

CATC FIRST YEAR SEMINAR COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Every freshman will take the First Year Seminar their fall semester of their freshman year. The First Year Seminar is composed of 2/3 shared content and 1/3 specialized content unique to the faculty member and course section. Read below for descriptions of the 1/3 specialized content of the First Year Seminars offered Fall of 2016.

	COURSE DESCRIPTION
CORE 101-1	<p>Biology & Glory of God "How does the biological world declare the glory of God?" is the perennial question for this proposed seminar. This question will be answered in four ways: "It reveals His power", "It reveals His wisdom", "It reveals His love", and "It includes humans made in His image". By exploring these four answers, students will appreciate how living within this biological world reveals aspects of God's nature and therefore contributes to the "good life", living for God's glory in fellowship with Him.</p>
CORE 101-2	<p>Living in God's Creation Humans are unique in creation. We are like the rest of creation in that we are created beings. At the same time we are different from the rest of creation in that we have the image of God as part of our nature. This position places both privileges and responsibilities on humankind regarding the environment in which we live. Sin produces disordered relationships between people and God, between people and each other, and between people and the rest of creation. Cultural, political, economic, and interpersonal problems resulting from human's fallen nature are all played out within the context of our physical environment. The environment is influenced by these problems and at the same time shapes the problems. From Genesis to Revelation God provides guidance on how humans should live in the environment. Our ability to live well in creation hinges upon our understanding our Biblically mandated roles relative to the environment as well as considering the practical reasons for caring for creation. This First Year Seminar will use the lens of a Biblically and theologically informed view of the natural and human influenced environment to expand our consideration of "the good life".</p>
CORE 101-3	<p>Relationship to Creation What is our real place in and relationship to His Creation? Beyond core assignments, the distinctive theme for this section comes through supplemental readings of diverse types to give focus on the Lord's great creative genius in this earthly home.</p> <p>What is it that thrills our hearts in the presence of mountains, beaches, forests, deserts, streams, oceans, and among the grand variety of living things? What can Scripture with its theological history, the testimony of scientific exploration, and the constant interaction of humanity with all Creation mean to us and our lifestyles? What is the current state of God's good Creation in relationship to the industry and aspirations of His image bearers?</p> <p>Join us if you love the wonders of the outdoors, and especially if life and earth science are realms that stimulate your imagination. Science can be very sterile or intimidating if considered without application to our practical and aesthetic sensitivities. Living on this planet without a proper appreciation for how it functions in God's design is unwise. The seminar will bring together many aspects of living and study to help us realize what the Creator considers the "good life".</p>
CORE 101-4	<p>Where did we come from? Our question leads us to explore the influence of past events in the history of the cosmos, Earth and life on the human body and mind. Our two primary books are <i>God's Universe</i> by Owen Gingerich and <i>The Universe Within: Discovering the Common History of Rocks, Planets and People</i>, by Neil Shubin. Gingerich, a Harvard University astronomer and Christian, explains how the mainstream scientific enterprise and subsequent interpretations complement Christian understandings of divine action and the biblical accounts of origins. Shubin, a University of Chicago paleobiologist, writes from a mainstream scientific perspective and perceptively interprets the world we know, including our bodies, in the context of discoveries from astronomy, geology and paleobiology. Shubin asks questions like, "Where did the elements in our bodies come from?" "Why is there so much liquid</p>

	<p>water on Earth and not on other planets?” “Why do we live by the day-night clock in our bodies?” Both books introduce readers to the scientists, men and women from many different cultures, who were responsible for breakthroughs in knowledge of the history of the cosmos and life. Additional articles further elaborate concepts of divine action, the methods, authority and purviews of science and theology as ways of knowing, and historical and contemporary examples of scientific discovery.</p>
