<u>**Course Development and Teaching Guidelines for**</u>
<u>**Theological Explorations (THEO 1)**</u>

<u>Course Overview</u>

This is the first of two courses focused on theology. Students think critically about sources and themes of the Christian tradition and begin to explore religious engagement with society. It is likely that this course will be developed under one course number to provide a degree of common grounding for the second theology course, though courses will vary by instructor. This class also includes a grounding in Benedictine Hallmarks such that students are prepared to meet their Benedictine Engagement (BEN) requirement later. (The first theology class helps prepare students for the requirement but does not itself carry a BEN designation.)

<u>Learning Outcomes</u>

As you are designing your course, please keep in mind that students will need to produce work that will be used to assess their proficiency in the related learning outcomes.

Analyzing Texts 1
Students read or interpret a variety of texts for comprehension, adjusting strategies based on the genre, nature of the text and context of the assignment.

Common Good 1
Students explain the moral dimensions of situations, perspectives, and actions in their lives and recognize that there are competing, yet legitimate, conceptions of what defines the common good.

Religious Engagement 1
Students identify and explain one or more forms of religious engagement with society.

Theological Reasoning 1
Students identify elements of Christian theological sources, which may include scripture, practices, texts, or art forms. Students explain a theological teaching, doctrine, or theme.

<u>Curriculum Guidelines</u>

- Students must complete the Theological Explorations course in the first three semesters
- Theological Explorations cannot contain any prerequisites
- Theological Explorations courses will be capped at 30 students
- Theological Explorations will be taught at the 100 level
- Theological Explorations courses cannot be designated as
    - A Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CSD 1) or A Cultural and Social Difference: Systems (CSD 2) OR
    - A Way of Thinking, OR
    - Writing Foundations, Writing Explorations, or Writing Integrations.

- Theological Explorations cannot carry an engagement designation (e.g., BEN, ARTE, EXP, GLO) (pending Senate approval)

Teaching Guidelines

1) The requirement of the Theology course sequence in the Integrations curriculum emerges out of the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University's unique mission as Catholic Benedictine institutions. While the discipline of Religious Studies calls for a descriptive, non-normative study of religion/s, the discipline of theology occurs within the bounds of a commitment to a particular religious community; its scripture, traditions, and practices; and the willingness to affirm the normativity of its truth and values.

2) In the Theological Explorations course, students are asked to think critically about sources and themes of the Christian tradition.

   a) Christian theology classically has been defined as 'faith seeking understanding,' where faith is the point of departure and return in a reasoned search to understand the contents of that faith better. As such, it is an inquiry into faith, belief, and the religious dimensions of human existence, whether one's own or that of others.

   b) As stated in the beginner Theological Reasoning learning outcome, Christian theological sources, which may include scripture, practices, texts, or art forms, explain a particular theological teaching, doctrine, or theme. Thus, these sources must emerge from and operate within a particular faith community and aid that community in understanding its normative truth claims and values. Although etymologically theology would seem to concern strictly theistic religions, as a reasoned discipline making sense of truth and value, theology can (and does) include non-theistic religions as well.

3) While the language of the common good in the Integrations Curriculum emerges from our mission as Benedictine and Catholic institutions, this goal encourages vigorous academic debate about different ideas of what the common good is, including the varied ways in which the common good has been and might be pursued across time, place, and context. Thus, the learning goal invites instructors and students across the disciplines to question, contest, negotiate, evaluate and apply conceptions of the common good. At the same time as the language for the learning outcome recognizes that there are many different ways to think about the common good, it also emphasizes an element of "commonness" or sociality insofar as it requires students to consider how an individual's decisions affects others in their communities (broadly or narrowly conceived).

   a) In the beginner Common Good learning outcome, which is housed in the Theological Explorations course (THEO 1), students are asked to explain the moral dimensions of situations, perspectives, and actions in their lives and recognize that there are competing, yet legitimate, conceptions of what defines the common good. In the intermediate goal, which is housed in the Cultural and Social Difference: Systems course (CSD 2), students are asked to evaluate different historical or contemporary situations, perspectives, or

actions, giving reasons why some more effectively contribute to the competing conceptions of common good. Finally, in the third goal, which is found in the Write 3 course, students are asked to apply the moral understanding they have gained to articulate and defend some vision of a responsible life and character and to connect these to the common good. <u>As such, the overall objective of the common good learning goal is to help students think about their place/role in communal flourishing.</u>

4) In the Religious Engagement learning goal, religious engagement with society implies how religious persons engage society religiously or how religious beliefs and practices inform persons' social actions. Thus, it is not simply a matter of religious engagement within a particular faith community, but the implications of that engagement for the society [persons also beyond that community].