



Course Syllabus

EDU511: History of Classical Christian Education; three credits

New Saint Andrews College, Fall and Spring terms 2026-27

Instructor: Christopher R. Schlect, Ph.D. (draft; updated 11/20/2025)

I. Course Introduction and Overview

Classical and Christian education is an approach to education that draws its purpose and methods from the long Christian tradition of teaching that spans millennia. Students in this course will read and discuss seminal works by the key theorists and practitioners across this long tradition. These works reflect the rise and development of the liberal arts program from its origins in classical antiquity, continuing through its Christianization in early medieval monasteries, and extending into the scholastic movement. Students will also read works representing the rise of humanities instruction in the early modern era. They will draw these historical works into conversation with contemporary interpretations of “classical and Christian education” in order to see the ways in which today’s movement adopts, adjusts, and diverges from historical precedents. Thus the students in this course will assert their own voice into a conversation among educators who lived over 1500 years apart from one another.

Today’s classical and Christian education movement, of which we are a part, began as a grassroots phenomenon that arose amidst the culture wars of the 1970s, ‘80s and ‘90s. Ardent Christians in that era mobilized around family values and a strident critique of mainstream American culture. This mobilization took shape in various ways: some sought to reform American culture through political and legal channels, and others set about the task of building countercultural institutions. In the educational arena, the former impulse introduced new battles over curriculum, vouchers, and charter schools, whereas the latter fueled a dramatic rise in homeschooling and private Christian day schools. These innovators—our own predecessors—had to confront the question of how to faithfully deliver a sound education in today’s context. In order to steer clear of the many problems we saw in mainstream public education, Christian parents and educators searched the past for inspiration and models. From this impulse emerged the renewal of classical and Christian education. This course aims to serve this renewal by introducing some of the great texts in the western tradition of education.

II. Course Logistics

Course Dates: Fall & Spring terms—September 14, 2026 to April 16, 2027.

Access to Course Content: Course resources and information will be disseminated through the College’s learning management system, Populi. Students, once they are enrolled, will receive a personal login and instructions for accessing populi. For questions about logging into populi, contact our registrar, Sarah McCabe, at <registrar@nsa.edu>.

Course Routines: The course is organized into fourteen lessons; most lessons span two weeks (see §VI. *Course Schedule* below). For each lesson, students will participate in written discussion postings on populi and join a live meeting over zoom.

Contacting the Instructor: I can be reached at cschlect@nsa.edu. I am happy to meet with students by phone or zoom. To arrange an appointment, please reach out both to me and to my wife Brenda who manages my calendar (bschlect@nsa.edu). If you have a question about course instructions, expectations, and logistics, chances are that your classmates may have the same question, so please

post such questions to the course dashboard on populi and I will reply there. Of course, for questions about your individual coursework, reach out to me directly by email.

III. Course Objectives

1. Students will read and interrogate key writings from the western tradition of education, writings that span from antiquity up into the early modern era. Specifically,
 - a. Students will compare these historic works to one another;
 - b. For each work, students will identify the authors' context, concerns, and contributions; and,
 - c. They will form their own assessment of each historical authors' achievements.
2. Students will read key writings from the contemporary movement in classical and Christian education.
 - a. Students will compare these contemporary works to one another;
 - b. They will compare these works to historical writings from the western tradition of education; and,
 - c. They will form their own assessment of each contemporary authors' achievements.
3. Students will develop informed answers to the following questions:
 - a. How do ancient, medieval and early modern writers characterize grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric (i.e., the arts of the trivium)? Do they represent them as curricular in nature? Pedagogical? Both? What is the scope or domain of each art? Are they sequenced?
 - b. According to the various writers we read, which arts are the liberal arts? How do they fit within the broader project of preparing a person for life? How do they relate to one another?
 - c. What were the humanities? According to promoters of the humanities, how do the humanities relate to the liberal arts?
 - d. How do contemporary presentations of classical education compare with one another? How do they differ? Identify areas of variety and commonality among contemporary writings in classical and Christian education.
 - e. How do various writers on education—those from the past and from today's CCE movement—treat older fields of study? –Fields such as law, architecture and medicine? Where do such fields figure into their curriculum? What about newer fields such as biology, chemistry, psychology, and others?
 - f. In what respects have prominent writers in today's CCE movement adopted the principles and practices of the past? –Which principles and practices, and from what sources in the past? In what respects do these contemporary writers appropriate and adjust the ways of education in the past? In what ways do they depart from the past?
4. Students will consider how educations delivered in the medieval and early modern eras might inform the education we deliver in our own classrooms today.
5. Students will assert their own viewpoints through discussion and writing assignments.