CORE 101-5	<p>Living with Rhythm The good life is filled with rhythm. We find rhythm in human artistic expression (music, film, dance), in persuasive communication (public voice, relationship coordination) and life balance (spiritual disciplines). If we lack rhythm, then we probably are lacking some of the joy and fulfillment available to us through our personal expressions, our relationships, or our faith in Christ. To explore rhythm, we will enjoy reading about, and experiencing, “rhythm and blues” music, film editing, persuasive strategy, and various spiritual disciplines.</p>
CORE 101-6, 7	<p>The Good Life in Media Age? In this interdisciplinary first-year seminar, students will be introduced to a wide variety of classical, Christian, and liberal arts authors and perspectives. Additionally, students will be introduced to a new interdisciplinary social science calling itself Media Ecology, which studies the effects of media and technologies on the human biological, social, and cultural environment. Using this new tool of social science will offer students fresh perspectives and interpretations on some of the enduring questions that humanity has been asking itself for centuries.</p>
CORE 101-8	<p>Good Life & Communication The word "communication" comes from the Latin root <i>communis</i>, or common. It represents a very old discipline that dates from ancient speakers and philosophers to the new technologies and innovators that are changing our world. Communication shapes our lives by developing a common or shared understanding of who we are, what we believe, and what is our place in this world. It studies relationships and messages across interpersonal, small group, organizational, and public contexts. It first teaches us how our perceptions of self and others formulate identity. It teaches us how to develop and sustain relationships with others as we build common understanding through encoding and decoding symbolic behavior (verbal, nonverbal, and visual) that creates meaning. It teaches us what is appropriate (i.e., the rules of interaction management) as well as what is effective (i.e., how to achieve our relational goals). This understanding builds community between people, bridging the differences between individuals and cultures as we listen to their voices. Ultimately, communication leads us to empower the voices of others and in the process, learn how to sustain and share the Good Life.</p>
CORE 101-9	<p>Can War Be Just? The perennial question organizing this FYS will be "Can war be just?" This question asks students to press to the very center of what it means to live well, both as individuals and together within political communities since every political community claims the right (and not just the power) to use lethal violence in defense of its interests and (ostensibly) its citizens. We will ask what it could mean for war to be just and whether we as Christians can ever be just warriors or if we should abjure "the sword."</p>
CORE 101-10	<p>Accounting for Beauty As Fyodor Dostoevsky once remarked, “Beauty will save the world.” What could he have meant by this enigmatic claim? This seminar speaks to such perennial questions as: “What is beauty?” “What does beauty tell us about reality?” and “What, if anything, is it there for?” Recognizing the role that beauty plays in the good life, we’ll explore its centrality in the arts, its surprising role in the sciences, its relationship with truth and goodness in philosophy, its revelatory role in theology, and beauty as a means of grace in our day-to-day life. This venture will involve reading texts about beauty but also beautiful texts; in this seminar, you will encounter beauty. It provides, we’ll discover, a window onto a reality that is as transforming as it is unmistakable. Beauty holds the power to transform the individual and the potential to remake the church as a compelling alternative to a culture that has sold out to the power of politics, finance, and celebrity. Ultimately, the beauty that will save the world is the (shocking) beauty of the cross; day-to-day, it is the beauty of a life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.</p>

