

Vitae I – Week 1 Handout

Title: What Are the 11 Major Body Systems?

The human body is not a random collection of parts. It is an ordered, purposeful whole. These 11 body systems help us understand how the body works together, not just as a machine, but as something designed for life, health, and meaning.

Each system has a Latin name. While you are not expected to memorize them yet, learning to pronounce and recognize them helps us see connections between language, medicine, and history.

1. Skeletal System

Latin: systema skeletale (SIS-teh-ma skeh-leh-TAH-leh)

What it does: Provides structure, support, and protection. Without your skeleton, you couldn't stand, move, or protect your vital organs.

Interesting Note: The Latin skeleton comes from the Greek skeletos, meaning “dried-up body.”

2. Muscular System

Latin: systema musculare (SIS-teh-ma moo-skoo-LAH-reh)

What it does: Allows for movement and stability. Your muscles also help produce heat.

Interesting Note: The word muscle comes from the Latin musculus, meaning “little mouse” — ancient people thought muscles looked like mice under the skin.

3. Nervous System

Latin: systema nervosum (SIS-teh-ma nair-VOH-soom)

What it does: Controls the body through electrical signals. It includes your brain, spinal cord, and nerves.

4. Endocrine System

Latin: systema endocrinum (SIS-teh-ma en-DOH-kree-noom)

What it does: Regulates body functions with hormones. Controls growth, stress response, metabolism, and more.

5. Circulatory System

Latin: systema circulatorium (SIS-teh-ma keer-coo-lah-TOR-ee-oom)

What it does: Moves blood through the body. Delivers oxygen and nutrients; removes waste.

6. Respiratory System

Latin: systema respiratorium (SIS-teh-ma res-peer-ah-TOR-ee-oom)

What it does: Brings in oxygen and removes carbon dioxide. Includes lungs, trachea, and diaphragm.

7. Digestive System

Latin: systema digestorium (SIS-teh-ma dee-jes-TOR-ee-oom)

What it does: Breaks down food into usable energy. Includes mouth, stomach, intestines, and liver.

8. Urinary System

Latin: systema urinarium (SIS-teh-ma oo-ree-NAH-ree-oom)

What it does: Filters blood, removes liquid waste, and balances fluids.

9. Immune System

Latin: systema immunitatis (SIS-teh-ma eem-moo-nee-TAH-tees)

What it does: Defends against illness and disease. Helps recognize threats and heal injuries.

Interesting Note: The Latin *immunis* means “exempt” or “free from burden”—like being protected from attack.

10. Integumentary System

Latin: systema integumentarium (SIS-teh-ma in-teh-goo-men-TAH-ree-oom)

What it does: Protects your outer surface. Includes skin, hair, and nails.

Interesting Note: The word *integument* means “covering” — it shares a root with *integrity*, which hints at wholeness and being undivided.

11. Reproductive System

Latin: systema reproductivum (SIS-teh-ma ray-proh-dook-TEE-voom)

What it does: Allows for the creation of new life. Carries deep biological and moral meaning.

Final Thought

All 11 systems are part of a unified design. No system works alone. As you study each part of the body, remember: you are not assembled like a robot. You are knit together with meaning and purpose.

“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” – Psalm 139:14

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Title: How the Body is Organized – From Cells to Systems

Your body is not random. It is carefully ordered—built from the tiniest units of life into a single, unified whole. That order matters. It tells us something not just about biology, but about meaning.

In classical biology, the human body is structured in five levels. You don't need to memorize every term yet, but you should begin to see how one level leads naturally to the next. Latin terms are included with pronunciation and notes where helpful.

1. Cell

Latin: cellula (CHEL-loo-lah)

The smallest unit of life. All tissues, organs, and systems are built from cells. They breathe, eat, divide, and communicate. Your brain, bones, muscles, and skin all begin here.

2. Tissue

Latin: textum (TEK-stoom)

A tissue is a group of similar cells working together. There are four main types:

- Epithelial – lines and covers surfaces
- Connective – supports and binds
- Muscle – contracts to move
- Nervous – sends signals

Interesting Note: The Latin textum means “woven fabric”—which is why we also use the word “text” to describe written words. Both are patterns woven together.

3. Organ

Latin: organum (OR-gah-noom)

An organ is made of different tissues working together. Examples: heart (cor), liver (hepar), lung (pulmo), kidney (ren). Each has a clear shape, location, and purpose.

4. System

Latin: systema (SIS-teh-mah)

A system is a group of organs that cooperate for a major function. The digestive system breaks down food. The nervous system sends signals. Systems do not work alone. They depend on one another constantly.

5. Whole Person

Latin: persona integra (pehr-SO-nah IN-teh-grah)

You are not a pile of systems. You are a human person: body and soul, integrated. Even the best science cannot explain everything about who you are. The classical tradition insists that the whole is greater than the parts.

“The body is a unity—not a machine, not a costume, not a prison, but a place of purpose.”

Visual Recap

cellula → textum → organum → systema → persona integra

This structure is not just biology—it is philosophy. You are made to live, to act, to think, and to give. The more clearly you see the body, the more deeply you understand the person.

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Title: Scripture Study – Your Body Has Meaning

The Christian tradition does not treat the body as neutral, unimportant, or disposable. From Genesis to Revelation, the body appears again and again—created, healed, broken, glorified. Two key passages help us reflect on the body’s purpose and dignity:

Psalm 139:13–16

“For you formed my inward parts, you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.”

This psalm reminds us that we are deliberately formed. We are not assembled by chance. The phrase “knit together” implies careful design. This is not just a poetic idea—it reflects how the human body develops from a single fertilized cell into a living person, with systems, senses, and identity.

Latin Insight: The Latin word *texere* (to weave) is related to both *textum* (tissue) and *textus* (text). In a real sense, your body is a written story—woven by God.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

This is not just a call to respect your body. It is a claim about ownership. If your body does not belong to you, then it must be received as a gift, not treated as a project or possession. This challenges the modern idea that we can do whatever we want with our bodies.

Key Concept: To glorify God in your body means to live in a way that honors its design, its limits, and its calling.

Latin Insight: The word *templum* (TEM-ploom) means temple or sacred place. Your body is not empty space—it is a place of presence and purpose.

Suggested Reflection (for writing or discussion)

- What would change if you truly believed your body was a temple?
- What habits, thoughts, or choices would you revisit?
- Do you tend to treat your body as a possession, a burden, or a gift?

These aren’t questions to answer quickly. They are questions to live with. In this course, we won’t just study anatomy—we will learn to see the body as meaningful, moral, and made.

“The body is not a thing to be used. It is a gift to be received and a truth to be lived.”