IV. Required Readings

A. Historical Texts (Students are responsible to obtain these texts. Some titles are in the public domain and can be accessed online.)

Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*. Translated by R. P. H. Green. Oxford World's Classics. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Basil the Great. "Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature." In *Essays on the Study and Use of Poetry by Plutarch and Basil the Great*, translated by Frederick Morgan Padelford. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co., 1902.

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Essays_on_the_Study_and_Use_of_Poetry_by/8siAAAAAMAAJ

Bonaventure, *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, trans. Zachary Hayes, The Works of St. Bonaventure 1 (Franciscan Institute, 1996).

Cassiodorus Senator, *Institutiones Divinarum et Saecularium Litterarum*. Available versions:

Option 1 (most recommended): Cassiodorus. *Cassiodorus: "Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning" and "On the Soul."* Translated by James W. Halporn. Translated Texts for Historians 42. Liverpool University Press, 2004.

Option 2: Cassiodorus Senator, *An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings*, trans. Leslie Webber Jones (Columbia University Press, 1946)

Comenius, Johann Amos. *The Great Didactic, Part II.—Text*. Translated by M. W. Keatinge. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907. Available online at <http://archive.org/details/cu31924031053709>.

Hugh of St. Victor. *The Didascalicon of Hugh of Saint Victor: A Guide to the Arts*. Translated by Jerome Taylor. Records of Western Civilization. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Kallendorf, Craig W., trans. *Humanist Educational Treatises*. The I Tatti Renaissance Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Martianus Capella. *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts, Volume II: The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*. Translated by William Harris Stahl, Richard Johnson, and E. L. Burge. Vol. 2. Records of Western Civilization. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1992.

Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* (selections). Note: this is a large work; we will be reading only books I, II, and X. This important text is available in three versions:

Option 1 (most recommended, but also most expensive): Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*. Translated by Donald A. Russell. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002. This edition is five volumes; the required selections for this course appear in volumes 1 and 4.

Option 2: Quintilian. *Quintilian on the Teaching of Speaking and Writing: Translations from Books One, Two, and Ten of the "Institutio Oratoria."* Edited by James J. Murphy and Hugh C. Wiese. 2nd edition. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015. This volume includes all the required selections for this course.

Option 3: Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria*. Translated by H. E. Butler. 4 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922. This edition is in four volumes;

the required selections for this course appear in volumes 1 and 4. This version is in the public domain and therefore available at this link:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=y0EFAQAIAAJ>.

and also at this link:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/

B. Contemporary Works (students are responsible to obtain these texts)

Clark, Kevin, and Ravi Jain. *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, revised edition. Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2021.

Be sure you secure the third edition, published in 2021.

Littlejohn, Robert, and Charles T. Evans. *Wisdom and Eloquence: A Christian Paradigm for Classical Learning*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006.

Wilson, Douglas. *The Case for Classical Christian Education*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003; or the reprint edition published at Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2022.

C. Additional Miscellaneous Works (these selections will be provided on populi)

Alcuin. *De Grammatica*. Translated by Wenden Scholars. *Shield Wall* 2, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2016): 37–45. Available on populi.

_____. *Disputatio Pippini*. Translated by Caleb Harris, Emily Kapuscak, Anneliese Mattern, and Joseph Roberts. Moscow, ID: By the translators, 2022. Available on populi.

Augustine. “On the Catechizing of the Uninstructed” (selections), in *St. Augustine: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*, translated by S. D. F. Salmond, Vol. 3. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956. Available on populi.

Classis 14 no. 4 (Autumn 2007). The entire issue is dedicated to discussion of Littlejohn and Evans, *Wisdom and Eloquence*. Available on populi.

