

INTRODUCTION TO A LIVING THOMISM

SEMINAR SYLLABUS

[SPRING 2022]



DESCRIPTION

“Veritatem meditabitur guttur meum, et labia mea detestabuntur impium” – “truth shall be mediated by my mouth, and impiety detested by my lips.” These words—from Proverbs 8:7—begin Saint Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Contra Gentiles* and from them he elucidates the twofold office of the wise: first, to contemplate and speak the divine truth, which we may simply call “truth”, and, second, to refute the errors opposed to the truth.

This office was one Aquinas himself carried out diligently over the course of his teaching and writing career. Though he lived a mere 49 years—from 1225 until 1274—he composed works preserved today totaling over 8 million words (without a computer or typewriter or even electric light to help). Comprised within those 8 million words, one finds an incredible breadth of topics, often treated with similarly incredible insight and brevity. In those brief insights are contained a perennial wisdom, fruitfully mined again and again over the centuries, and to which we in this seminar will diligently turn our own attention: seeking to understand not only the **doctrines** of the Angelic Doctor, but his **thinking**.



METHOD

The seminar is 8 weeks long, with one recorded lecture and one discussion sessions each week. Each discussion session is structured around a reading from Thomas Aquinas. Participants are expected to have read the assigned reading and listened to the lecture prior to the session, so that they may engage in a semi-structured discussion directed and moderated by the instructor. Moreover, *continual discussion* will foster that participation and engagement throughout the week. Participants will be expected to partake in these discussions on a regular basis, and will be challenged to do so directly.

READING

Each week includes (scheduled below) an assigned reading, ranging across a number of Aquinas’ works. All of these are available online (by download from the Lyceum Resource Archive or at <https://isidore.co/aquinas/>). One may, additionally, purchase copies of the texts assigned. Translations of *De principiis naturae* (*On the Principles of Nature*), *De ente et essentia* (*On Being and Essence*), and the

Summa Contra Gentiles are readily available. To acquire the first two (and more besides), this [Selected Writings of Thomas Aquinas](#), translated by Ralph McInerny, is a decent and affordable purchase. If one finds large folio editions acceptable, I highly recommend The Aquinas Institute's Latin-English facing [Summa Contra Gentiles \(Books 1 & 2\)](#)—which is much preferable to the Notre Dame English editions, the bindings of which are notoriously awful (we'll not read Books 3 & 4 in this seminar, but they are available in [a second volume](#))—and [Opuscula I: Treatises](#).

Supplemental readings will be provided at the instructor's discretion in PDF format.

LECTURE

Each week there will also be a 40+ minute audio lecture, posted to Teams at the beginning of the week. This lecture will be based upon the assigned reading, but will also stray into related topics, or may use the reading as a launching point for addressing some related issue (perhaps one more general, or perhaps one more specific). The primary (but not sole) purpose of these lectures is to help clarify some of the more difficult concepts and arguments contained within the reading, as well as to raise specific questions that should help structure and guide our discussion sessions.

There *may* be accompanying visual aids (not necessarily) in order to provide some clarity as to textual points, but one *should* be able, in most cases, to simply listen to the lecture (and perhaps consult the visual aids later). This should allow more flexibility: making the lectures suitable accompaniment for a commute, while doing chores, going for a run, etc.

DISCUSSION

The heart of the seminar is the discussion session (**Saturdays at 1:15–2:15pm ET**): where all the thoughts emergent and encountered throughout the week—via the reading, lecture, and on-going conversations in the Teams channel—are brought into explicit conversation. This allows us to attempt a concerted effort at bringing resolution to our difficulties, and—failing such a resolution—to direct our inquiry further.

Each discussion session will begin with a brief synopsis of the week's material or a question, a focusing on whichever aspects of that material seem most pressing. Beyond the direction provided by the instructor, participants are encouraged to bring their own concerns explicitly into view and to engage with the instructor and one another in civil debate and collective inquiry.

AUDITS OR COMPLETES

Beginning in 2022, all Lyceum Institute seminar participants will be able to either **audit** the seminar or **complete** the seminar. To **complete** the seminar, the participant **must** submit an essay of 2000+ words pertaining to the subject. This essay may be evaluated for publication in *Reality* and will be included in each Lyceum Institute member's profile, along with the mark of auditing or completing. Due date for a submission is **28 June 2022**.

SESSION SCHEDULE

April 2	<p>Thomism and Tradition</p> <p>Lecture: The Virtue of Thomism</p> <p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kemple 2020: “The Contexts of Thomism” <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Étienne Gilson 1965: “The Nature of Thomistic Philosophy” in <i>Thomism: The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas</i>
April 9	<p>The Principles of Thomism: Knowledge</p> <p>Lecture: Resolution to Principles</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1256-59: <i>Quaestiones disputate de veritate</i>, q.1, a.1.
April 16	<p>The Principles of Thomism: Nature</p> <p>Lecture: Discovering the World – Causality</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • c.1252/56: <i>De principiis naturae</i>
April 23	<p>The Principles of Thomism: Metaphysics</p> <p>Lecture: Being, Essence, and Existence</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • c.1252/56: <i>De ente et essentia</i>, c.1-3. • c.1270/71: <i>In libri Metaphysicorum</i>, proem.
April 30	B R E A K
May 7	<p>Faith and Reason: The Reasonableness of Faith</p> <p>Lecture: Knowledge’s Boundaries and Inferences</p> <p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • c.1259/65: <i>Summa Contra Gentiles (SCG)</i> book 1, c.1-9 <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rudi te Velde 2002: “Natural Reason in the <i>Summa contra Gentiles</i>” in <i>Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Perspectives</i>.
May 14	<p>Faith and Reason: Knowing the Existence of God</p> <p>Lecture: Necessities and Remotions</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • c.1259/65: <i>SCG</i> book 1, c.10-14
May 21	<p>Creation: Relation to God</p> <p>Lecture: Relations to Perfection</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • c.1259/65: <i>SCG</i> book 2, c.1-14
May 28	<p>Creation: Causality and Wisdom of God</p> <p>Lecture: The Meaning and Order of Creation</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • c.1259/65: <i>SCG</i> book 2, c.15-24.