

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

While the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy is the newest Faculty in the University, beginning in 2009, its origins can be traced back to the very first universities. Many of the most prestigious and oldest universities in the world were instituted for the purposes of teaching theology and philosophy. Universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Yale continue to teach theology and philosophy today. Catholic universities around the world place a particular emphasis on teaching theology and philosophy because of the strong Catholic commitment to the unity of faith and reason.

The Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, *Ex corde ecclesiae* (From the Heart of the Church) sets the agenda for our new Faculty:

Aided by the specific contributions of philosophy and theology, university scholars will be engaged in a constant effort to determine the relative place and meaning of each of the various disciplines within the context of a vision of the human person and the world that is enlightened by the Gospel, and therefore by a faith in Christ, the Logos, as the centre of creation and of human history.

Both theology and philosophy have a role in providing an integration of knowledge within a context of faith and reason. Theology in particular is inherently interdisciplinary and in constant dialogue with a range of other disciplines.

Both theology and philosophy ask the big questions of life: Where have we come from? What is the purpose of existence? What can we expect when we die? While philosophy draws on the resources of human reason to answer these questions, Catholic theology reflects on the Christian faith tradition, shaped by the Scriptures and central Church teachings. Both philosophy and theology are key parts of the Catholic intellectual tradition, and together these two disciplines provide a rich set of resources for the search for meaning and purpose in life.

Much of the teaching of the Faculty is for programs in other Faculties, particularly Education and Arts and Sciences. However, we do offer various programs in our own right, including a Bachelor of Theology, Master of Arts (Theology) and specialist Graduate Certificates in Catholic education, health and welfare. For those interested in interfaith issues there is a Graduate Certificate in Interfaith Relations and a Certificate in the Study of Islam. We offer also a Master of Practical Ministry. At the graduate level many of our courses are offered online.

Research is a real strength of the Faculty. Many of our theologians and philosophers have strong international reputations in research and publishing and the Faculty has a large number of Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Philosophy research students. The Faculty contains four Centres with a research focus – Centre for Early Christian Studies, Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care, Golding Centre for Women's History, Theology and Spirituality and Asia-Pacific Centre for Interreligious Dialogue. We offer also a Doctor of Practical Ministry which has a major research component.

While people generally do not study theology and philosophy for lucrative careers, the skills learnt in these disciplines are valuable in many settings, particularly the use of critical reasoning and the close reading of text. Theology students can find careers in teaching, chaplaincy work and as a stepping stone to careers in Catholic health and welfare agencies. Students of philosophy can find careers in the public service, in ethics committees and wherever critical and disciplined thinking is required.

We hope that during your study at ACU you have the opportunity to take some of our offerings. It is not uncommon for students to discover a real passion for the questions raised by their theology and philosophy units, and to then find themselves completing majors or even whole degrees from our Faculty. As the Psalmist says, "taste and see the good things of the Lord" (Ps 34:8).