Philosophical Inquiry

I. Description of Purpose and Content
The purpose of the *Philosophical Inquiry* core requirement, as stated in the New University Core Curriculum (pp. 7-8), is to “introduce students to the various modes of philosophical inquiry and to the great philosophical questions that are central to a humanistic education in the Catholic intellectual tradition.” More specifically, the aim of this requirement is to help students to acquire an *understanding* of fundamental metaphysical and epistemological questions that are central to a humanistic education in the Catholic intellectual tradition, to assist them in acquiring the interpretive and evaluative *skills* necessary for assessing various answers to these questions, and to encourage them to develop a lifelong habit of philosophical *self-reflection*. Course activities, experiences, and pedagogies should be selected to promote each of these aims, and therefore should include careful interpretation and close analysis of philosophical texts and questions, critical discussion with the instructor and with other students of these texts and their questions, and out-of-class assignments that extend and deepen students' capacity for philosophical self-reflection.

II. Learning Outcomes
Successful course proposals for *Philosophical Inquiry* must include the following learning outcomes:

- Students should demonstrate an understanding of fundamental metaphysical and epistemological issues, particularly those that concern the human person and are central to a humanistic education in the Catholic intellectual tradition.
- Students should demonstrate an ability to interpret and analyze these questions and various proposed answers to them carefully and critically, by considering both historical context and logical cogency.
- Students should show evidence of engagement in philosophical self-reflection.

III. Defining Characteristics
Successful course proposals for *Philosophical Inquiry* must:

- Introduce students to traditional themes in metaphysics (the study of the nature of what is) and epistemology (the study of the nature and scope of human knowledge), especially those that are related to the human person and central to a humanistic education in the Catholic intellectual tradition.
- Assist students in understanding the historical development of philosophical problems and the different modes of philosophical inquiry.
- Require that students read primary philosophical texts addressing these issues.
- Provide assignments designed to teach students how to analyze philosophical texts critically and to articulate significant questions, ideas, and arguments clearly in discussion and writing.
- Include activities (e.g., reading, formal writing assignments, essay exams, discussion, journaling) that encourage students to develop an appreciation for philosophical self-reflection.