CORE 101-11	<p>What is an Image?</p> <p>The question "What is an Image?" is about a lot more than art. Idolatrous images are a primary obstacle between God and his beloved people (2 Kings 21). On the other hand, the Israelites were commanded to make images as well (Exodus 25:18). We ourselves, furthermore, are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27). Does this constitute a static possession or a dynamic destiny (I Cor. 15:49)? If Christ is himself the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), are images of Jesus acceptable? What about images of God the Father or God the Holy Spirit (Deut. 4:15)? In the 21st century, we are saturated by images like never before – and they are not all holy. As Christians, should we resist these images or embrace them? Should we recover the best images from Christian history, or should we make new ones?</p>
CORE 101-12	<p>Culture & the Good Life</p> <p>How do our cultures shape our understanding of The Good Life? The ways we experience and define The Good Life (Buen Vivir, eudemonia, magandang buhay) are never just products of an individual mind or a solitary encounter with God and scripture. They are always, and necessarily, produced and experienced in a socio-cultural context. This First Year Seminar will engage in a critical, but positive, understanding of the ways people in various cultural contexts think about “The Good Life,” relating these ideas to scripture, tradition and the U.S. context. For us as much as anyone who has ever lived, our communities shape with us our ideas and practices that allow us to make such formulations. Throughout this seminar, and particularly in the final four weeks of the Instructor’s Choice material, we will draw on sociocultural anthropology and related disciplines to encourage a culturally engaged and socially particular interrogation of what it means to live The Good Life.</p>
CORE 101-13	<p>The Suburban Good Life</p> <p>In the United States, the answer to the question “what is the good life?” is often related to images and experiences of suburban single-family homes as well as happy suburban families. This seminar will address the ways – including social forces, historical events, and political actions - in which this suburban answer developed in the United States. Additionally, we will consider how Christians might respond to the good life being placed in a particular geographic setting that critics argue promotes private space, individualism, homogeneity, and consumerism.</p>
CORE 101-14, 15	<p>Who Do I Want To Be?</p> <p>How can we live robust, flourishing, happy lives? Ancient Greek philosophers and Christian faithful agree that cultivating virtues and avoiding vices is essential for happiness. Virtues are acquired habits of excellence in areas of human life that are important and challenging, such as gaining wisdom and understanding, dispensing justice, loving your neighbor, and contributing to the good society. Virtues such as practical wisdom, humility, generosity, compassion, self-control, and love help us to achieve these important goods. Insofar as virtues are taking up permanent residence in us, we are being conformed to Christ-likeness.</p> <p>Christians are also called to avoid or conquer vicious traits, such as pride, anger, greed, that diminish us as persons and are counterproductive to our flourishing. Indeed, your character, who you are in your innermost being, is a unique blend of good and bad character traits. The process of sanctification whereby we are transformed into new creatures in Christ, requires that we cultivate virtues. Indeed, the apostle Peter says, “make every effort to add to your faith virtue” (II Pet. 1:5). Why? So that we may be conformed to the divine image. This class will explore the nature of virtues and vices: how to cultivate the former and avoid the latter.</p>
CORE 101-16	<p>Cosmology and the Good Life</p> <p>Students will explore the question “How is cosmology connected to the good life?” in this section. Historical, theological, scientific, philosophy of social science and cultural criticism readings will be used to explore how all cosmologies are either explicitly or implicitly intertwined with a conception of the good life. Students will start by investigating traditional Chinese, Japanese and Hindu cosmologies and the form of the good life these cosmologies presuppose. Next, they will look at how astronomers learn about the cosmos and learn about contemporary scientific cosmology. Students will then be in a position to explore what vision of the good life is intertwined with contemporary scientific cosmology in American society. Finally, drawing on the entire semester</p>

	students will explore whether there is an alternative to the contemporary American/scientific cosmology default conception of the good life.
