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The "Model Syllabi" for Teaching the Catholic Intellectual Tradition

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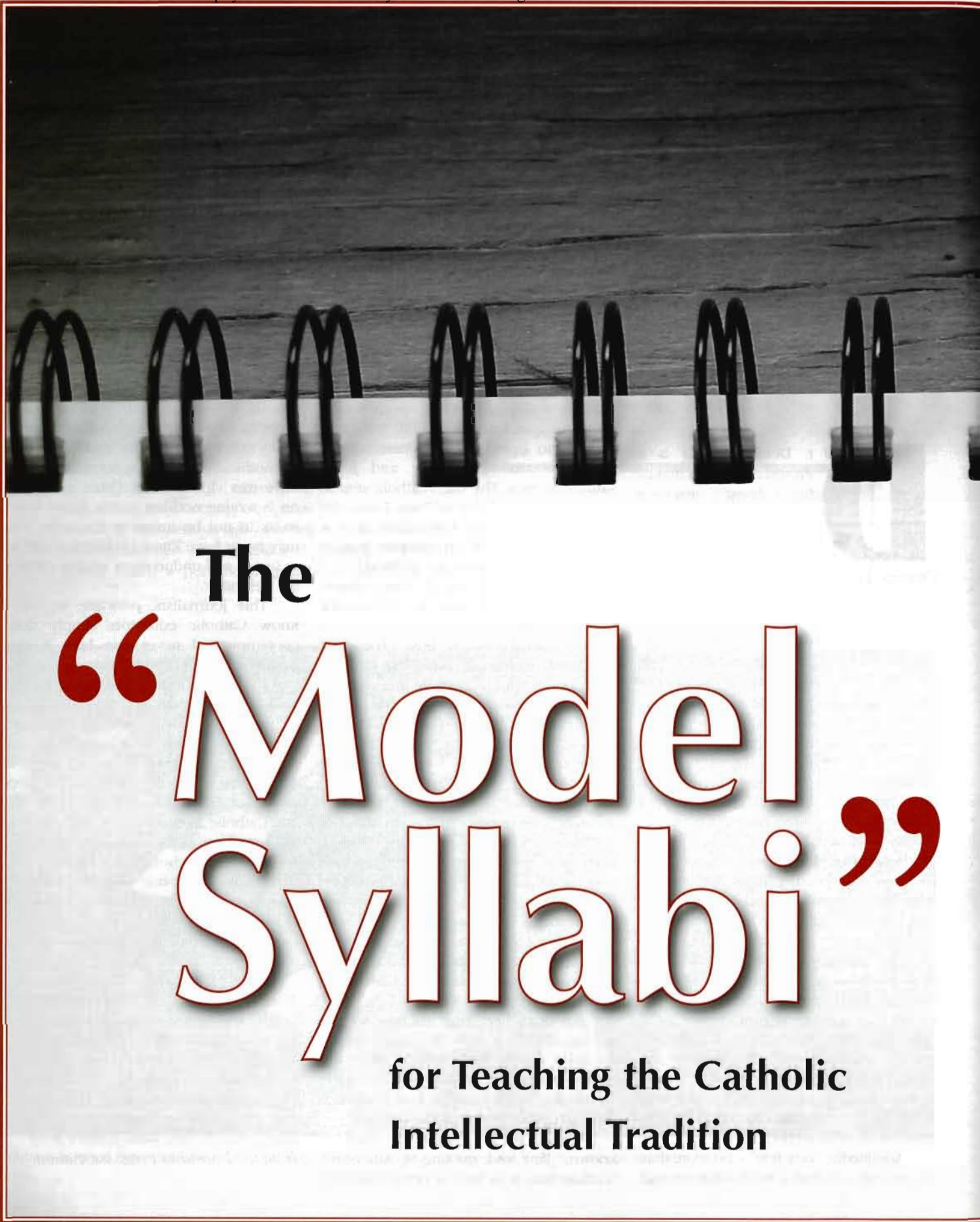
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The
**“Model
Syllabi”**
**for Teaching the Catholic
Intellectual Tradition**

Let's imagine that, thanks to a magnificent benefaction, we were able to start up a new Jesuit University, called Saint Ignatius University, situated in one of those places most mentioned as ripe for a Jesuit intellectual presence — like Phoenix and Atlanta; and a hallmark of this school would be its focus on the Catholic intellectual tradition. How would we teach this treasure? One way might be a cluster or series of core courses which every student would take in his or her first and/or second year. Ideally, the students would take several of these courses in the same semester and, as a result, would get to know their fellow students on a more intellectual level. Also, core and cluster courses work best when the faculty share common goals and collaborate with one another.

