DRAFT

1. Date of Application: March 27th, 2012
2. Name, Dept of Proposer: W. Harter, Philosophy
3. Name of Dept/Program housing course: Philosophy
4. Name of Chair/PD: W. Harter
5. How often is the course taught: yearly
6. Course Prerequisites: none
7. Unit value of course: 1
8. Normal Class Size: 25
9. Number of sections expected Fall 2012: 1
10. Number of sections expected Spring 2013: 0
11. Is the course appropriate for first-year students: Yes
12. Relevant Learning Goal(s): Theological Understanding
13. Chair will oversee submission of student work: Yes
14. Chair will oversee instructor participation in norming/asst: Yes

15. Teaching:
    Philosophy 130 introduces students to ethical science as it developed within
    the philosophical tradition descending from Plato and Aristotle, and through
    contributions by Catholic theologians in the patristic to late medieval period. Works
    in sacra doctrina are represented in the course by the writings of St. Thomas
    Aquinas, and which require students to become familiar with hermeneutical
    principles presupposed by Biblical literacy of the kind that resulted in his “four
    senses of Scripture”. Selected Biblical texts provide focus for the developing ethical
    theory, listed in the schedule of required readings.

    Ethics is concerned with the practical problem of cultivating human virtue,
    and with establishing a political order conducive to virtue; sacra doctrina, on the
    other hand, is concerned primarily with understanding First Truth, God, and only
    indirectly with the problem of human virtue. Phil 130 therefore engages students in
    a science of morals that emerged in the West when the Greek philosophical tradition
    was enlisted as ancilla theologiae for understanding more perfectly the revelation of
    God in the person of Jesus Christ. The discipline is “mixed”, a study wherein
    theological doctrine aids moral philosophy to achieve its own proper end.

16. Learning:
    This course is taught in the mode of seminar; each day each student is
    expected to be ready to summarize and refine a discussion beginning in the texts,
    but developing through shared inquiry with the class. In addition the students singly
    engage the instructor at midterm, which is an opportunity for the instructor and
    student to acquire a more nuanced appreciation of the actual progress or
    impediments to progress in the understanding of each student. Students further
    demonstrate their grasp of the development of this understanding by one or more
    formal written assignment (a paper or papers).
Learning Outcome 1) Demonstrate an understanding of one or more aspects of Christian tradition and/or another religious tradition or traditions, acquired through focused study in a sub-field of theology or religious studies.

The 'subfield of theology' that Phil 130 is concerned with is known as "Foundational Theology." (Sometimes called “Fundamental Theology”, the two terms signifying divergent schools within the Thomistic tradition, and which, when providing explanatory principles for the science of Ethics, makes possible what is sometimes called “Christian philosophy” or “moral philosophy adequately taken”)

This subfield is part of the mainstream of the Catholic intellectual tradition. The course is, in general, concerned with providing philosophical principles for engaging moral doctrine as it developed in the West, i.e., in the natural law tradition of ancient Greece which received from theologians in the medieval schools a greater precision, but more importantly, a radical transformation under the light of Christian faith, and now capable of bringing forth a truly new world: the “modern world”.

Learning Outcome 2) Demonstrate an ability to explore religious questions from a believer’s point of reference and from the critical perspective of the academy.

Among other things, this course investigates the developing understanding of the relationship between faith and reason in the theological and philosophical traditions that came to define what is meant by Western Civilization, a synthesis of two wisdoms accomplished to such high degree in the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas that to this day his thought stands forth as a most clear, enduring expression of Western civilization in its theoretical and practical principles. The course also engages selected texts from the Bible and Greek thought that were fundamental to this development. In terms of the learning outcomes for Theological Understanding, our investigations of “faith” present the perspective of the “believer,” while our investigation of “philosophical reason” provides “the critical perspective of the academy” (literally, during the latter part of the class, through writings from the historical era wherein the University (the academy proper in contemporary usage) first comes into existence as the intellectual achievement and secular project of Christendom, and which provides fertile ground for great advances in the science of faith).