

## Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): Master of Theological Studies (MTS); Master of Arts in Religious Education (MARE) Department: Theological Studies

Degree or Certificate Level: Post-Baccalaureate Graduate Degree College/School: College of Arts & Sciences

Date (Month/Year): September 2021 Assessment Contact: Rubén Rosario Rodríguez

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? AY 2020-21

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2018

### 1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please list the full, complete learning outcome statements and not just numbers, e.g., Outcomes 1 and 2.)

**Learning Outcome 1:** Graduate students will demonstrate knowledge of the broad outlines of Christian scripture, Christian history, and the major theological developments in the tradition, as well as core terms, categories, and exempla that frame theological and religious studies.

### 2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe and identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

Continuing the assessment of **Learning Outcome 1** (see above) begun last year (see 2020 Assessment Report), the Graduate Studies Committee decided to focus on two courses, **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology** and **THEO 5280: Christian Tradition II**, revisiting course descriptions, learning outcomes, and required texts. These courses were offered hybrid online/face-to-face format in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and **include them in/with this report document** (please do not just refer to the assessment plan).

A major goal of the Graduate Studies Committee in AY 2020-21 was to reevaluate the first comprehensive exam requirement for the PhD Program in Christian Theology (CT). This involved a thorough study, discussion, and revision of the course description, learning outcomes, and course syllabus for **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology**. Because this course is also required of both the MTS and MARE degree programs, the conversation involved the Graduate Studies Director, the Masters Program Director, the Graduate Studies committee, and the faculty member(s) teaching **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology**. The comprehensive exam discussion is irrelevant for the purposes of the MTS/MARE annual assessment report, but it directly impacts the course design insofar as the comprehensive exam reading list identifies a number of required texts every graduate student in Theological Studies is expected to have read in order to "demonstrate knowledge of the broad outlines of Christian scripture, Christian history, and the major theological developments in the tradition, as well as core terms, categories, and exempla that frame theological and religious studies" (Learning Outcome 1). Accordingly, the final comprehensive exam reading list is attached to this

report, and instructors for both **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology** and **THEO 5280: Christian Tradition II** are encouraged to integrate the list of ten required texts into their course design.

#### 4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

The Graduate Studies Committee continues to discuss revisions to the first comprehensive exam for the PhD Program in Christian Theology (CT), which is currently linked to **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology**, and PhD students in the CT track are encouraged to take at the end of their first semester after having taken **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology**. In AY 2020-21 changes were made to allow PhD students a flex option as to when to take their first comprehensive exam (whether at the end of the first semester of study, the end of the second semester of study, or at the beginning of the third semester of study). While these discussions do not directly impact the MTS/MARE graduate students (insofar as they are not required to take the comprehensive exam), changes to **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology** do, especially in terms of required texts and learning outcomes for this course.

#### 5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

One major realization of this process as it applies to the MTS and MARE programs specifically, is that the Graduate Studies Committee came to realize that as currently structured, there is a lot of overlap in terms of learning outcomes and required readings between **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology** and **THEO 5280: Christian Tradition II**. Furthermore, it became evident that both classes tended to focus on Modern Christianity (1500 to the present) to the neglect of the Patristic and Medieval periods. If, as defined in **Learning Outcome 1**, one of the major goals of the program is to provide our students with comprehensive “knowledge of the broad outlines of Christian scripture, Christian history, and the major theological developments in the tradition, as well as core terms, categories, and exempla that frame theological and religious studies,” then we had to provide greater clarity in terms of course description, learning outcomes, and required readings for each class.

#### 6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

1. The comprehensive exam reading list was compiled over a year-long period of conversation among the CT track faculty (encompassing Systematic Theology, Theological Ethics, and World Religion). Faculty members identified crucial texts while challenging the received canon in order to integrate more diverse perspectives and reflect best practices at peer and aspirational programs.
2. The list evolved and grew in the form of a Google document made available to all faculty, and once a list was compiled the Graduate Studies Committee debated and discussed the merits of this list, sought outside advice in terms of broadening our canon to include more diverse voices. For example, the faculty benefitted from Zoom talks with African American theologians Willie James Jennings (Yale Divinity School) and Fr. Bryan Massingale (Fordham University), which in turn informed our final list of required versus recommended texts.
3. The final comprehensive exam reading list was also vetted by the Christianity in Antiquity (CA) track faculty because in the end the comprehensive exam reading list encompassed the whole arc of Christianity, from the apostolic era to the present.
4. At the last faculty meeting of Spring 2021 the Director of Graduate Studies updated the entire faculty of this process and shared the final comprehensive exam reading list.

**B.** How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

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| Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Course content</li><li>• Teaching techniques</li><li>• Improvements in technology</li><li>• Prerequisites</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Course sequence</li><li>• New courses</li><li>• Deletion of courses</li><li>• Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings</li></ul> |
| Changes to the Assessment Plan          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student learning outcomes</li><li>• Artifacts of student learning</li><li>• Evaluation process</li></ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)</li><li>• Data collection methods</li><li>• Frequency of data collection</li></ul>                            |

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

1. Faculty teaching either **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology** or **THEO 5280: Christian Tradition II** are encouraged to use the comprehensive exam reading in determining required course readings.
2. In terms of course overlap, faculty teaching **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology** are reminded that they are not limited to the modern era (1500 to the present)

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

N/A

**7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes**

**A.** What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

Under the new department chair the Executive Committee, which includes the Director of Graduate Studies and the Director of Masters Programs, has been empowered to implement changes brought forth by standing committees like the Graduate Studies Committee, sometimes bringing issues to a faculty-wide vote, other times simply implementing the recommendations of said standing committees depending on the particular situation. In terms of this assessment period, it enabled us to amend the current comprehensive exam/THEO 6040 structure in order to meet the immediate needs of graduate students (while benching the longer-term discussion of redesigning our comprehensive exam structure). Included in this decision by the Graduate Studies Committee which finalized the comprehensive exam reading list used in redesigning course descriptions, outcomes, and required readings for both **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology** or **THEO 5280: Christian Tradition II**.

