

THE SCSS M.TH. PROGRAM IN CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

Catholic social teaching and the body of thought growing up from it is perhaps the Catholic Church's best-kept secret. Even in most Catholic universities today Catholic social thought is given little attention, and relatively few scholars and professionals are well-versed in it and build their work in their fields with reference to it. This is even though the modern social teaching of the Church contains a well-developed set of moral principles relating to socio-politico-economic life dating back to the late nineteenth century, with its roots in the Gospel. The Society of Catholic Social Scientists' (SCSS) Master of Theology (M.Th.) program in Catholic Social Thought aims to provide graduate training in this tradition in a manner that puts the social science disciplines into a distinctly Catholic framework—and in a way that fits the student's schedule and life situation. The instruction is provided by Catholic scholars faithful to the magisterium of the Church. When students enroll in the Program, they actually enroll in the Graduate Theological Foundation (GTF), which gives the academic credit and eventual degree. The Program is independently administered by the SCSS in partnership with the GTF. Actually, the SCSS is a kind of enabling organization that matches prospective students with scholar-tutors from among its membership who contract with the students to direct them in their degree studies. The SCSS oversees the program and insures that basic requirements are met. The M.Th. program is part of the SCSS's apostolate of resuming the building of the "true Catholic social science" that Pope Pius XI called for in the famous social encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), which was interrupted or ignored for many years after the mid-1960's.

WHO THIS PROGRAM IS GEARED FOR

The SCSS's M.Th. Program in Catholic Social Thought should be of particular interest to students planning to go on for a doctorate in one of the social science disciplines or moral theology, clergy and religious, individuals working in Catholic social service agencies or diocesan offices dealing with social questions, and anyone wanting to gain a deeper understanding of the authentic social teaching of the Church. The Program is open to students regardless of sex, race, color, ethnic or nationality group, or religious profession (though non-Catholic students must understand that the Program is a distinctly Catholic one, which accepts the teaching of the Catholic Church's magisterium and emphasizes that teaching as the truth).

WHAT IS THE SOCIETY OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (SCSS)?

The purpose of the SCSS is to bring Catholic scholars, professors, teachers, researchers, practitioners, writers, and others in the social sciences and related disciplines into association to produce objective knowledge and analysis about political, social, and economic life that can assist the Catholic Church in fulfilling her various apostolic efforts, and which can bring the Church's social and other teaching and the Natural Law to bear on addressing the challenges and problems of modern culture. The Society seeks to promote scholarly endeavors and efforts and approaches in applied fields that are oriented to getting Catholic social teaching better known and helping to rebuild culture according to its principles. It also seeks to provide opportunities for fellowship and exchange of scholarship and professional ideas among its members.

WHAT IS THE GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION?

Founded in 1962 and headquartered in Sarasota, Florida, the Graduate Theological Foundation (GTF) is unique in its consultative relationship with international institutions and organizations (such as the SCSS) that provide educational opportunities to students in their pursuit of graduate degrees.

The Graduate Theological Foundation's mission is to foster and facilitate a personally tailored postgraduate education for professionals in the cognate fields of ministry – faith communities (Christian, Jewish, Islamic), education, health care, counseling, mediation, spirituality, sacred music, administration and media. The Foundation has, from its inception, chosen to define ministry both within specific faith communities and within the broader society in terms of those professionals involved in human social services in which the practitioner is self-reflectively aware of the nurturing quality of that activity. Individuals who define their professional activity as being of service to the improvement and nurture of society and the world community, including such fields as education, pastoral assignments, chaplaincy, mediation, management, media services, health care and counseling, are recognized by the Foundation as being in ministry. For purposes of admission into the M.Th. program, the Foundation also counts undergraduate coursework toward ministry.

The Graduate Theological Foundation bases its academic integrity on its affiliations with Oxford University and the Centro Pro Unione in Rome, and has chosen from its inception in 1962 not to formally associate with any government agency for the validation of its educational agenda or programs. The Foundation is a member of the Association of American Colleges and Universities and an institutional member of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education. The Foundation enjoys formal consultative and programmatic relationships with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in the Vatican, with the Church of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and with Oxford University's International Programmes and Department For Continuing Education.