CORE 101-17	<p>Studying the Physical Universe</p> <p>Students in this section will investigate the question “why is understanding the physical universe essential to the good life?” Readings will introduce students to questions and perspectives that examine the relationship between the physical universe and the good life, including investigating what areas of the human experience science can and cannot address. Next, students will read and discuss differences between observation and experimentation and how these practices shape the experience of being human and pursuing a good life. Finally, the last week of the course will guide students through forming an integrated, holistic perspective of the good life that gives adequate and relevance place for the physical universe.</p>
CORE 101-18	<p>Neuroscience & Faith</p> <p>Recent research in neurobiology has been reported in newsstand magazines and popular books, and at times, this research seems to indicate that we are nothing but our neural connections. This research documents connections between brain function and mental health, personality, emotions, and relationships, among other things. How does neurobiology, though, intersect with our Christian faith? Is research in neurobiology explaining faith away? Can someone be a committed Christian and embrace scientific discoveries in brain research? Is it possible that spiritual disciplines, such as meditation, prayer, and worship have an effect upon the neural structures in our brain? In addition to examining texts from authors such as Augustine, Wright, and Endo, students in this First Year Seminar will examine correlations between neurobiology and spiritual formation for the purpose of embracing the breadth of liberal arts learning, worshipping the Creator and Author of all things, and learning about the interconnectedness between our neurobiology and spiritual practices.</p>
CORE 101-19	<p>Spiritual Practices</p> <p>When thinking about the good life, people today are inclined to first think about what possessions are needed in order to have such a life. We have been trained to think that we are what we have or what we consume. However, we get a much different answer from the ancient world. To paraphrase Aristotle, "We are what we repeatedly do." The good life, then, is more determined by our habits than by what we possess. The Christian tradition acknowledges this emphasis on habit and habit formation and also emphasizes the importance of the heart: "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it" (Proverbs 4:23).</p> <p>The selected theme builds on the overall topic of the good life and Christian discipleship. Specifically, we will survey “How do Christian spiritual practices contribute to the good life?” We will explore how Christians have understood the development of virtues and the disciplines that promote them as vital to the good and full life. Accordingly, students will be introduced to several classic Christian spiritual disciplines that promote habits for flourishing.</p>
CORE 101-20	<p>Diversity & Community</p> <p>Our course will study human flourishing in the context of community: “In what ways is human flourishing defined by and rooted in community?” “How can we flourish given the challenges and realities of our differences?” Individual and group identities are often based upon the intersection of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic resources, and race. What the good life entails and who may pursue it are profoundly influenced by a sense of the differences between individuals. Men and women in other historical and cultural contexts often defined the good life in strikingly different ways—particularly in their emphasis on the centrality of community to human flourishing. In this seminar, students will examine the question of living well in diverse communities through a series of case studies on cross-cultural encounters in early North America. Topics include American Beginnings: Columbus and the Taino, After the Mayflower: Pilgrims and the Wampanoag, Salem Divided: War and Witchcraft in a New England Community, and Carolina Risings: Bondage, Freedom, and Revolt in Stono and Charleston. In doing so, they will engage with course materials that draw upon the insights of several disciplines including history, anthropology, theology, and environmental studies.</p>

CORE 101-21	<p>Who Am I? The perennial question, <i>Who Am I?</i> will be approached from an identity development perspective. This draws on research and writing from fields like developmental psychology, family systems theory, theology, and community art to understand identity development. A major value in answering this question will be to consider development in context. Thus, how the individual interacts with various outside factors must be considered. The course will include readings and discussion on race, gender, culture, family dynamics, and membership in community.</p>
CORE 101-22	<p>Justice, Mercy & Good Life The question, "What is the Good Life?", is organized around Micah 6:8, "He has told you what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God." This seminar will ask: How are acts of justice, compassion, and humility an essential part of our journey of faith, i.e., the Good Life? It is my goal for the course to cultivate in students the ability to think and actively engage in the seeking of justice and compassion while serving God's Kingdom with humility.</p> <p>Students will explore readings from various disciplines as they relate to justice seeking, shalom, and ethics, e.g., political scientists, theologians, philosophers and psychologists. Students will also explore their own developmental stories of family and community as influential in their ability to act in just, compassionate, and humble ways. Delving deeper into the Micah 6:8 call requires students to grow intellectually (with regard to understanding issues of justice and injustice), emotionally (as we explore compassion rather than sentimentalizing the poor), and spiritually (humility as formed by the Holy Spirit). Students will explore how advocacy for justice is both a spiritual discipline and a vocational vision.</p>