Classis 31 no 1 (Fall 2023). The entire issue is dedicated to discussion of Dorothy Sayers, “The Lost Tools of Learning.” Available on populi.

Diener, David. “The Principles of Classical Education,” *Principia: A Journal of Classical Education* 3, no. 1 (2024): 75–92, <https://doi.org/10.5840/principia202462410>.

Milton, John. “Of Education,” 1644.

https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/of_education/intro.shtml.

Plato, selections from *Republic* and *Meno*, from *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, vol. 7, Great Books of the Western World (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952).

Schlect, Christopher. “What Is a Liberal Art?” *Principia: A Journal of Classical Education* 1, no. 1 (October 17, 2022): 75–91. <https://doi.org/10.5840/principia20229224>.

Williams, Brian A. “Editorial: Introducing Principia and Classical Education.” *Principia: A Journal of Classical Education* 1, no. 1 (October 17, 2022): 1–14.

<https://doi.org/10.5840/principia202211/21>.

V. Assignments

A. Discussions (20% of overall course grade)

1. Introductory Discussion (Lesson 1)

This is the first discussion forum assignment on the course page on Populi. It should help you become familiar with how discussion forums work. See Populi for more specific instructions.

2. Discussions (Lessons 2-12)

All students will participate in six online discussions (see lessons 2-12). See Populi for more specific instructions.

B. First Project (25% of overall course grade)

Students shall select one of two options to fulfil this requirement.

Option B1: Paper

Prepare a paper that analyses two historical texts from the first half of the course. The paper should (a) focus upon one specific element, issue, or question; (b) advance a historical thesis; and (c) draw significantly upon at least two historical texts from this course to support the thesis. (d) Length: 1300-1700 words.

Students who pursue this option should submit an abstract to the instructor on or before December 3. The abstract should be 150-200 words, and should lay out the paper's proposed thesis and lines of reasoning in support of the thesis.

Option B2: In-Service Training Exercise

Design a training exercise for a group who serves at your school—a group such as board members, administrative staff, faculty, or interested parents. Imagine you will lead the group through ONE of the main historical texts assigned in the first half of this course (Quintilian, Augustine, Cassiodorus, Martianus). While you may or may not actually carry this out at your school, to fulfill this assignment you must develop a plan for such an exercise, along with supporting materials.

Here are the particular materials you will prepare:

1. Cover sheet or dashboard that includes the following information

- The book you select
- The composition of the group (board members, faculty, parents, etc.)
- Basic schedule: How many sessions? Duration and frequency of sessions?
- Overall objectives for the exercise

2. Supporting materials

- Prepare a 1,000-1500 word introductory essay. Your essay should place the book in its historical context, identify its major themes and features, and relate it to your school's philosophy, mission, vision, and/or curriculum.

- Prepare a lesson for each group session. For each session,
 - (a) Identify which part of the book is assigned for this session;
 - (b) Frame study questions that point readers to the text and guide them through it. These are questions that can be answered from the text itself.
 - (c) Pose questions or topics for discussion. These questions should prompt the group to assess the reading, and also bring the reading to bear upon the school's mission, vision, philosophy, curriculum, and/or instructional practices.

C. Second Project (25% of overall course grade)

Students shall select one of three options to fulfil this requirement.

Option C1: Paper

Requirements are the same as for Option B1 above, but the paper should feature two historical texts from the second half of the course.

Option C2: In-Service Training Exercise

Requirements are the same as for Option B2 above, except that the text should be one from the second half of the course (i.e., Hugh of St. Victor, humanist treatises, Comenius).

Option C3: Extended Paper

This option is available to students who selected Option B1 for their first project.

Revise and expand the paper submitted for the first project. This paper will analyze the same two historical texts as before, together with one or two additional texts from the second half of the course. The paper should (a) focus upon one specific element, issue, or question; (b) advance a thesis; and (c) draw significantly upon at least three historical texts from this course to support the thesis. Texts must be drawn from both the first and the second half of the course. (d) Length: 2500-3500 words.

D. Final Exam (30% of overall course grade)

Students will be examined orally by the instructor. Exam times arranged by appointment.

VI. Course Schedule (dates need updating)

See the following pages.

