Teaching Profile of the Faculty of Catholic Theology

Faculty 07 – Catholic Theology at Goethe University Frankfurt shapes its teaching profile as an independent, coherent continuation of the university's guiding principle "Teaching and Studies" (December 13, 2023). The teaching in our faculty combines the academic depth of Catholic theology with the broad perspective of religious studies, the professional requirements for teacher training, and the challenges of social transformation. This teaching profile shapes all our degree programs and contributes to professional qualifications in schools, churches, adult education, media, ethics consulting, and research.

The range of courses offered by the faculty includes teacher training in religion for all types of schools, as well as bachelor's degree programs (Catholic Theology and Religious Studies) and a wide variety of master's degree programs (Religion – Media – Interculturality, Religious Studies, Philosophy of Religion, and Social Ethics in Healthcare). The subject-specific objectives of our study regulations are closely linked to the dimensions of our guiding principle, ensuring a modern culture of teaching and study.

Distinctive elements of Catholic theology in Frankfurt include:

- Social relevance
- Interculturality
- Digitalization
- Theory-practice connection
- Sustainability

At the heart of our teaching profile is academic-theological education for diverse fields of action. Dialogue is central to our approach. We see Catholic theology—and the study of Catholic theology—as an academic discipline that does not stand alone, but is always in exchange with its university and social environment. Our location in Frankfurt is special because we are situated in the midst of a secularized society, where we actively seek dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders. Already in the basic course in Catholic Theology, the welcome event for all our undergraduate degree programs, our students get to know the city's diverse religious life through excursions. Here, our focus is not only on Christian communities; students also engage with a variety of religious communities.

The connection to practical fields of theology runs like a common thread through all our degree programs and teaching. In teacher training programs, the practical orientation is directed especially—but not exclusively—toward religious education in schools. Dialogue skills are a key competence for meeting the challenges of religious education in cross-grade or interdenominational learning groups, as well as for making the most of the diverse backgrounds that characterize today's students. In our bachelor's and master's degree programs, courses focus on exchange with Christian, other religious, and secular stakeholders. Through our teaching, we aim to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to bring Christian and theological perspectives into dialogue across various social contexts.

University Teaching and Research-Based Learning

Teaching at the Faculty of Catholic Theology is distinguished by its wide variety and breadth of theological topics. In line with the Humboldtian ideal, our faculty fosters the unity of research and teaching by embedding research-based learning in all our degree programs. The ability to independently identify and critically analyze theological questions is established as a core competency in all our curricula. In the introductory modules, the focus is on providing essential expertise and the necessary skills. The advanced stages of study, especially in our master's programs, open up opportunities to apply these skills in independent, small-scale research projects. Here, students engage in scholarly exploration of their own questions related to contemporary experience, religion, and Christian faith, develop a thoughtful approach to Jewish-Christian tradition, work with primary sources, and build theological and ethical judgment and argumentation skills to address today's challenges in theology, the church, and society.

Dialogue-Oriented and Cooperative Teaching and Learning Models

To foster the communication skills needed for meaningful exchange within theology and the church, as well as with other stakeholders, dialogue orientation is also at the heart of our teaching culture in the faculty. Seminars—whether introductory seminars, advanced and in-depth seminars, or upper-level seminars for master's students—are the central format in our faculty and are characterized by a vibrant culture of discussion. Cooperative teaching and learning methods also play a key role, encouraging students to work toward shared goals and negotiate different viewpoints. In our cross-program courses, dialogue around a shared topic is enriched by the diversity of perspectives that students bring to the table.

Good Conditions, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity

Our faculty is continually committed to creating a supportive environment for successful teaching and learning. Ensuring that our degree programs are manageable and that

curricula are well-balanced are guiding principles in the design and ongoing revision of our courses of study. We pay particular attention to teacher training programs, which are shaped by the challenge of balancing many different areas of study.