**B.** How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

In terms of assessing how **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology** or **THEO 5280: Christian Tradition II** have or have not met Learning Outcome 1, the Graduate Studies Committee relied on its own internal review and assessment process (described above) as well as the process described in our 2017 Assessment Plan. Specifically: "Assessed by group of faculty by considering the categories of the Annual Review Form," and by tasking the faculty member(s) teaching **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology** or **THEO 5280: Christian Tradition II**: Assessed by course professor through course presentations, projects, and research papers."

**C.** What were the findings of the assessment?

As described above, our assessment discussions revealed gaps in the knowledge base expected from graduate students caused by a focus on Modern Christianity (1500 to the present) in **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian**

**Theology or THEO 5280: Christian Tradition II.** Only the latter course ought to focus on the period of 1500 to the present, while the instructor of THEO 6040 is tasked with providing a grounding in the wide arc of Christian Theology from the Apostolic era to the present.

**D.** How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

1. Review and revise course syllabi for **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology** or **THEO 5280: Christian Tradition II** on an annual basis.
2. Charge the Graduate Studies Committee with the task to continue to review and revise the comprehensive exam reading list in Christian Theology on an annual basis.
3. Recognizing that the MTS program is designed to prepare students for Phd work in Christian Theology while the MARE program is designed to prepare students to teach Religion in Catholic secondary schools, revisit the requiring MARE students take **THEO 6040: Intro to Christian Theology**.

**N.B. In light of low applicant numbers the MARE program has been completely redesigned and a new program proposal has been submitted and will hopefully be approved by Fall 2022 in order to receive a new class of students for Fall 2023.**

**IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document.**

### **Primary Sources in the Study of Christian Theology** Reading List

This reading list was compiled by the CT faculty as a guide for your studies. It is by no means exhaustive, but it does provide a range of thinkers and texts that have been and continue to be central in the field of constructive Christian theology. Not only is it a resource for your syllabus design exam, but it is a guide to additional readings to supplement your coursework.

#### Theological Ethics

1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I, II, and X
2. Augustine, "On the Morals of the Catholic Church," *City of God* Books XIV and XIX, and "On Grace and Free Will"
3. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*  
I, qq. 5-6 (goodness and God); I-II, qq. 6, 8, 12-13 (human acts), 26 (love), 54-55 (virtue), 61-62 (cardinal and theological virtues), 90-95, 100 (law), 106-108 (new law); II-II, qq. 25-26 (charity), 40 (war), 63 (respect), 64 (murder), 154 (sex)
4. Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian" and "On Temporal Authority"
5. John Calvin, *Institutes*: Book II, chapters 7-9 (laws); Book III, chapter 2, i-vii, 6-8, 19 (the Christian life), and Book IV, chapter 20 (civil government)
6. Orestes Brownson, "The Laboring Classes"
7. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*
8. Karl Barth, "The Command of God and the Ethical Problem," in *CD II/2*, § 36.1 and/or "The Problem of Ethics Today" in *The Word of God and the Word of Man*
9. Select Vatican II documents (*Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Dei Verbum*, *Nostra Aetate*) and World Council of Churches documents
10. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* and/or *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*
11. Stanley Hauerwas, *Christians Among the Virtues* or *The Peaceable Kingdom*
12. Emilie Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*

13. Katie Canon, *Katie's Cannon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*
14. Servais-Théodore Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* or *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Moral Theology*
15. Charles Curran, *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today: A Synthesis*
16. Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason* or *Natural and Divine Law*
17. Jennifer Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*

### Systematics

1. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*
2. John Henry Newman, *Essay on the Development of Doctrine* or *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*
3. Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Romans; Church Dogmatics (I.1, I.2; II.1, II.2; IV.1, IV.2; IV.3.1)*
4. Karl Rahner, select chapters or essays
5. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man*
6. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*
7. Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*
8. David Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*
9. Thomas Aquinas, Selections from *Summa Theologia* (especially I, qq. 1-43, 75-102; III, qq. 1-90)
10. Sarah Coakely, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*
11. Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key*
12. Johann Adam Möhler, *Symbolism*
13. Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*
14. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Epilogue*
15. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us*
16. James H. Evans, *We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology*
17. Gordon Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology*

### Political Theology

1. James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*
2. Augustine, *City of God* (At least Preface, Books II and XIX), and *Political Letters*
3. Luke Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*
4. Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love*
5. Martin Luther King Jr. *The Radical King*
6. Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*
7. David Walkers, *Appeal*
8. Nat Turner, *Confessions of Nat Turner*
9. Martin Luther, "Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation"
10. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, or *Letters and Papers from Prison*
11. Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Men* or *Vindication of the Rights of Women*
12. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*
13. William Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*
14. Erik Peterson, *Monotheism as Political Problem*
15. Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*
16. Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society*
17. Dorothee Söelle, *Political Theology* or *The Silent Cry*
18. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*