

AQUINAS: *DE VERITATE I*

SEMINAR SYLLABUS

[SPRING 2023]



DESCRIPTION

Thomas Aquinas held his first series of “disputed questions”, *De veritate*, over the course of the three years of his first regency at the University of Paris, 1256-1259. He was then in his early thirties.

The structure of the “disputation” – both live and in its published form – reflects the continual raising of questions and resolution of difficulties between teacher and students engaged together in common, probing inquiry. This particular series of disputations, according to Aquinas’s biographer J.-P. Torrell, shows us “the genius of the young master... a genius in motion, perpetually in the act of discovery”.

Though we know this work as *De veritate* (*On Truth*), in fact Thomas and his students were occupied with two great themes: the *true* and the *good*. These two have a transcendental character: that is, each is a name for *being* itself, albeit under the aspect of a *relation* to mind (the true) or to appetite (the good). These two great themes yielded a total of 253 discussions (“articles”) ranged under a total of 29 areas of inquiry (“questions”).



Clearly there would be no way to treat the entirety of this great and massive work in a single, or even several, seminars. This seminar is the first of two, in which we will read and discuss together important selections pertaining to the first great theme of *truth and knowledge* (or, being in relation to mind). The second seminar, to be held in a later season, will deal with the theme of the *good and freedom*.

In this first seminar, I will devote special attention in some of my lectures to points of continuity of Aquinas’ thought with *semiotics* as it took shape in later Latin philosophy (Poincaré in particular).

METHOD

The seminar is 8 weeks long, with one recorded lecture and one discussion session each week. Each discussion session is structured around readings from Aquinas’ *De veritate*. 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.

READING

The primary text for this seminar, Aquinas' *De veritate* is available online (link to be provided). Supplemental or suggested readings, if any, will be provided via Teams. **The reading schedule given below is subject to change.**

LECTURE

Each week there will also be a 20-40+ 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 11:30am-12:30pm 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 and 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.

SESSION SCHEDULE

NOTE: The assignment of an article from *De veritate* will always include Aquinas' main "Reply". A later version of the schedule will specify which (if any) "Difficulties" and "Answers to Difficulties" may be omitted from the reading.

April 15	Being and the True I Lecture: "Truth as communication of being and mind" Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>De Veritate (DV)</i> 1, aa. 1-3, 5
April 22	Being and the True II Lecture: "Truth and mutability, truth and falsity" Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>DV</i>1, aa. 6, 8-12

April 29	<p>Divine Knowledge I</p> <p>Lecture: “Divine knowledge as divine perfection”</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>DV2</i>, aa. 1-5, 8, 12
May 6	<p>Divine Knowledge II</p> <p>Lecture: “Divine knowledge as cause of the creature”</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>DV2</i>, aa. 13-15 • <i>DV3</i>, aa. 1-3
May 13	BREAK
May 20	<p>Human Cognition I</p> <p>Lecture: “The understanding animal”</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>DV10</i>, aa. 1-6
May 27	<p>Human Cognition II</p> <p>Lecture: “The understanding animal understanding itself”</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>DV10</i>, aa. 8-9 • <i>DV11</i>, aa. 1-2
June 3	<p>Faith</p> <p>Lecture: “Knowledge beyond nature”</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>DV10</i>, aa. 11-13 • <i>DV14</i>, aa. 1-3
June 10	<p>Practical Knowledge</p> <p>Lecture: “Synderesis and conscience”</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>DV16</i>, aa. 1-3 • <i>DV17</i>, aa. 1-3