With this in mind, we invited four faculty from Jesuit schools in different parts of the country to draw up syllabi for “ideal” courses in literature, history, religion, and the arts. Each syllabus should fit on one page; but we also asked them to offer brief commentaries on what they hoped to accomplish and to correspond with one another, passing around their syllabi for comments, during the spring semester. Aside from the space limitations, each one chose his or her own format, reading lists, and assignments.

Our pioneers are: Paul V. Murphy, a historian at John Carroll and member of the seminar; Josephine M. Dunn, in the art and music program at Scranton; David K. Sauer in the English department at Spring Hill; and Susan A. Ross, in the theology department at Loyola University Chicago. We invite the readers to respond with their own reflections. RASj



The Church in History

Instructor: Dr. Paul V. Murphy

COURSE PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the church as an historical community that has maintained a commitment to a received faith while at the same time adapting itself to varied and changing historical and cultural circumstances. The course schedule is organized around four major themes: doctrine, worship and spirituality, ministry, and authority.

Students will learn the basic skills of historical analysis of documents related to the history of Christianity. Through this they will come to better understand major issues and questions in the church's history and the church's relationship to culture.

ASSIGNMENTS

- 1) A 4-page paper on each of the four thematic sections of the syllabus that employs primary source documents to analyze the theme under review (10% each).
- 2) A 4-page book review of Jaroslav Pelikan's *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (10%).
- 3) A Mid-Term Examination (20%).
- 4) Class Participation (10%).
- 5) A Final Examination (20%).

Part I. History of Doctrine

In Part I we will examine the development of Christian theology from the early Church to the twentieth century through reading of primary source documents such as the Gospels; early credal statements; excerpts from the homilies of St. Augustine. Students will be introduced to Medieval and

Reformation theology via readings on salvation and grace taken from St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and the Council of Trent. Finally we will read from Karl Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Faith* to gain an appreciation for Catholic theology in the twentieth century.

Part II. Worship and Spirituality

A survey of the development of Christian worship and spirituality. Reading of an array of sources including the *Didache*, Hippolytus of Rome's *Apostolic Tradition*; the decrees on sacraments from Lateran IV; and Christian attitudes to sacramentals such as relics and devotion to Mary. Examination of Medieval and Reformation views by readings from Martin Luther, The Council of Trent, and Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* Study of modern liturgical developments including Vatican II on the liturgy.

Part III. Ministry

An introduction to the practice of ministry from the ancient Church's experience of martyrdom; the rise of major religious orders such as the Benedictines, the Franciscans, and the Jesuits; the role of women in ministry, including Dorothy Day and contemporary women religious in the U.S.

Part IV. Authority

Concerns the exercise of authority in the Church in various historical and cultural circumstances. Readings will include Paul's *Letter to the Romans*; Cyprian of Carthage *On the Unity of the Catholic Church* (selections); readings from the medieval Investiture Controversy; Martin Luther, the Council of Trent's *Decree on*

Scripture, Ignatius of Loyola's *Rules for Thinking with the Church*; Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* (selections); Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*; Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* and the *Declaration on Religious Liberty*. ■

RATIONALE

History as Handmaid

Among the many challenges to forming a syllabus in history that reflects the Catholic intellectual tradition two stand out. First, the very breadth of material makes teaching one course on a survey level nearly impossible. I am reminded of a professor who advised his graduate students about his version of Western Civilization: "This course cannot be taught. It must be performed!" A survey of western Christian history is impossible unless viewed as only an introduction to important issues. Second, the methodologies of contemporary historical scholarship are not in themselves in any way "Catholic." The advantage then to such a course is that it brings those methodologies to bear on issues in the Christian past and present that are sometimes described by the Church in an ahistorical manner. In this respect, history can be a handmaid to more fully informed pastoral and theological reflection by Catholics.

