

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF RICHMOND
OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Approved High School Theology Curriculum

Rationale: In July 2008, the USCCB published the *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework* for use in all Catholic high schools in the United States. Since that time, high schools in the diocese have been asked to fulfill that framework within their existing course offerings. Many of our schools follow the framework, but often while missing large sections of it, or concentrating their efforts more in one area rather than a broad approach to the complete program. A consistent curriculum across the Diocese will ensure that every student in a Diocesan High School will be instructed in each of the Core Curriculum components *as well as* parts of each of the elective components.

Secondly, a universal curriculum, which should have been in place since implementation of the Framework, will allow us to best equip and evangelize our Catholic and non-Catholic students to have a greater love for the faith and a more solid understanding of the Church's teachings. To that end, the new curriculum takes parts of the *Framework* from each semester and adds a Capstone Experience course in Theology which will review the entire *Framework* through a series of reviews, contemporary orthodox Catholic readings, and apologetics, all based on the Challenge Questions of the *Framework*.

Curriculum: The curriculum (what specifically is covered for each semester course) is outlined clearly in the USCCB *Framework*. It is important to note that classroom instructors are expected to teach the actual content of the curriculum, supported by the texts approved by the Diocese of Richmond and supporting Church documents. Instructors should not use the text to drive the content, they should use the text to support the materials in the framework.

The USCCB *Framework* is available for download at the USCCB site:

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/upload/high-school-curriculum-framework.pdf>

The order of that coursework for all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Richmond is as follows:

Freshman Year:

Semester I- The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture (Christology I)

Semester II- Who is Jesus Christ? (Christology II)

The essential elements from elective A (Sacred Scripture) are covered in the course content for the first semester. A review of that content from the *Framework* may be done for supplementary knowledge but is not required.

Sophomore Year:

Semester I- The Mission of Jesus Christ (The Paschal Mystery)

Semester II- Life in Jesus Christ (Morality)

During the Morality semester, all students will participate in the Theology of the Body Program for Teens, in conformity with the USCCB Document *Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living*.

Junior Year:

Semester I- Jesus Christ's Mission Continues in the Church (Ecclesiology)

Semester II- Sacraments as Privileged Encounters with Jesus Christ (Sacraments)

During the Ecclesiology Semester, instruction must also cover elective E (Ecumenical and Interreligious Issues), Sections II and III. A review of elective B (History of the Catholic Church) could be completed as time allows without prejudice to the essential elements of the Ecclesiology framework content.

During the Sacraments Semester, instruction regarding the Sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders should also draw from the required items in elective D (Responding to the Call of Jesus Christ). Specifically, the semester must cover the items in Section III, IV, and V. Section V (The Consecrated Life) should be given special treatment since it is not a Sacrament, but is a Sacred Vocation in the Church.

Senior Year:

Theology Capstone I and II

Theology Capstone (Apologetics)

Catholic Social Teaching must be incorporated into the Christian Service programs present in all of our Catholic Schools throughout the 4 years. In addition, during the Capstone year, students should cover elective C items I, II, and III, Catholic Social Teaching. An approved text for Catholic Social Teaching is not required but may be used. Catholic Social Teaching should be covered as a stand-alone unit not consuming more than 3 weeks of instruction time during the Capstone year.

Texts:

The Bishop of Richmond approves the following publishers and their high school curriculum which is in conformity with the *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework: for the Development of Catechetical Materials for the Young People of High School Age*. The three approved publishers are Midwest Theological Forum, Our Sunday Visitor, or Ave Maria Press. Any of the texts for the six courses of the Core Curriculum may be used from any of the publishers.

N.B., While they are approved, the following texts are *not recommended* for use in the Diocese of Richmond:

For the Sacraments Semester, Ave Maria Press is not recommended because it does not fully incorporate the materials for Vocation semester to include the depth regarding Matrimony and Holy Orders.

For the Morality Semester, Our Sunday Visitor Press is not recommended because it lacks depth in dealing with present-day issues in morality, and does not go into the same level of depth or application regarding difficult moral teachings.

Defending the Faith:
A Senior Capstone Year in Theology

Course Description: As the conclusion of the 4th year of Theology in the Catholic High School, students will have a year to firm the foundation of Catholic theology and belief through a year-long course in Catholic apologetics. Students will be able to defend the teaching and belief of the Catholic faith in the areas of Theology of God, the Authority of the Catholic Church, the Sacraments of the Church, and the selected Moral teachings of the Church. Particular emphasis on understanding the dangers of relativism will be faced while building a strong and competent understanding of a full life within the Catholic Church.

Course Requirements: Students completing the course will have a working knowledge of the essential teachings of the Church. Students will complete a summer readings assignment relevant to explaining and defending the faith, respond to and answer the USCCB *Framework* Challenge Questions for each of the core courses. The course will then move them through basic Christian and Catholic apologetics. They should be able to defend any of the teachings of the Church from a Biblical, Catechetical, and Pastoral approach. Students will specifically work toward embracing the fullness of the Church's teaching and achieve competence in explaining and, when necessary, defending the faith. The course will require a working knowledge of each of the sections. Further, each student will complete a year-long "capstone experience" project which will take a deeper look at one particular aspect of the Catholic Faith and present and defend it before peers and faculty.