

GRADE 12
CHRISTIAN EXISTENCE SYLLABUS
AI, AII

Christian Existence is a course designed to provide the student with the tools necessary to live as a fruitful a Christian in the modern world. The main components of this course are: Faith, Belief, Self- Knowledge, Love, Existentialism, and Relationships.

Course Goals:

1. To bring the students to a greater understanding of the Catholic faith. Using *Letters To A Young Catholic*, George Weigel tours unique sites in the Catholic world tying theme into important themes in the Catholic faith.
2. Give the students a deeper self-knowledge and the ability to be more successful in their relationships. *The Enneagram In Love and Work* by Helen Palmer will be used to learn about the nine typical personality types.
3. Learning important life lessons. Using *Tuesdays with Morrie*, the students learn from a man who is dying from ALS.
4. Exploring the sanctity and sacredness of love, marriage and the human body studying *The Theology of the Body* (The teaching of Pope John Paul II) using the Christopher West text: *The Good News About Sex and Marriage*.

Trimester One

Course introduction –

1. Goal is to show how logical it is to believe in God.
2. Discuss general beliefs and faith of new students.
3. General review of what it is to be Catholic

Letters To A Young Catholic, by George Weigel

Letter One: Baltimore and Milledgeville - Acquiring the “Habit of Being”

To be a Catholic is to have a different way of seeing the world, a distinctive perception of reality. This “habit of being” allows us to see things as they are and for what they are. Everything that is, is for a reason. Everything that happens, happens for a purpose. Catholicism insists that everything is of consequence because everything has been redeemed by Christ.

Names and Terms: Flannery O’Connor, habit of being, Baltimore Catechism, Pre-Vatican II Church, nihilism, Nietzsche.

Letter Two: Rome - The Scavi of St. Peter's and the Grittiness of Catholicism

Catholicism does not rest on a pious myth. Real things happened to real people who made real life-and-death decisions. Being seized by the truth is not cost-free; faith in Jesus Christ costs not just something, but everything. Our history shows great men and women who had to overcome basic human weaknesses in order to allow love to triumph. Love is a final word. Love is the most living thing of all, because love is of God.

Names and Terms: St. Peter, Scavi, Tropaion, Obelisk, Quo Vadis, Pentecost, Easter.

Letter Three: St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai/The Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem - The Face of Christ.

An icon is a symbol that makes present what it conveys. Catholics claim that we can touch the truth of our salvation. Catholicism is not simply a matter of ideas but a matter of truth enfleshed: God become man, and man deified.

Humanism without God is unhuman - as the atrocities of the 20th century have revealed. Only a Christ-centered humanism is a true and ennobling humanism.

Names and Terms: St. Catherine's, Icons, Christos Pantokrator, Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Stone of Unction, Gnosticism, Humanism, Reason.

Letter Four: The Dormition Abbey, Jerusalem - Mary and Discipleship

Every Catholic has a vocation - a unique something that only you can do in the providence of God. Through Mary we can think about the mystery of vocation - of "being called". Mary's fiat - "Be it done unto me according to your word" - is our prime example of how one should approach this question of vocation. Mary teaches us to live in trust, not in calculation. We should stake everything on Christ.

Names and Terms: Dormition Abbey, Luminous Mysteries, Mary's Fiat, Assumption, Christian Evangelists.

Letter Five: The Oratory, Birmingham, England - Newman and "Liberal" Religion

Liberalism in religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion, but that one creed is as good as another. John Henry Newman devoted his life to prove this doctrine erroneous since he believed that this doctrine did not respect the uniqueness of Revealed Religion. Newman insisted that Catholicism is not a matter of opinion but truth. There is something that might be described as "The Truth" and that is not something that we invent. It is something that we can only receive as a gift, a gift that demands a response.

Names and Terms: Oratory, Edith Stein, Hartford Appeal, conversion, "obedience of faith", liberalism.

Letter Eight: The Sistine Chapel, Rome - Body Language, God Talk, and the Visible Invisible

Pope John Paul II's "theology of the body" teaches us that the only way to find ourselves is to give ourselves away. The "Law of the Gift", the law of self-giving, teaches us that human happiness depends on self-giving, not self-assertion. Catholic sexual ethics liberates the erotic by transforming longing into self-giving. Married love is the human reality that best images the commitment, the intensity, the passion of Christ's love for the Church.

