I. FOUNDATIONAL COURSE IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

1. Based on the Church documents concerning Divine Revelation (esp., Dei Filius & Dei Verbum), summarize their principal teachings regarding the following topics: a) the purpose of revelation; b) revelation through creation and through salvation history; c) the intrinsic connection between words and deeds which comprises the economy of historical revelation; d) the interrelation of revelation in creation, in the history of salvation and in the eschaton i.e., what comprises their differences and their intrinsic unity; and e) the definitive nature of the revelation given in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

2. Draw up a comprehensive description of the nature of Divine Revelation and Faith using the documents of the Church (esp., Dei Filius & Dei Verbum) and show how the New Testament verifies this definition. Be sure to make clear the progression of God’s self-revelation in salvation history (e.g., the Old Testament) and its culmination in Christ (cf. Dei Verbum chapter one). Explain the nature of public and private revelation and their interrelation.

3. Using the second chapter of Dei Verbum, draw up a comprehensive definition of Tradition. Explain what Tradition is and how we have access to it. Explain the ways in which the Church sees an intrinsic link between Tradition and Scripture in the transmission of the revelation of the mystery of God in Christ, and how Tradition, Scripture and the Magisterium are interdependent. Explain why the Church does not draw her certainty about everything that has been revealed from Scripture alone. List all the criteria for a Catholic method of interpreting Scripture found in Dei Verbum #12.

4. According to the teaching of the Church (e.g., Dei Filius chapter four and the respective canons, Fides et Ratio chapters one to four), explain the relationship between faith and reason, philosophy and theology. What are some aberrant ways of understanding this relationship (e.g., fideism, traditionalism and semi-rationalism)? Why is historical or supernatural revelation “necessary” for man? What role does reason play in regard to the faith and in theology in general?

II. FOUNDATIONAL COURSE IN SACRED SCRIPTURE

1. Be prepared to provide a working definition of key biblical terms on the List of Biblical Definitions provided in the Foundational Course in Sacred Scripture.

2. Develop an historical overview of the biblical period, including a consideration of Israel within the Ancient Near Eastern world and of Christianity within the Jewish and the Greco-Roman worlds; explain the importance of situating the Bible within the socio-cultural setting of any given period.
3. Give a working definition of “divine inspiration” and discuss various acceptable and four unacceptable explanations of it. Explain what is meant by “biblical inerrancy” and how it is understood in Catholic and Fundamentalist traditions.

4. Define canonicity and identify criteria used to affirm canonical status in each Testament, with examples from individual books; explain the terms “Deutero-canonical”, “Apocrypha” and “Pseudepigrapha” and identify the variations in the canon within Jewish, Catholic and Protestant traditions.

5. Summarize the principal teachings of Providentissimus Deus, Divino Afflante Spiritu, Sancta Mater Ecclesia, Dei Verbum, and The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church; explain the relationship of Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium as presented in Dei Verbum.

6. Describe the principal literary forms commonly found in the Bible, including covenant narrative, genealogy, proverb, oracles of judgment and salvation, lament, call narrative, midrash, myth, parable, miracle story, conflict story, epistle, apocalyptic; discuss the value of understanding literary forms for the interpretation of biblical texts.

7. Give the meaning of the terms “literal sense” and “sensus plenior” as defined in Divino Afflante Spiritu and explain the relationship between the two; trace the development of this understanding in the ancient, medieval and modern periods.

III. FOUNDATIONAL COURSE IN MORAL THEOLOGY

Christian Anthropology

1. Describe how moral theology fits into the overall scope of Catholic theology. Discuss what is meant by a “Christian Moral Anthropology.” What is specifically meant by a “Christian” anthropology and what are the key elements of such an anthropology? Under this purview, how can we answer the questions: “Who is God?” “Who is Man?” “Who is Man in light of God?” How does our understanding of God as Trinity impact our understanding of Christian moral anthropology? In addition, how does the New Law of Grace ushered in by Jesus Christ form our understanding of these anthropological questions?

The Life of Virtue

2. Given our understanding of anthropology and the law of grace, what are the implications for man’s actions in the world? How ought we to live in light of our origin and true end? Define what is meant by “good” and “evil”. How does the Church define “virtues” and what place do they have in the moral life? Define and discuss the meaning and interrelationship of the theological and cardinal virtues.
The History of Moral Theology

3. Give a brief overview of the history of moral theology beginning with the biblical foundations of the moral life presented in the Old Testament, the New Law as summarized in Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, the application of these moral principles as described by the Church Fathers, and the scholastic understanding of moral theology as presented by St. Thomas Aquinas. Lastly, summarize the four sections of Veritatis Splendor, describing the “fundamental truths of Catholic doctrine” which undergird the whole of the Church’s moral teaching.

Contemporary Fundamental Moral Theology

4. Discuss the meaning of the following concepts as they are currently taught by the Church and as they relate to the moral life: conscience, reason, natural law, sin and grace, moral absolutes and moral relativism, human freedom, the fundamental option, and the moral act. What is the Church’s response to the prominence of moral relativism, proportionalism, and utilitarianism popular today? Define the elements of the moral act – object, intention, and circumstances – and their importance for understanding moral actions.

IV. SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

1. Present in summary fashion basic information about the author, date, primary sources, audience, purpose, structure of each gospel and the interrelationship between the synoptic gospels. Explain the implications each of these has on the interpretation of gospel texts. Be prepared to illustrate how each gospel conveys its purpose and develops its particular Christological emphases.