Alumni of the GTF are affiliated with 96 educational institutions in 26 U.S. states and 20 educational institutions in 10 foreign countries. Among these institutions are: Franciscan University of Steubenville, Holy Apostles College and Seminary, Immaculate Conception Seminary, Johns Hopkins University, Madonna University, St. John's University (NY), Seton Hall University, University of Kentucky, University of Notre Dame, University of Pennsylvania, University of Utah, and Virginia Commonwealth University. Its alumni include the Dean of St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, an associate dean of the University of Notre Dame, and a vice president of Franciscan University of Steubenville.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The SCSS's M.Th. Program in Catholic Social Thought is not the typical classroom-based academic program. It is carried out either by means of face-to-face tutorials, as utilized abundantly in medieval education and at such places as Oxford today, or online. In either case, the student is working under just one scholar-tutor in a chosen field in a mentoring arrangement. The degree can be earned, when working under most of the scholar-tutors, in 3 consecutive trimesters (each calendar year is divided into 3 trimesters: Sept.-Dec., Jan.-April, May-Aug.). Most students should plan to begin in the Sept.-Dec. Trimester. The first trimester focuses on general studies in Catholic social teaching/thought. The first third of the trimester typically involves study of the major social encyclicals, the second third *The Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church* and other Church documents, and the final third a survey of the work of major Catholic social thinkers in different disciplines. The second trimester features intensive study in the social science discipline of the student's choice, which aims to put that discipline into a distinctively Catholic framework and focuses on Catholic approaches to it. Individual scholar-tutors have much leeway in developing this part of the program according to their expertise. This trimester is also divided into thirds according to three major themes or topics that will be focused on. The third and final trimester exclusively involves the writing of a master's thesis of a minimum of 75 pages. The scholar-tutor must approve the student's topic prior to the start of the thesis trimester. Besides the scholar-tutor that the student has been working

under, the Director of the SCSS M.Th. Program assigns another scholar to be a second reader. Both have to approve the final version of the thesis, and agree on a grade, for the thesis requirement to be met. Thus, full-time students can earn the M.Th. in one calendar year, assuming that the thesis is approved at the end of the third trimester.

Students will follow a syllabus of readings drawn up by their scholar-tutor. If doing the program by tutorial, they will ordinarily meet with the scholar-tutor once or twice per week during the trimester perhaps with other students the scholar-tutor is directing at their same stage in the program. Students doing the program online will be required to submit assignments by the dates set out by the scholar-tutor and can email any questions they have. Students in the online program should be prepared for periodic phone discussions, at the student's expense, with the scholar-tutor if the latter requires this. The scholar-tutors set their own policies and sanctions for missed meetings or late assignments. *It is expected that graduate students seeking a program such as this one will have such a level of interest and intensity that this would not be a problem, however.*

Students can also enroll part-time in the M.Th. Program. They can stretch the first and second trimesters into two trimesters for each and take up to three trimesters to complete the thesis. The scholar-tutor adjusts the program of the first two trimesters accordingly for a part-time student.

Although students generally do the full M.Th. Program under one scholar-tutor, in some cases they would have two different ones: one for the first trimester for the general studies in Catholic social teaching/thought and another for the trimester of studies in the student's discipline. Both scholar-tutors would be the readers for the student's thesis and would have to jointly approve it.

GRADING AND SATISFACTORY PROGRESS THROUGH THE PROGRAM

The Program does not utilize courses in the traditional sense, although each fourth of the first two trimesters with their thematic/topical focus are the equivalent of courses. Each fourth counts as 3 credits, for a total of 24 for these two trimesters. The thesis is taken after the coursework is finished. It counts for 6 credits. The M.Th. program overall, then, requires the completion of 30 credits. The scholar-tutor gives the student a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F) for each third of the first two trimesters (adapted accordingly for part-time students). Only grades of A or B will be accepted toward the degree by the GTF. If a student receives a grade below that for any third of the first two trimesters, he or she will have to retake that third at an additional cost of \$250. Any student who earns a grade less than B in more than one of the thirds of the first or second trimester will not be permitted to continue in the Program. A letter grade is also given for the thesis, which is derived through consultation between the two scholar-tutors directing it. The latter may demand revisions that they see fit before they find the thesis acceptable and submit the grade. A grade of B is required on the thesis to complete the program. If the thesis does not qualify for at least a B grade, the scholar-tutors will require revision and possibly rewrites. Students who is still unable to attain a B grade after that will have to submit a new proposed topic and do a new thesis under different scholar-tutors if they wish to finish the degree.