CORE 101-23	<p>What is Justice? What does it mean for a society to be just? And how should we respond to injustice? This section of the First Year Seminar will take up such questions as we consider what it means to live "the good life" with and for others. Beginning with Isaiah's exhortation to "seek justice," we will explore different ways that writers and artists have understood the concept, and we will consider case studies from South Africa and the United States that illustrate what (in)justice looks like in practice. Guides on our journey together will include Plato, Augustine, Shakespeare, Weil, King, Tutu, Krog, and many others.</p>
CORE 101-24	<p>The Value of Creativity What is creativity? This course will consider the nature of creativity by exploring the following questions through readings, discussions, writing assignments, experiential learning, and related projects. How does the current interest in creativity compare with past views of creativity? Do beliefs about creativity influence one's creativity? How have educational experiences impaired or invigorated creativity? How do various disciplines view creativity, & what can be learned from this? How do our spiritual practices affirm or challenge our notion of creativity? How do our views of creativity influence our role in our various communities? How does our view and definition of vocation invite or ignore cultivating various forms of creativity in our lives?</p>
CORE 101-25	<p>Creativity & the Good Life What does it mean to be a creative human being? Students will reflect on how being made in the Image of God imbues us with creative capacities, allowing us to participate in the process of making all sorts of things, immaterial and material. In a real sense, what we choose to create will direct our energies toward the kind of life that we will live. Some of the corollary concerns that this seminar will examine are as follows. Is creativity a gift given only to some and not to others? Does it need to be cultivated, and if so, how? Are there risks involved in exercising creative potential? In what ways is our potential as humans tethered to our embracing of creative capacities? What is a biblical foundation for creative expression? This seminar will provide both a conceptual and practical opportunity for students to define and clarify personal creativity.</p>
CORE 101-26	<p>What is an Individual? The perennial question—What does it mean to be an individual?—provides students the opportunity to consider how beliefs, assumptions, and narratives concerning personhood and identity influence our understanding of "the good life." Key questions will be based on an understanding of the term</p>

	individual as "indivisible," or part of a larger whole, as well as "distinct from others." Readings will consider how philosophers, theologians, writers, and artists have thought about individuality in terms of embodiment, the shaping power of culture, and the rise of humanitarian movements that emphasize our sympathetic attachments to both local and global communities.
CORE 101-27	<p>How Do We Help the Poor?</p> <p>"How best can we do good for the poor?" From a Christian point of view, we are more like God and also more truly human when we give rather than receive (Acts 20:35), when we are generous (2 Cor 9:7), and when we consider others before ourselves (Phil 2:3). Showing love and fulfilling our duties to others are essential aspects of the Good Life. As Jesus said, we will always have the poor with us (Mark 14:7; Matt 26:11), and it is fundamental to Jesus' mission to bring good news to the poor (e.g. Matt 11:5; 19:21; Luke 4:8; 14:13; 18:22; 19:8). Therefore, one way to practice the Good Life is to care for the poor. Yet, while this important value is simple at its core, it is also complex to put into practice. We must start with love for God and neighbor and a spirit of grateful obedience to God. Yet, to answer the question, "How best can we do good for the poor?" (cf. Mark 14:7), we must consider many issues related to people's individual needs and how societies function on multiple levels, informed by Scripture and also by all of the humanities and social sciences that give insight into the human condition.</p>
CORE 101-28	<p>What is Love?</p> <p>This seminar will take up the particular enduring question, "What is love?" We will examine various forms of love, including: romantic love, familial love, friendship, love of neighbor, God's love for us and our love for God. This examination will be grounded in the biblical affirmation that "God is Love" and a biblical and theological account of God's love for humanity. This perennial question "What is Love?" will complement the theme of the first year seminar "What is the good life?" by encouraging students to consider how love directed outside of oneself toward a friend, a spouse, a child, a neighbor, and God is essential to the "good life" – a life in which a person, by God's grace and call, is turned away from sinful self-preoccupation to love for others. The main text unique to this seminar will be C.S. Lewis's classic book, <i>The Four Loves</i>.</p>