2. Identify and discuss the major theological and spiritual (i.e. Christology, Discipleship, Message of salvation, etc.) themes of the gospel of Mark; trace these themes and how they are developed or adapted in the gospels of Matthew and Luke; explain the value of Mark’s message for one’s own conversion and commitment to a Christian life.

3. Outline the pericopes of the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke, explain their similarities and differences, and identify the relationship of these narratives to the gospels as a whole.

V. THEOLOGY OF CHRIST

1. Explain how the actions and message of Jesus are at the origins of the Christology of the New Testament and of the Church, and how the apostles, enlightened by the experience of Easter, grew in the understanding of the mystery of the Person of Christ. Explain how, from the central events in Christ’s life as related in the Gospels, we reach our awareness of Christ as Son of God, sent by His Father into the world, for us and for our salvation.

2. Summarize the teaching of the Church on Christology as set forth by the Councils of Nicea I,
Ephesus, Chalcedon and Constantinople III, which dealt with the terms “nature” and “person” for Christ as Son of God, made man, the one Lord consubstantial with the Father in his divinity, consubstantial with us in his humanity. Describe how the communicatio idiomatum works in Christology.

3. Explain from International Theological Commission documents on Christology how Christ was conscious of Himself as Son of the Father, and was aware of his mission to reveal the Father, to found the Church and to offer himself as vicarious satisfaction for our sins. Discuss the importance of the fact that Christ possessed true human knowledge and a free human will.

4. Explain the following: a) why the Church has reacted to attempts to spiritualize the resurrection by asserting the bodiliness of Christ’s resurrection; b) how the virginal conception safeguards Christ’s unique divine Sonship; c) how Christ revealed the Father and the Holy Spirit; and d) how and why Christ is the only savior of mankind and the culmination of God’s self-revelation in history (cf. 2000 CDF document Dominus Iesus).

VI. THEOLOGY OF GRACE

1. Identify the major Church documents that deal with original justice, original sin and our justification by grace. Summarize the principal teachings of each document, indicating cases where the Church was responding to a contrary teaching or heresy. Explain created and uncreated grace and how they are related. Discuss the key New Testament texts, referenced by the Magisterial documents, that provide the foundation for the Church’s teachings on grace, sin and redemption, and our sharing in the divine nature.

2. Explain the following: a) how the original happiness of the first human beings came from their unity and harmony with God; b) what it means to say that concupiscence remains even after Baptism; c) what the Church teaches about our inheriting the “sin of Adam”, and about “original sin” in general; and d) what the Church teaches about death and judgment, purgatory, heaven and hell. Refer to the 1979 CDF and 1992 ITC documents on eschatology.

3. Explain the following: a) the relationship between faith, grace and good works (Church teaching on merit); b) how the gifts of the Holy Spirit develop the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity; and c) the connection between original sin and actual sin.

VII. THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

1. Using the Documents of Vatican II, explain the following: a) the mission of the Church & the universal call to holiness; b) the role of the laity in the Church’s mission; c) the eschatological goal of the Church. Explain the concept of communion and how it is the key to understanding what Vatican II says about the Church.

2. Summarize the teaching of the Church on ecclesiology in Lumen Gentium by explaining the following: a) four New Testament images used to explain the nature of the Church; b) what Vatican II means by Christ’s founding the Church and the stages that it highlights for this
purpose; c) what it means to say that the Church of Christ is one complex reality and not two realities; d) how the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church; e) how the elements of truth and sanctification outside the Church have a force impelling them toward Catholic unity; f) why the Church is necessary for salvation.

3. Explain the teaching of Vatican II on episcopal collegiality and papal supremacy in Lumen Gentium. Discuss the various exercises of the Magisterium by the pope and the college of bishops. Explain the Church’s teaching on the infallibility of the extraordinary and the ordinary magisterium. List the levels of magisterial teaching and the response due them by the faithful (cf. CDF documents “Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian” and the “Commentary on the 1989 Profession of Faith”).

VIII. THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENTS

1. Give a comprehensive definition of a sacrament, which distinguishes sacrament from an ordinary sign or symbol. Explain the notions of sacramentum tantum, res et sacramentum and res tantum, offering examples by referring to the sacraments of initiation. What do the notions ex opere operato and ex opere operantis mean regarding the sacraments? Explain the principle lex orandi—lex credendi and discuss how this principle demonstrates the relationship between liturgy and faith.

2. “Thus by baptism men are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ: they die with Him, are buried with Him, and rise with Him” (SC 6). Explain how participation in the sacraments of the Church is a participation in the Paschal Mystery. Discuss the Eucharist as a sacramental sacrificial meal in terms of thanksgiving, memorial and the presence of Christ.

3. Based on Sacrosanctum Concilium and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, explain how the liturgy is “a sacred action surpassing all others” (SC 7) and “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed” (SC 10). Explain the Church’s teachings on the Real Presence, transubstantiation and reservation and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

4. Trace the development of the Church’s understanding and celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, including the relationship of Baptism and Confirmation, the practice of infant baptism, the relationship of First Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the theology and practice of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

5. Explain Church teaching on the difference between the royal priesthood of the baptized and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained (esp. refer to the Documents of Vatican II and Ecclesia de Eucharistia).

6. Explain the Church’s teaching on the sacrament of marriage and how this has developed in history. What are the sacramentum tantum, res et sacramentum and res tantum of the sacrament of marriage? How is the sacrament of matrimony related to the New Covenant established by Christ?