Paul V. Murphy

Postmodern Catholicism

Instructor: David K. Sauer

COURSE PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES

This course starts with the postmodern predicament—after two horrific world wars, and a sudden globalization of the world, people in the second half of the twentieth century faced what Walker Percy called “the dislocation of man in the modern age.” The purpose of this course is to explore some Catholic articulations of that problem, and the glimmers of solutions writers found. The idea of the divine that will be encountered will not be like any other you have seen—global, not of one religious tradition, immanent, yet unrecognized as it works throughout the world.

First Reading: Flannery O'Connor *Wise Blood* (1952 novel; four classes) [Each of O'Connor's stories has, she said, a moment of grace, Catholic grace – grace that brings a person to the brink of belief, but not grace that saves by itself. It is transformative, but those to whom the grace is given must choose to either accept it or not.]

Second Reading: J. D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey* (1955/57 novella; three classes) [quest for meaning/escape phoniness through the world's wisdom/religious traditions.]

Third Reading: Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer* (1961 novel; four classes); [“What is the nature of the search? you ask. Really it is very simple; at least for a fellow like me. So simple that it is often overlooked. The search is what anyone would undertake if he were not sunk in the everydayness of his own life.”]

Fourth Reading: David Lodge: *The British Museum is Falling Down* (1965 novel; four classes) [a day in the life of Adam Appleby and the plight of a young Catholic family playing Vatican roulette.]

Fifth Reading: Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (1992/93 plays; six classes) [Jewish playwright's search for meaning through four main characters who struggle with Gay/Straight issues, as well as the

intervention of Mormon Angels in a search for the right way to live a life]

Also Film: 1987 *Der Himmel über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire*) Peter Handke and Wim Wenders [angels hover over humans in Berlin, listening to their thoughts and dreams, becoming entangled in their lives.]

Sixth Reading: John Guare, *Six Degrees of Separation* (film of the play); *Four Baboons Adoring the Sun* (1990; 1992 play; 4 classes) [Quest to keep otherness separated breaks down when life without diversity is discovered to be empty; In the short play, the God Eros, unseen, narrates/intervenes in a family's collisions over love and death with archeologists in Sicily.]

Seventh Reading: Terrence McNally, *A Perfect Ganesha* (1993 play; two classes) [two older women tour India searching for healing continually accompanied by Ganesha unseen in a variety of guises.]

Eighth Reading: Richard Russo, *Straight Man* (1997 novel; four classes) [In a week, an anarchist academic survives a week of misadventures trying to bring order to his life.]

Ninth Reading: Paula Vogel, *How I Learned to Drive* (1998 play, two classes) [surviving sexual abuse by Uncle, forty year old Li'l Bit narrates her teen years and comes to forgiveness.]

Tenth Reading: Margaret Edson, *W;t* (2000 play; two classes with film) [English Professor who teaches Donne and has 4th stage ovarian cancer facing her death and looks back on her life.]

ASSIGNMENTS

Five papers (50%), two exams (20%), final (30%). Ask why characters feel/experience dislocation, assess places they look for solutions. What is the reader to conclude about their quests and meaning of their lives? Use specific passages to support one's thesis, and analyze the word choices by the writer for tone as well as literal sense of the language. ■

RATIONALE

No Answers

*My course starts with the modern predicament—two world wars and the diversity of a global society redefine spiritual quests. The characters in these works are the wounded, seeking salvation. They are all filled with confusion, misdirection, yet love and forgiveness seep in through the cracks, and still exist. Readers are not given answers here, as in earlier centuries, but they are called to share the vision and to struggle on despite the lack of clarity of what is the right way to go. At the end of *Six Degrees of Separation*, Ouisa realizes she's lived her life in her high rise apartment trying to keep out the forces of chaos, but the result is that she's kept out humanity as well, and can't go on living that way. Li'l Bit, in *How I Learned to Drive*, forgives her uncle for stealing her youth, coming to sympathize with his plight, and she heroically soldiers on. Vivian Bearing, on her deathbed in *W;t*, finally discovers her scholarly studies of Donne were also an escape and led to a loss of the very humanity she wants doctors to show to her. At the end, Kathleen Chalafant stepped away from the deathbed and stood reaching up into a blinding white light. It was a transcendent moment in the theatre, a positive ending beyond a dead-end life.*

None of these works offers answers. They do provide a kind of consolation that there is a divine presence with us in these confusions—always forgiving the missteps, yet letting us make our own mistakes rather than putting us on a single right path. The diversity of the world is too great for a single, one-size-fits-all solution, except for the recognition of the presence of God even as we seem to see only absence.