As a small faculty, our teaching is characterized by a favorable student-to-instructor ratio, allowing us to respond to individual life and study situations as needed. The team at the Office of the Dean of Studies is available to advise and support students throughout their entire period of study. We place special emphasis on helping students get off to a successful start. In the introductory course in Catholic theology, which is required for all undergraduate degree programs in the first two semesters, students receive an orienting overview of Catholic theology and acquire the essential skills for effective academic work. The initial phase of study is also supported by a peer-to-peer mentoring program as part of the introductory study tutorial.

To continue supporting students' academic success throughout their studies and to provide assistance in case of difficulties, our faculty is developing a proactive student advice and counselling service for students in advanced semesters, building on the "Academic Success in Dialogue" project. This service pays particular attention to the final phase of studies, whether students are completing their academic degree with the first State Examination or with a bachelor's or master's thesis.

To continually address changing student life circumstances, work toward excellent study conditions, and respond to individual challenges, our faculty is committed to having student representation in matters of equal opportunity. Our faculty actively engages with the topics of diversity and equal opportunity in all committees, and especially in the Gender & Diversity Commission. These topics are also addressed explicitly in classes such as the feminist course and during events like the convocation day, Dies Academicus.

Future-Ready Skills – Digitisation, Internationality, Sustainability

Our faculty is committed to contributing to the management of social change and challenges through future-ready education. Digital elements play a key role in our teaching and are an integral part of our degree programs, both formally and in terms of content. One of our faculty's goals in designing courses is to teach and develop skills for using digital tools as resources for students' own studies. These digital skills go beyond university life and prepare students for their future careers, serving as both tools and content within our programs. The use of digital media is a particular focus in our teacher

training programs, but it also plays an important role in our Bachelor's in Catholic Theology and the Master's in Religion – Media – Interculturality. Critical reflection on digital developments—currently with a special emphasis on artificial intelligence—is also part of our curriculum, such as in the seminar Ethics of Digitisation.

Internationality and interculturality are integral to our teaching culture. For over forty years, the teaching and research focus on intercultural theology has shaped our faculty. Here, students engage in dialogue with visiting scholars from non-European countries and gain awareness of theological similarities and differences in international and intercultural exchange. The exploration of questions related to non-European Christian theology is embedded in all our degree programs. Thanks to the close integration of Catholic theology and religious studies in our teaching, engaging with other religions and cultures is also a central part of our faculty.

We actively support opportunities for students to study abroad by continually expanding our Erasmus program. Currently, our faculty has partnerships with nine universities across Europe (Austria: University of Klagenfurt and University of Vienna; France: Institut Catholique de Paris; Croatia: University of Split; Italy: University of Parma, University of Padua, University of Florence, and University of Turin; Romania: University of Sibiu). Through these partnerships, our faculty also welcomes visiting students. In addition, we are committed to inviting guest instructors to our faculty to further enrich the diversity of our teaching.

Engaging with the topics of sustainability and justice is woven into the very fabric of theology and into the teaching at our faculty. Theological and ethical reflection on norms is a part of all our degree programs and is designed to encourage students to act responsibly and think critically. In our teacher training programs, education for sustainable development (ESD) and the role of religious education within it are firmly anchored. The Master's in Social Ethics in Healthcare places a special focus on justice and sustainability.

Redeployment and Quality Assurance

Our faculty sees quality assurance in Student and Academic Services as an ongoing responsibility. We are committed to continuously improving the study experience in response to changing conditions and challenges—taking into account both the realities of our students' lives and the essential skills graduates need in today's society. Open dialogue with the departmental student body is central to this process. We always consider students' opinions and suggestions, especially on topics that directly affect them. Our faculty values student commitment and is working to recognize this even more

in the form of credit points within our study regulations. Regular evaluations of our classes and degree programs are an integral part of our teaching and learning culture. Each semester, the Study Commission and Curriculum Conference take a fresh look at how we can ensure excellent study conditions within our faculty. We measure the quality of our teaching and course offerings by student success, professional qualifications (such as teaching, ethics consulting, media, NGOs), and the ability to actively shape society.