1988. ISBN 0-8091-2959-0

These texts will be supplemented by further materials which have been selected and prepared by the instructor that will be made accessible by way of *CAMINO*.

Each student also needs to have access to a Bible. There are various translations of the scriptures; however, the *NRSV*, that is, the *New Revised Standard Version*, is highly recommended. On *CAMINO* you have also been provided with a very helpful online Biblical resource.

Recommended, but not Required Tests:

The Bible and Spirituality: Exploratory Essays in Reading Scripture Spiritually, edited by Andrew T. Lincoln, J. Gordon McConville and Lloyd K. Petersen, Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013. ISBN 978-1-4982-1631-9

Ruth Burrows, *Guideline for Mystical Prayer*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1976. ISBN 0-7220-7663-0

Work and Study Expectations

Faculty generally expect that for every hour spent in class, students dedicate 2 to 2.5 hours to “home study,” which includes reading, reflection, and writing. Therefore, for a 3-hour graduate course, students should plan to spend 6 to 7.5 hours each week engaged in theological study outside of class.

Engaging with the sacred scriptures of Judaism and Christianity requires more than passive reading. Students are encouraged to take notes, focus on key terms and new vocabulary, and bring their insights, reflections, and questions to each class session.

Over the ten-week quarter, students will complete the following assignments:

- A. An initial essay reflecting on *Dei Verbum*, the landmark document from the Second Vatican Council (1962–65);
- B. A series of short reflections (“Discussions”) based on the weekly readings; and
- C. A final synthesis essay that integrates course themes and applies them pastorally to the student’s ministerial context.

Written assignments—including discussions and essays—will be evaluated based on content, clarity, and logical organization. While grammar and spelling matter, the timely submission of work is crucial to fostering a collaborative learning environment.

Class Attendance and Tardiness Policy

Although all class sessions will be recorded, attendance is mandatory—whether you are enrolled in person or online. If you must miss a class, you are expected to watch the recording and, if possible, discuss the session with a classmate. After reviewing the material, you are welcome to meet with me to address any questions.

Please note that arriving late is disruptive. However, if you are late, it is better to attend than not at all.

Absences and tardiness can negatively affect not only your own learning but also that of your peers. Given the intensive nature of graduate coursework, consistent attendance and punctuality are essential.

Course Goals and Objectives and the Graduate Program of Pastoral Ministries:

Goal 2: In THEO 239 students need to attend to 2A

Students will develop pastoral skills, ministry knowledge, and liturgical fluencies in at least one key field of study relevant to Christian ministry. (*pastoral proficiency*)

Objectives:

- A. Students will demonstrate a depth of practical and theoretical knowledge in their area of concentration.
- B. Students will understand the significance of liturgy for their ministry and in the life of faith.

Goal 3: In THEO 239 students need to attend particularly to 3A

Students will become competent leaders dedicated to serving the Church and to creating community in parish and other pastoral settings. (*leadership skill*)

Objectives:

- A. Students will employ historically informed knowledge of the tradition to assess theological positions and pastoral issues.
- B. Students will apply skills from their area of concentration for use in their faith community.

Important to Note:

Camino Course Management System: Students enrolled in this course are also enrolled in *Camino*. Given the mix of synchronistic and asynchronistic learning modalities, students need to regularly consult *Camino* for assignments, announcements, supplementary course material, readings, and so forth. *Camino* is an essential “virtual” meeting place for all of us!