APPLYING FOR THE PROGRAM, SELECTION OF SCHOLAR-TUTOR, ACCEPTANCE INTO THE PROGRAM, OTHER ARRANGEMENTS

A student must apply both to the SCSS and the GTF. Each application and directions are available from the appropriate website (www.catholicsocialscientists.org and www.gtfeducation.org). First, the student must be accepted by the SCSS, and then makes application to the GTF. Transcripts for all undergraduate and graduate work that the applicant has taken are required to be sent **only** with the SCSS application. When the student receives the acceptance letter from the SCSS, he or she just includes it with the GTF application and acceptance by GTF will normally be automatic.

Separate non-refundable application fees are due with each application: \$25 for the SCSS and \$65 for the GTF.

Admission requirements: *Acceptance requires a bachelor's degree in any discipline, a satisfactory undergraduate record, at least 6 credits in undergraduate philosophy courses, and evidence that the applicant is knowledgeable about the basic faith and moral teachings of the Catholic Church.* In order to be accepted, an applicant must show the potential for doing satisfactory graduate-level work. If an applicant does not have the undergraduate philosophy credits, he or she could get them through the GTF before beginning the M.Th. work. An applicant can request a particular scholar-tutor to direct his or her program. An admissions committee made up of the Director of the SCSS M.Th. Program and the scholar-tutor(s) the student wishes to study under or whom the Director of the SCSS M.Th. Program matches the applicant up with in light of the discipline sought makes the decision about acceptance (i.e., all on the two or three-member committee must agree on acceptance). Each scholar-tutor only directs a limited number of students at one time, usually not more than four (though some choose to direct fewer). The student indicates what trimester during the calendar year he or she wishes to begin the program and the preference for the full-time or part-time track (some scholar-tutors may accept new students only in the fall trimester and some are not available to direct students during the summer). Every effort is made to accommodate the student, but it is contingent on the scholar-tutor's availability.

A student may count toward the M.Th. up to 2 graduate courses previously taken elsewhere if they closely correspond to the themes and content of particular thirds of the first two trimesters. Any such courses would have to be from a regionally-accredited U.S. university or comparably-recognized university in another country, in accordance with GTF requirements. The Director of the Program will determine if the proposed transfer coursework satisfies any of the requirements of the Program.

Neither the SCSS nor the GTF has housing, or provides information about it. Students doing the program by tutorial study have to make these arrangements on their own in the geographical locale of their scholar-tutor.

Church documents and certain other materials are readily available on the worldwide web or via the GTF web site. Tutorial students have to make arrangements on their own to use library facilities, as needed, in the geographical locale of the scholar-tutor (which may involve paying a fee to the facility). Neither the SCSS nor the GTF have agreements with libraries, though the SCSS tries to provide a list of suitable libraries near each scholar-tutor.

THE COST OF THE PROGRAM/MAKING PAYMENT

The tuition and fees for GTF master's degree programs have ranged in recent years from \$13,000 to over \$15,000. For information about the GTF's current tuition and fees, contact the GTF Bursar's Office. In addition, a total additional amount of \$3,500 must be paid to the SCSS, mostly as compensation for the scholar-tutor. The latter payment is made to the SCSS, according to procedures spelled out on the agreement signed by the student. The amount to go to the SCSS must be paid when the student starts the program. The GTF tuition payment is made to them directly and may be paid at the beginning of the program or, if they agree, paid by trimester. Students should contact the GTF directly about the payment of its charges: Graduate Theological Foundation, 751 South Orange Ave., Sarasota, FL 34236; Toll Free: 1-800-423-5983; email: bursar@gtfeducation.org. Payment of the GTF's tuition may be made by PayPal or credit card and must be sent electronically to the GTF. See the GTF website for full information (<https://www.gtu.edu/admissions/tuition-financial-aid>). The SCSS's fees may be paid **only** by check or money order.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about the SCSS M.Th. Program in Catholic Social Thought, go to the SCSS website (www.catholicsocialscientists.org) or contact: Dr. Stephen M. Krason, Society of Catholic Social Scientists, 100 Franciscan Way, Steubenville, Ohio 43952/ (740) 284-5377 / email: catholicsocialscientists@gmail.com.