A. The purpose of this course: Heinrich Fries describes the task of Fundamental Theology not in terms of the simplest possible introduction to the ABCs of Theology but as that branch of Theology which studies the most foundational presuppositions and conditions for the possibility of theology (Fries, FT, p.3). 20th and 21st century Fundamental Theology has four critical orientations that define its unique project. First, it comes with an awareness of the historicity of human experience and the attendant hermeneutic problems. Specifically, it critically answers whether and how the purported 1st century revelation of God can (and should) be understood by people living in the 21st century, though the particulars of this answer vary with the formulations of the theologians attempting it. Second, it is anthropologically centered. It examines the claim that the content of revelation conforms to human nature and its deepest desires, especially the desires to know, to do what is right, and to love and be loved. Third, it comes with an awareness of the criteriological problem. That is, it asks what constitutes human knowledge (as it really is), and it asks whether the content of Christian revelation is truly knowledge. Fourth, it critically addresses the truth claims of Christianity. And in this, unlike apologetics, its focus is dialogical rather than argumentative.

Among the most fundamental of conditions for the possibility of Theology is the Christian idea of revelation. In this advanced undergraduate class, the grounds of the credibility of Christian revelation claim will be critically studied by introducing students to it in light of a contemporary understanding of human conviction and knowledge. This will be accomplished through a series of readings of and seminar papers on 20th and 21st Century fundamental theologians, thinkers such as: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, Joseph Ratzinger, Clodovis Boff, Stuart Hackett, Paul Griffiths, Hans Fries, Kevin Vanhoozer, et al.

B. Among possible topics addressed in this course will be the following: reason and personal authority as grounds of human certitude, the assent of faith vs. rational knowledge, religious doubt vs. agnosticism and atheism, the fundamental human situation in the horizon of being, revelation as a trans-rational disclosure of God, the credibility of the miraculous, the incarnation as the revelation of God in time, the significance of the historicity of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the problem of competing truth claims in different religious traditions, the meaning and plausibility of the doctrines of infallibility and inerrancy as they apply to scripture and personal authority. These topics will be explored through readings in classic works of Fundamental Theology and will be treated according to the prominence given to them in these works.