UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS
Saint John Paul II Institute

Fall Semester 2025

JPII 5310 Thomistic Personalism

Dr. John Corrigan

Course description: This course seeks to explicate the philosophical project and method of Polish philosopher Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II (1920-2005) through (a) an explanation of the Thomistic character of his thought and the role of phenomenology in exploring the subjectivity of the person. In addition, the course covers his critique of modern moral philosophy and underscores his distinctive approach to experience and subjectivity. His understanding of freedom and rights, conscience and truth and other themes serve to illustrate how he sought to "place the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas in motion."[1]

Program goals:

⇒ To situate the personalism of Karol Wojtyla in the developments of contemporary philosophy, especially Thomism and Phenomenology
⇒ To explore themes pertaining to the human person such as subjectivity, irreducibility, self-determination, and communion
⇒ To build on *Redeemer of Man* and *Fides et ratio* and to understand conscience in the life of the human person and the relation of truth and freedom
⇒ To fully articulate the vision of the dignity of the human person in community

Chief outcomes – at the end of the course the student should be able

- To state the fundamental principles of Thomistic account of human nature
- To discuss the basic themes of Wojtyla's phenomenological approach to the person such as experience, irreducibility, freedom, and living in truth
- To summarize the philosophies of the person developed by Scheler and Kant and to explain the rationale of Wojtyla's critique and use of them
- To use the phenomenology of the Act to display essential aspects of the human person
- To know the structure and themes of Veritatis splendor time permitting such as: The dialectic of human of freedom, the place of the body in moral action;

[1] Expressions like this are used in Wojtyla: "The Acting Person" trans. Tymieniecka pgs. 3-5 and pgs. 11-15 Similarly Weigle and Buttiglione mention this; George Weigel "Witness to Hope" pgs 143-145. Buttiglione: *Karol Wojtyła: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II* pgs. 57-59

Psychological and sociological vs. cognitive views of conscience; the various aspects of morality of the act: the object, intention, or circumstances; distinguishing debased forms of teleologism such as utilitarianism and proportionalism from an authentic form of teleology.

Course Requirements / Grading

Journal	20%
Discussion board	40%
Paper	40%

Journal

You will be required to create 8 entries for your own personal journal. A journal post should be done, if possible, by Thursday of the week. I will read your entries each week and give you comments/feedback that allows you to build on your ideas over the semester. The journal is a tool for exploration and self-discovery – explore the writings of John Paul II and select a passage, an idea or an incident that appeals to you as significant or meaningful for your life and work. After all, you enrolled in this program because of your admiration and love for Saint John Paul II. Now find items that give this admiration and love some thing concrete and specific for your life, your work, your personal journey. Expectations for your journals are to write at least three paragraphs as follows:

1. Identify the idea or incident, provide a reference to our readings, briefly describe it.
2. Explore its deeper theological or philosophical meaning and historical context
3. Explain how it applies to your work and journey in life.

Discussion board

After completing the week's readings, podcasts or videos, please respond to prompt provide for discussion. Provide a 250-400 word response expressing your informed judgment and opinion about the matter. In addition, please comment on the post of at least two other students. Aim for your response to be constructive and engaging. You may disagree with each other, and challenge each other; but civility must be observed at all times. A post on the discussion board should be done, if possible, by Wednesday of the week.

Paper

The student must write a paper on the theme of the connection between truth and freedom in the thought of St John Paul II/ Karol Wojtyła; it is due last week of class. Various sources such as Veritatis splendor, Person and Act, and various essays, and incorporate any relevant materials from assignments in class; previous class material would be an important source as well; and use appropriate secondary literature. Paper should be 8-10 pages double-spaced, 12-point, 1 inch margins. Use the University of Chicago or Turabian style book.

Books for course

1. Wojtyła, Karol. *Person and Act and Related Essays*. Vol. 1. Of English Critical Editions of the Works of Karol Wojtyl1a/ John Paul II. The Catholic University of America Press, 2021. ISBN: 9780813233666
2. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Pauline Books: Boston, 2006)
3. Wojtyła Karol, *Love and Responsibility*, (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2013)
4. Acosta, Miguel and Adrian J. Reimers. 2016. *Karol Wojtyla's personalist philosophy : understanding Person & act*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press. ISBN: 9-780813228570
5. Frossard, Andre, "*Be Not Afraid!" Pope John Paul II Speaks out on his life, his Beliefs, and his Inspiring Vision for Humanity*, (New York: St. Martins Press, 1984). Used copies available

Available online or blackboard:

John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter, Veritatis splendor*, Publication / United States Catholic Conference;. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998. Or Daughters of St Paul, Boston.