Loving, not using - that's the deeply humane challenge the Catholic Church poses to the sexual revolution.

Names and Terms: Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo, Last Judgment, Lust/desire, Chastity.

Letter Ten: St. Stanislaw Kostka Churchyard, Warsaw/The Metropolitan Curia, Krakow - How Vocations change History

Our challenge in this world is to live "counter cultural Catholicism". We must resist the trends and fads of the day in order to be aware of His-story, the story of God at work in the world, often "underneath the surface of history".

Pope John Paul II felt destined to live His-story. He chose to think vocationally rather than in terms of career. A vocation is something you are and the Pope learned to "abandon himself to the will of God" and discovered his true calling. Faith has consequences. At the personal level, those consequences are vocational - What is it that I am called to do?

Names and Terms: Father Jerzy, "living rosary", counter cultural Catholicism

Letter Fourteen: The Basilica of the Trinity, Krakow - On Not Being Alone

Modernization has come to mean secularization - the withering away of traditional religious beliefs and practices. This has led to a fully developed ideology for remaking the world without God called Atheistic Humanism. The greatest slaughters of the twentieth century were not perpetrated by religions but by atheistic humanism.

The alternative to Atheistic Humanism is Christian humanism, a humanism built on the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Christian humanism is on the rise today and the new millennium is becoming more intensely religious. As a religious person, you're not alone.

Names and Terms: Henri de Lubac, Basilica of the Trinity, theological virtues, zero-sum game, secularization, atheistic humanism

Supplemental Videos: "The Agony and the Ecstasy"
"Quo Vadis"
"Inside The Vatican"
"Theology of The Body by Christopher West"
"The Art of Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel"

Trimester Two

Enneagram In Work And Love, by Helen Palmer

1. Students take Enneagram test to determine their personality type.
2. Discuss each personality type, including the strengths and weaknesses of that type.
3. Show how the Enneagram can help a person in living a moral life.
4. Discuss the Integration and Disintegration of each personality type with the other personalities in its triad.

Supplemental Videos: "Discover Yourself with the Enneagram"

Tuesdays with Morrie, by Mitch Albom

Morrie Schwartz serves as a mentor to a former student and to all willing to listen while he is dying.

1. Morrie discusses: Culture, Money, Love, Family, Emotions, Relationships, Forgiveness, Marriage, Aging.
2. An examination of the spiritual development of Morrie Schwartz and Mitch Albom.

Supplemental Videos: "Morrie, Lessons on Living"
"Tuesdays with Morrie"

Death and Dying

Using the video series *On Our Own Terms* by Bill Moyers, the class examines:

1. Important Health Terms that every person must know.
2. Understanding the importance of the Health Care Proxy and how this document came to be.
3. An overview of this topic is presented in a lecture by Fr. Philip Eichner, S.M. to all seniors.

Trimester Three

Theology Of the Body – *Theology of the Body for Teens*
by Jason Evert, Ascension Press, 2010)

Humanae Vitae, Pope Paul VI

The 'Theology of the Body' is Pope John Paul II's integrated vision of the human person - body, soul, and spirit. As he explains, the physical human body has a specific meaning and is capable of revealing answers regarding fundamental questions about us and our lives:

- Is there a real purpose to life and if so, what is it?
- Why were we created male and female? Does it really matter if we are one sex or another?
- Why were man and woman called to communion from the beginning? What does the marital union of a man and woman say to us about God and his plan for our lives?
- What is the purpose of the married and celibate vocations?
- What exactly is "Love"?
- Is it truly possible to be pure of heart?

All of these questions and many more are answered in Pope John Paul II's 129 Wednesday audiences, which were given between the years 1979 and 1984. His reflections are based on Scripture (especially the Gospels, St. Paul and the Book of Genesis), and contain a vision of the human person truly worthy of man. John Paul II discusses who man was in the beginning, who he is now (after original sin), and who he will be in the age to come. He then applies this message to the vocations of marriage and celibacy, in preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven.

A worksheet containing important terms and the Church's teaching will be given to the students. The course concludes (if time allows) with a practical discussion of love and relationships using these handouts:

1. "Stirring The Oatmeal" by Robert Johnson
2. "Love Is Not A Feeling" by Scott Peck
3. "Men Are From Mars", Women Are From Venus by John Gray