David Sauer

"...students would take several of these courses in the same semester and, as a result, would get to know their fellow students on a more intellectual level."

A "model" Jesuit college.

Art and the Catholic Tradition

Instructor: Josephine M. Dunn, Ph.D.

COURSE PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES

Students will engage the Catholic Intellectual Tradition that shaped Christian art from the third through 17th centuries. Patristic texts and contemporary essays serve as interpretive guides. On-site study of imagery in St. Peter's Cathedral provides a special opportunity to understand meaning and history in a modern local church.

LECTURE SCHEDULE AND TEXTS

Visual language of a new faith: *Early Christian Catacombs and Sarcophagi*. **Texts:** The Bible; patristic texts; and excerpts from R. M. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*.

Liturgical Spaces: *Old St. Peter's and Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome*. **Texts:** Excerpts from R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, and Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308*.

Hagiography: *Men and Women for Christ: St. Francis (Assisi); St. Augustine (San Gimignano); Exaltation of St. Ignatius (Rome); Life of St. Catherine of Siena (Siena)*. **Texts:** Excerpts from J. de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*; G. A. Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565-1610*; St. Bonaventure, *Life of St. Francis*; R. Kieckhefer, "Devotion to the Passion," *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and Their Religious Milieu*; J. Le Goff, "The Time of the Exemplum (thirteenth century)," *The Medieval Imagination*; J. Tylanda, SJ., editor, *Ignatius, Autobiography*.

Time and the World: *Chartres Cathedral*; Limbourg Brothers, *Les Tres Riches Heures*. **Texts:** Excerpts from A.

Henisch, *The Medieval Calendar Year*; A. Katzenellenbogen, "The Sculptures of the Transept Wings," in *The Sculptural Program of Chartres Cathedral: Christ, Mary, Ecclesia*; E. Male, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*; M. M. Mannion, "Art and Devotion: The Prayer-Books of Jean de Berry," *Medieval Texts and Images: Studies in the Manuscripts of the Middle Ages*; J.W. Williams, "The Historical Circumstances," in *Bread, Wine, and Money: The Window of the Trades at Chartres Cathedral*.

The End of Time: Coppo di Marcovaldo, *Last Judgment (Florence)*; Giotto, *Last Judgment (Padua)*; Michelangelo, *Last Judgment (Rome)*. **Texts:** Excerpts from B. Barnes, *Michelangelo's 'Last Judgment': The Renaissance Response*; L. Steinberg, "The Last Judgment as Merciful Heresy," *Art in America* (1985); G. Vasari, *Life of Michelangelo*.

ASSIGNMENTS

ESSAYS (Tests): Five in-class essays graded on style and content. Students will critique a contemporary art historical essay (thesis, primary and secondary sources; meaning and interpretation). In-class essays will be rewritten as a REFLECTION (Final Exam). The Reflection comprises course material and the five essays. Students will analyze "interpretation" in the artistic Catholic Intellectual Tradition. (Essays, fifty percent; Reflection, forty percent).

PROJECTS: Paired students analyze, interpret, and date a work of art unknown to them (Image Day); and interpret visual imagery in the cathedral of Scranton. (Attendance and participation: ten percent.) ■

RATIONALE

Inculcating the "Joy" of Art History

Art history offers exciting possibilities for designing a single, multi- or cross-disciplinary course on the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. When invited to participate in this pedagogical exercise, I considered various approaches to the topic: introductory or period course, or seminar. In the end, I returned to the mini-course I had developed for the one-week faculty seminar that has been offered at the University of Scranton for the past two years. Augmenting the faculty seminar by 14 weeks birthed an expanded course and adoption of new texts.

In designing a general introductory course, I included pedagogical goals that have become important to me over a teaching career of 21 years. First is the importance of inculcating the "joy" of art history in an introductory art history course, which is usually doomed to the employ of informative, but decidedly dry, textbooks. By assigning classical texts in art history and essays penned by contemporary art historians, I share both the tradition of art historical scholarship and the excitement of young scholars at work. General Education students gently discover art historical inquiry and methodology. Secondly, I believe it is never too early to introduce students to the wonder of primary texts so that they learn to appreciate and distinguish varying interpretive modes. Thirdly, reflection expressed in critical writing is integral to my courses. Finally, experiential components encourage use of newly-acquired analytical skills and knowledge through observation of new images or re-view of familiar spaces beyond the classroom.

