
ESSAY

Creation

The essay is designed so that the student can have the opportunity to explore one of the issues of the course in an in-depth manner before encountering the broader material of the course. Students are thus expected to develop and write the essay during the first month of the course. It is due on November 20.

The student should select a topic of his choice related to the theology of creation and give an overview and assessment of contemporary treatments. The topic should be treated as if it were a presentation to a parish adult group on some particular aspect of contemporary interest in the theology of creation. It should (1) summarize the issue at hand and discuss its contemporary relevance, (2) give an overview of how the topic has been treated in the tradition and give a broad presentation of contemporary approaches, (3) give and assess any official magisterial teaching on the topic, (4) provide a critical assessment of the issue with recommendations of how contemporary Roman Catholics should approach the issue. The essay will be evaluated based on (a) clarity of presentation reflecting a good understanding of the issue, with good style and grammar, (b) accuracy in the treatment of traditional and contemporary sources, (c) nuanced and relevant assessment of the magisterial teachings, and (d) evidence of clear assessment the issue and the contemporary response.

Some possible topics: Christian assessment of modern cosmologies, Creatio ex nihilo, Material reality in Catholic perspective, Human nature in Catholic perspective, Theology of evil, Theology and evolution, Theology and New Age cosmologies, Theology and Quantum Physics, Process Theology, The Theology of Teilhard de Chardin, Assessment of Young Earth Creationism, Assessment of Intelligent Design, Theology and biological approaches to the human person, Contemporary relevance of angels and other spirits, Theology and contemporary mind-body dualisms.

Step 1: Build a bibliography. Consult recent articles in recent theological dictionaries and encyclopedias to determine the more significant thinkers and works on the topic. These overview sources will lead to the most relevant books and articles on the topic, which can then be collected and carefully read. Find any official magisterial teaching on the topic.

Step 2: Research. Carefully read at least three different books or articles on the topic. These should be Christian treatments, but can come from any denominational perspective. At least one should give a Roman Catholic account.

Step 3: Write.

Step 4: Reread the work for accuracy, grammar, style, and its ability to sustain the interest of the reader.

Throughout this process it would be helpful to present the work in progress to other students in the course and to discuss the relevant issues. It would be particularly useful for students to ask the others in the course to read and comment on their nearly completed work such that the final product can take into account these comments and any questions that arise.