Fall Term 2026		
Lesson	Dates	Assignments and Deadlines
1	Week 1 Sept 14-19	Become oriented to expectations and deadlines. <u>Reading:</u> Quintilian, <i>Institutio Oratoria</i> book I (all) <i>Introductory Discussion due September 18</i>
2	Week 2 Sept 20-26	<u>Reading:</u> Quintilian, <i>Institutio Oratoria</i> II.1-10; Plato, selections from <i>Republic</i> and <i>Meno</i>
	Week 3 Sept 27-Oct 3	<u>Reading:</u> Quintilian, <i>Institutio Oratoria</i> book X <i>Initial posts due Sept 29 to allow time for replies through October 3</i>
3	Week 4 Oct 4-10	<u>Reading:</u> Augustine: <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> , books I-III
	Week 5 Oct 11-17	<u>Reading:</u> Augustine: <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> , book IV <i>Initial posts due October 13 to allow time for replies through October 17</i>
4	Week 6 Oct 18-24	<u>Reading:</u> Cassiodorus, <i>Institutiones Divinarum et Saecularium Litterarum</i> , begin
	Week 7 Oct 25-31	<u>Reading:</u> Cassiodorus, <i>Institutiones Divinarum et Saecularium Litterarum</i> , finish <i>Initial posts due October 27 to allow time for replies through October 31</i>
5	Week 8 Nov 1-7	<u>Readings:</u> Basil the Great. “Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature”
	Week 9 Nov 8-14	<u>Readings:</u> <i>Classis</i> 31 no 1 (Fall 2023)—on Dorothy Sayers <i>Initial posts due November 10 to allow time for replies through November 14</i>
6	Week 10 Nov 15-21	<u>Reading:</u> Martianus Capella, <i>De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii</i> , begin
	Nov 22-28	Thanksgiving Break
	Week 11 Nov 29-Dec 5	<u>Reading:</u> Martianus Capella, <i>De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii</i> , finish <i>Initial posts due December 1 to allow time for replies through December 5</i> <i>Abstracts for Option B1 due December 1</i>
7	Week 12 Dec 6-12	<u>Readings:</u> Wilson, <i>Case for Classical and Christian Education</i> , begin
	Week 13 Dec 13-19	<u>Readings:</u> Wilson, <i>Case for Classical and Christian Education</i> , finish <i>Initial posts due December 15 to allow time for replies through December 19</i>
--	Dec 20-Jan 10	Christmas Holiday <i>(Looking ahead: First projects are due January 13)</i>

Spring Term 2027		
Lesson	Dates	Assignments and Deadlines
8	Week 14 Jan 11-16	<u>Reading:</u> Littlejohn and Evans, <i>Wisdom and Eloquence</i> , begin <i>First projects are due January 13</i>
	Week 15 Jan 17-23	<u>Readings:</u> Littlejohn and Evans, <i>Wisdom and Eloquence</i> , finish; and Classis 14, no. 4 (exchange on <i>Wisdom and Eloquence</i>) <i>Initial posts due January 19 to allow time for replies through January 23</i>
9	Week 16 Jan 24-30	<u>Reading:</u> Hugh of St. Victor, <i>Didascalicon</i> , begin
	Week 17 Jan 31-Feb 6	<u>Reading:</u> Hugh of St. Victor, <i>Didascalicon</i> , finish <i>Initial posts due February 2 to allow time for replies through February 6</i>
10	Week 18 Feb 7-13	<u>Reading:</u> Schlect, “What is a Liberal Art?”
	Week 19 Feb 14-20	<u>Reading:</u> Bonaventure, <i>On The Reduction of the Arts to Theology</i> <i>Initial posts due February 16 to allow time for replies through February 20</i>
11	Week 20 Feb 21-27	<u>Reading:</u> Vergerio, <i>The Character and Studies Befitting a Free-Born Youth</i> , in Kallendorf
	Week 21 Feb 28-Mar 6	<u>Reading:</u> Piccolomini, <i>The Education of Boys</i> , in Kallendorf <i>Initial posts due March 2 to allow time for replies through March 6</i>
12	Week 22 Mar 7-13	<u>Reading:</u> Comenius, <i>The Great Didactic</i> , begin reading
	Week 23 Mar 14-20	<u>Reading:</u> Comenius, <i>The Great Didactic</i> , finish reading Milton, “Of Education” <i>Initial posts due March 16 to allow time for replies through March 20</i>
13	Week 24 Mar 21-27	<u>Reading:</u> Clark and Jain, <i>The Liberal Arts Tradition</i> , begin
	Week 25 Mar 28-Apr 3	<u>Reading:</u> Clark and Jain, <i>The Liberal Arts Tradition</i> , finish; and Williams, “Editorial...” <i>Initial posts due March 30 to allow time for replies through April 3</i>
14	Week 26 Apr 4-10	Final Examinations
	Week 27 April 11-16	Final Examinations <i>Second projects are due April 12</i>

