

Vitae I: The Human Body as Gift – Foundations in Anatomy, Virtue, and Stewardship

Semester: Fall (Weeks 1–18)

Credit: 0.5 high school credit

Target Grade: 9th (advanced 8th welcome)

Format: Online, classical college-prep format

Instructor: TBD

Delivery: Weekly written lectures, asynchronous assignments, 1 live seminar per week

Course Description

This course invites students to begin a four-year journey in understanding the human body as a meaningful, ordered whole—not merely a biological machine. Through integrated studies in anatomy, physiology, moral philosophy, and sacred texts, students will gain insight into the structure and dignity of the human person. They will be challenged to think clearly, act responsibly, and reflect deeply on what it means to care for the body they’ve been given.

Course Objectives

Students will:

- Master foundational anatomical systems and terminology
- Develop habits of careful observation and diagramming
- Explore how bodily rhythms influence attention, emotion, and identity
- Reflect on core moral questions about discipline, health, suffering, and limits
- Begin forming a personal ethic of stewardship rooted in natural law and integrated knowledge

Course Components

Each week may include:

- A written lecture (8–10 minutes if read aloud)
- Required forum posting and response
- Optional reading or video links for enrichment

- Weekly Assignment Packet (as needed): includes written responses, diagrams, or moral-philosophical questions aligned to the lecture—assigned selectively based on topic and depth
- One live Socratic seminar per week (recorded for those who cannot attend)
- A brief quiz or assessment
- Physical Movement Requirement: Students are expected to engage in daily physical activity totaling at least 90 minutes each day, broken into intentional movement segments. This may include walking, sports, yard work, or structured exercise. A weekly Movement Log is required and affects the overall course grade. See the Physical Stewardship Expectations document for full philosophy and details.
- Semester Project: Students will complete a simple, low-pressure artistic representation of one part or system of the human body (e.g., a hand, eye, heart, spine). This may be a classical-style drawing, a physical model, or a creative rendering. The final submission includes a short explanation of the body part's purpose, symbolism, and what was learned through the process.

Texts and Resources

Required:

- A Bible (Revised Standard Version, any edition)
- Selected excerpts from classical and modern sources (provided digitally)
- Aristotle, Hippocrates, C.S. Lewis, and others

Optional Readings (drawn from weekly enrichment):

A finalized list of optional books and essays will be provided at the start of the course. All selections will be grade-appropriate, mission-aligned, and—whenever possible—freely available in digital format.

Grading Breakdown

Component	Weight
Weekly Quizzes	25%
Forum Participation	30%
Assignments	25%
Midterm	10%
Final Art Project	10%

Grades are real, but the focus is formation—not perfection. Students are rewarded for depth, curiosity, and thoughtful engagement, not box-checking.

Note on Faith and Grading: This course includes moral and theological questions related to the human body, health, and personal meaning. Students will be required to engage with these questions thoughtfully, but no grades will ever be assigned based on a student's personal religious beliefs or conclusions. Faith is ultimately a personal decision, and while respectful engagement is expected, belief cannot and will not be evaluated.

Weekly Topics (Semester 1)

1. The Body as Gift
2. The Body as Dwelling – Structure and Direction
3. Rhythms of Life – Homeostasis and Order
4. Created to Move – Muscles and Bones
5. Breath and Being – The Respiratory System
6. Fuel and Fire – The Digestive System
7. Wired for Connection – Nervous System
8. Beating with Purpose – Cardiovascular System
9. Midterm Review and Moral Reflection
10. The Body in Time – Growth, Aging, and Cell Turnover
11. The Body in Culture – Image and Media
12. The Body in Silence – Sensory Fatigue and Quiet
13. Pain and Healing – Inflammation and Immunity
14. Care and Discipline – Habits and Self-Control
15. Body and Soul – The Unity of the Person
16. Limits and Strength – Fragility and Purpose
17. The Call to Stewardship
18. Final Assessment and Course Reflection + Presentation of Semester Body Project