Josephine Dunn

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition

Instructor: Dr. Susan A. Ross

COURSE PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES

To understand the Catholic theological tradition as a rich and complex, often unwieldy tradition that has grappled with intellectual issues from the time of its origins. By the end of the course it is my hope that students will:

- Be able to identify ways that the Catholic church has engaged faith and reason;
- Be familiar with differing ways of living life as a Catholic;
- Understand the relation between faith and justice;
- Be able to identify different ways that the church has engaged with the secular world.

ASSIGNMENTS

1) Four reflection/response papers due (12% each)*; 2) viewing of two films plus report (5% each)^; 3) two brief reports on theological issues (7% each)+; 4) final essay exam (15%); in-class participation (13%) (due dates indicated by symbols in the schedule). Further details on assignments will be given two weeks before the due dates.

Films to view: "Babette's Feast," "On the Waterfront" "The Mission," "Romero" (available in library on reserve); choose TWO

Readings: Most material is available online through links in Blackboard; additional material will be provided by the instructor

Participation: This is measured not only by speaking in class but by active listening. There will be multiple in-class UNGRADED writing assignments ("scribbles"), which cannot be made up but which will factor into your participation grade.

Etiquette: I expect that all of us will exercise courtesy to everyone in class: to me and to your fellow students. This means: removal of hats, no sleeping or lounging in class; no cell-phone or computer use. Please avoid private conversations.

Academic Integrity: Any violation of standards of academic integrity (see the Undergraduate Handbook, p. x) will result in failure of the assignment and potential failure of the course; by College rules I must report all instances of academic dishonesty to the Dean of the College. ■

RATIONALE

A Traditional Approach

*This is a somewhat "traditional" approach to a basic Theology course that takes a historical perspective. I have found in my 29 years of teaching that students usually lack a sense of the history of Catholic theology, or of the world events that play a part in its development. Most of the material is fairly straightforward and familiar (at least to theologians...); the Galileo selection (suggested to me by a colleague) raises many significant issues that resonate with the present: how we come to know things, how we should use the Bible; how theology is inherently open to discussion ("God delivered up the world to disputations"). The films provide a narrative context that fleshes out some of the issues raised in the readings. Ordinarily I also have students read a novel (in the past I have used Mary Gordon's *Final Payments* and Jane Smiley's *Good Will*) but since the students will also be taking the literature course, I leave the literary issues to my colleague. I always try to include women in as much course content as I can, so I include Hildegard with the other medieval thinkers, Teresa alongside Ignatius, and Elizabeth Johnson and Margaret Farley as two contemporary Catholic feminist theologians; I also include John Paul II's views on women as they inevitably provoke lively discussions. The in-class process will include student interviews with role-playing; close reading of short texts; audio-visual resources, as well as brief lectures, small and large group discussions.*

Susan A. Ross

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Reading
Week 1	Intro; Who is Jesus Christ?	Gospel of Mark
Week 2	Jesus and the church	Mark; selections from Acts
Week 3	Jesus and Philosophy	Nicene Creed and related documents*
Week 4	Faith and Reason	Anselm, Hildegard and Aquinas (selections)
Week 5	Religious Life	St. Ignatius and Teresa of Avila (selections)+
Week 6	Catholic/Protestant?	Luther and Council of Trent (selections)*
Week 7	Religion and Science	Galileo, "Letter to the Grand Duchess" ^
Week 8	Religion and Justice	<i>Rerum Novarum, Laborem Exercens</i> (selections)
Week 9	The Church & the World 1	Documents from Vatican II*
Week 10	The Church & the World 2	John Paul II (<i>Mulieris Dignitatem, Veritatis Splendor</i>) selections
Week 11	The Church & the Poor	Selections from CELAM, liberation and black theologians ^
Week 12	The Church & Women	E. Johnson and M. Farley (selections)+
Week 13	The Church & World Religions	<i>Nostra Aetate, Dominus Iesus</i> , contemp. Documents & issues*
Week 14	Reflection, feedback, etc.	