Wojtyla Karol, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, Catholic Thought from Lublin, New York: P. Lang, 1993. 0820414468

Schmitz, Kenneth L. *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993). 0813207800

Academic Honesty

Students are expected and required to conform to the highest standards of academic honesty, truthfulness, and integrity in taking exams. They are expected to hand in their own work and this alone. Plagiarism in the case of a paper will result in a grade of zero. Plagiarism will be understood as presenting the words of another as one's own and without attributing them to their author. Close paraphrasing of another's ideas and formulations without attribution can approach plagiarism. When in doubt, students should always explicitly cite the source of the idea or formulation.

Module 1. August 18–24

Topic: What is the Philosophy of the Person?

Assigned Readings

Josef Pieper, "The Philosophic Act"

Selected passages on philosophy from Aristotle, Karol Wojtyła, Jacques Maritain et al.

Selected passages on the person from Jacques Maritain et al.

Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, chapter 1, §§ 11-22.

Module 2. August 25 – 30

Topic: Philosophy of Nature, Human nature and human dignity

Assigned Readings

Karol Wojtyla, "Human nature as the basis for ethical formation," pp. 95-99

Karol Wojtyla, "The dignity of the human person," pp. 177-180

Karol Wojtyla, "Nature and Perfection," in Ethics Primer, pp. 61-72

Selected passages from William Wallace on nature and the four causes; human nature. With accompanying video lectures.

Module 3. September 1 – 6

Topic: On the Soul and its Powers

Assigned readings

K. Wojtyła, Considerations on the Essence of Man, chaps 2 and 3

Selected readings from P. Emonet, *Greatest Marvel in Nature*

Selected passages from William Wallace on nature and the four causes; human nature. With accompanying video lectures.

Further readings Pieper, Christian Image of Man

Module 4. September 8 – 14

Topic Augustinian quest and Carmelite Way

Assigned readings

Michael Waldstein in *Man and Woman He Created Them*, pp. 23-33; 77-93.

John Paul II, Letter of Augustine of Hippo https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1986/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_26081986_augustinum-hipponensem.html

John Paul II, Letter on The Master of Faith https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/master-in-the-faith-8924

Highly recommended:

Considerations on the Essence of Man, Chapter 5;

Josef Cardinal Ratzinger, "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology"

Module 5. September 15 – 21

Topic. The Modern Project: Machiavelli, Descartes, Hobbes and Hume

Assigned readings

Michael Waldstein in *Man and Woman He Created Them*, pp 34-62.

Karol Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 255-264.

Highly Recommended: Fr Ed Oakes, Pascal as First modern Christian

Recommended: J. Tranzillo (16) *John Paul II on the Vulnerable,* 221-244.

Module 6. September 22 – September 28

Topic Modern Project – Part II Kant, Marx, Nietszche

Assigned readings

Michael Waldstein in *Man and Woman He Created Them*, (18) pp 34-77

Man in the field of responsibility, 27-52.

Love and Responsibility, pp. 3-28.

Module 7. September 29 – October 5

Phenomenology and Personalism

Assigned readings

Michael Waldstein in *Man and Woman He Created Them*, pp 63 -77

Karol Wojtyła, "Thomistic Personalism,"

Karol Wojtyla, On Experience, *Person and Act*, 95-120

Highly Recommended:

Recommended: J. Tranzillo *John Paul II on the Vulnerable,* 221-244

Module 8. October 6 – October 12

Topic Efficacy, freedom and transcendence

Assigned readings

Karol Wojtyła, Person and Act 121-206

Module 9. October 13 – October 19

Topic freedom and transcendence

Assigned readings

Karol Wojtyła, Person and Act, chap 3

Highly Recommended:

Module 10 October 20 – October 26

Topic Fulfillment and truth

Assigned readings

Person and act, c. 4

Module 11. October 27 – November 2

Topic Integration

Assigned readings

Person and act, c. 6

Love and Responsibility chap 3

Module 12. November 3 – November 9

Topic Love as Gift and communion of persons

Assigned readings

Karol Wojtyła, "On Givenness"

Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, On Love and on communion of persons, pp. 57-83; 273-294.

MODULE 13. November 10 – November 16

Topic. Freedom and law

Assigned readings

Veritatis splendor, chapter 2, §§ 28-53; *Person and Act* 250-281; 354-373.

Recommended: Acosta and Reimers, *Karol Wojtyła's Personalist Philosophy* (1), 188-223.

Thanksgiving Break. November 24 – November 30

MODULE 14. December 1 – December 7

Topic On conscience

Assigned readings

JP II, *Veritatis Splendor*, §§51-83; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia-IIae, q. 94;

Highly recommended: International Theological Commission "In Search of a Universal Ethic: Natural Law", 2009; John Paul II, Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, chapter 2 (§§33-38)

December 8 hard deadline all assignments due