CORE 101-29	<p>Who is God?</p> <p>"Who Is God?" is a foundational question for human existence, for only when we rightly know God can we rightly know ourselves and God's creation. Scripture reveals many names for God, but in the New Testament, "Father" takes pride of place. This class explores the Old and New Testaments as well as church history and theology to understand what Christians mean when we call God "Father." We then explore familial dimensions of the story of salvation: God's partnering with a mother, Mary, to bring his Son, and Christians' identity as sons and daughters of God. This FYS invites you to grasp in a deeper way the character of God who is our Father.</p>
CORE 101-30	<p>Christian Community</p> <p>This seminar introduces students to the Christian Liberal arts by engaging in enduring questions in a theologically informed way. Essential biblical and theological content will ground the investigation of enduring questions, the liberal arts, vocation, and character formation. The seminar will begin by investigating the perennial liberal arts question, "What is the good life?" This seminar will then engage the particular enduring question, "How can Christian community exhibit the character of Christ?" We will examine the narrative character of the Christian community, the competing narratives of Church and the world, and end with the practical aspects of Church and social engagement. This examination will be grounded in the biblical affirmation that Christians are called to exhibit the character of Christ and a biblical and theological account of Jesus's life and ministry. We will consider seriously the reality that human beings are formed by the narratives we encounter and in which we enter. By entering the narrative of God in Jesus, students will explore how the Christian Church differs in both practice and telos from the dominant secular paradigms. In doing so, we will address the narrative character of communities, the Incarnation, moral authority of Scripture, the moral limits of a secular polity, virtue ethics, and the Church and social polity.</p>
CORE 101-31	<p>What is matter?</p> <p>What is matter? More specifically, how does our understanding of matter (i.e. the "stuff" of the physical world) shape our vision of the Good Life and contribute to its pursuit? As chemists we will focus particularly on how our mastery of atomic and molecular theory has enabled a reshaping of</p>

	<p>our modern ideals of the Good Life. Humans have always wrapped their understanding of the natural world into their bigger visions of life, so in the first week we explore some history of thought regarding the nature of matter and how those alternate visions impacted other areas of culture. In the second week we read a detailed case study of one scientific discovery that helped us arrive at our modern understanding of matter—the dispelling of the phlogiston myth. This will help students appreciate how science is done and how entrenched ideas of the world can be hard to break. In the final two weeks we use Andy Crouch’s work on culture-making as a backdrop to discussions of how modern visions of the Good Life have been shaped by the capabilities and creations of chemistry. We will examine two case studies from modern society and science: DNA technology and plastics.</p>
<p>CORE 101-32, 33</p>	<p>Sexuality & Identity “What is the Good Life?: The Role of Sexuality and Relationality” Increasingly, sexuality is considered the “master dimension” that defines and establishes the foundation or core of human identity. Confusing messages abound in our culture about our sexual identities. Embedded in this cultural shift are disjointed and under examined understandings of the nature of sexuality. Our focus question will be “How do our sexuality and relationality shape human identity and personhood, and hence shape our experience of the good life?” In answering this question, we will address two important focal topics: First, we will attempt to step back and ask how we can we begin to understand sexuality and relationality from a Christian perspective, and, on that basis, understand the proper role of sexuality in shaping and conditioning human identity and affecting our understanding of the good life. Second, we will look at interdisciplinary perspectives in understanding sexuality, with a primary focus on the social and natural sciences, to explore how these perspectives enhance and challenge a Christian perspective on these topics, and how a Christian perspective might shape our understanding of social and natural scientific perspectives on these topics.</p>
<p>CORE 101-34, 35</p>	<p>Modern American Families “What is the ideal modern American family?” This course explores how American families have changed over time and how those changes have influenced our understanding of “the good life.” When and why did American men and women shift from courtship to dating? What have been the changes to men and women’s roles in home and society? How and why did the ideal American childhood move from a useful childhood to a more protected childhood free from work? How did the rise of the middle class and mass media contribute to increasingly controversial debates about gender roles, reproduction, parenting, dating, feminism, and sexuality? We will consider how the politicized public debate about gender and family was at the heart of the 20th-century culture wars while also shaping our own current assumptions about love, family, dating, sex, marriage, and more. As students learn the history of these debates, they will be prompted to grapple with their experiences and expectations related to the family and the good life.</p>