VIII. Generative AI Tools and Academic Honesty

Generative “Artificial Intelligence,” or AI, describes algorithms that can be used to create new content based on prompts entered by a user. Popular AI tools include Character.AI, ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Grok, and QuillBot, among many others. In this course, some very limited uses of AI are allowed, whereas many uses are prohibited.

- *Students may use AI tools for inquiry and discovery.* Such permitted uses create leads that direct you to useful sources of information. These uses begin with queries such as, “Where does Shakespeare use flower metaphors?” and, “Which American museums have Greek vases in their collections?” When students receive AI-generated responses to such queries, they must treat them as leads that guide them to competent sources; students may never receive such responses as competent sources in their own right. (Note that AI generators tend to conjure up so-called “information” out of thin air. They often conflate, misattribute, and otherwise misrepresent the “sources” they supposedly identify.)
- *Students may not use AI tools for invention or communication.* Inventive uses include brainstorming ideas or generating outlines for work students might submit for credit. It also includes generating outlines or summaries of course readings, and generating study guides for review of course material. Communicative uses include generating words or phrases or any other verbiage that students represent as their own writing or speech. These prohibited uses of AI tools constitute a violation of the student’s commitment to academic honesty according to NSA’s Student Code of Conduct.

Generative AI tools have many valuable uses. In certain settings they may even serve inventive and communicative uses. But for those particular uses, this course is not one of those settings. You enrolled in this course to develop your God-given faculties of intellectual creativity and verbal communication. You would undermine this purpose if you outsource these faculties to machines. Imagine an athlete in training who brings a forklift to the gym to complete his weightlifting regimen in his place. That athlete would be cheating on his workout. So it would be for your work in this course. You did not enroll here to pass on what an AI-bot says about the past; you enrolled to develop and present your own engagement with the past.

IX. New Saint Andrews College Institutional Commitments

A. NSA Statement on the Liberal Arts

The liberal arts teach us how to learn—how to freely gain knowledge and understanding. Insofar as they are *arts*, they produce something, in this case, the ability to learn. Because they are *liberal* arts, they liberate us, not only from ignorance, prejudice, and provincialism, but also from servile dependence on the tutelage of others. The liberal arts, then, are particularly important for leaders, who themselves must be guides. Moreover, the liberal arts are not value-neutral, but, like all arts, are rightly ordered to the love and worship of the Triune God.

B. NSA Statement on the Humanities

The humanities convey universal and timeless truths about the human condition by passing on a cultural inheritance. These studies draw wisdom from wide human experience, recognizing that all peoples share a common humanity even as they inhabit particular times, places, and cultural settings. The humanities awaken students to wisdom by imbuing them with the cultural resources that

embody a tradition—that is, the writings, works of art, stories, institutions, etc., which carry a people’s culture: their system of shared meanings, attitudes, and values, and the symbolic forms in which they are expressed or embodied. Humanities instruction proceeds mimetically, looking to charismatic examples for inspiration, instruction, and warning. At New Saint Andrews College we draw our cultural heritage primarily from the ancient Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans; from the Christians of medieval Europe; and from the Reformed, Protestant branch of Christendom. Thus rooted in our own culture’s traditions, we avoid provincialism by studying others with due respect, for all people bear God’s image. Through humanities instruction we labor toward a day when our own traditions, alongside all others, are fully reformed by the gospel. We hope for that day when we join together with people of every tribe, tongue, and nation, laying our gifts before the King of kings—a day when, by God’s grace, we all realize our true humanity.