

Vitae I (9th Grade): Health & Human Stewardship – 36-Week Curriculum Overview

Course Summary:

(Curriculum details are subject to change) This first-year course introduces students to the human body as a gift to be received, understood, and stewarded. Through the integrated lens of anatomy, physiology, virtue, and Scripture, students explore each of the body's major systems with increasing depth. Each week includes scientific instruction, theological reflection, artistic or diagrammatic work, and short assessments. The course is designed to cultivate lifelong habits of reverence, discipline, and gratitude for the body.

Semester 1: Foundations of the Body and Rhythms of Life

Week 1 – The Body as Gift

Students are introduced to the course, the concept of stewardship, and the foundational idea that the body is not owned but received. They'll learn basic organization of the human body (systems, organs, tissues) and reflect on Genesis 1 and the idea of Imago Dei.

Week 2 – The Temple of the Holy Spirit

Students study body planes, cavities, and directional terminology. Spiritually, they explore the call to bodily reverence in 1 Corinthians 6. They'll begin a sketch of the body's major organ zones.

Week 3 – Rhythms of Life

Covers homeostasis, circadian rhythms, temperature regulation, and hormonal signals. Reflective focus on Sabbath rest and order, with Exodus 20 as Scripture anchor.

Week 4 – Created to Move

Muscular and skeletal systems are introduced together. Students learn major muscle groups and bones. Moral focus on movement as service, with Exodus 14 (walking out of slavery) as a lens.

Week 5 – Breathe and Live

Exploration of the respiratory system. Emphasis on structure-function (alveoli, diaphragm). Scripture: God breathing life into Adam (Gen 2:7), tying breath to soul.

Week 6 – Fuel and Fire

Students learn the basics of the digestive system, digestion, and metabolic energy. They reflect on John 6 and the theology of nourishment.

Week 7 – Wired for Connection

Focus on the nervous system—neurons, brain, spinal cord. Moral dimension: the need for silence, attention, and moral decision-making. Psalm 139 featured.

Week 8 – Beating with Purpose

Introduction to the cardiovascular system. Students map blood flow and heart chambers. The Sacred Heart devotion is introduced as a reflection of life-giving circulation.

Week 9 – Midterm Review and Assessment

Students complete a cumulative A&P quiz and a short oral or written reflection on what it means to be made in God's image. No new system introduced this week.

Week 10 – The Body in Time

Covers cell turnover, aging, and stages of development. Ecclesiastes 3 is used to explore time and transformation. Students create a “body through the decades” sketch or timeline.

Week 11 – The Body in Culture

Discussion of media, fitness culture, and modesty. Theological focus on Romans 12: presenting the body as a living sacrifice. Students critique a media message about the body using classical principles.

Week 12 – The Body in Silence

Explores sensory overload and nervous fatigue. No new system, but review of nervous and endocrine systems. Scripture: Elijah in the cave (1 Kings 19) and the “still small voice.”

Week 13 – Pain and Healing

Intro to inflammation, immunity, and healing processes. Spiritual dimension: redemptive suffering and Christ's wounds. Students complete a short comparison between pain as warning and pain as growth.

Week 14 – Care and Discipline

Students analyze their own habits related to food, movement, and screens. Focus on the virtue of temperance (1 Timothy 4:8). This week includes a personal audit log (not graded).

Week 15 – Body and Soul

Students study psychosomatic unity and the Christian anthropology of man (CCC 364–365). They discuss how our bodies influence emotions and prayer.

Week 16 – Living with Limits

Focus on fragility, injury, and disability. Reflection on St. Paul's “thorn” and the dignity of limitation. Students read one testimony or saint story about physical limitation and grace.

Week 17 – The Call to Stewardship

Students review all systems, then explore the idea of moral responsibility for the body. Matthew 25 (“talents”) is the theological anchor. Discussion and journaling on how students will apply what they’ve learned.

Week 18 – Final Assessment and Reflection

Final test covering systems, terminology, and a moral synthesis. Students submit one creative piece (e.g., visual, written, diagrammatic) representing what it means to care for the human body.

Semester 2: Systems, Habits, and the Moral Body

Week 19 – The Skin We’re In

Focus on the integumentary system: structure, temperature regulation, and healing. Reflection on spiritual covering and the dignity of appearance. Genesis 3 and modesty as inner virtue.

Week 20 – Bones and Belonging

Deep dive into the skeletal system: types of bones, joints, calcium, and bone health. Spiritual anchor: Ezekiel 37 (dry bones and resurrection).

Week 21 – Muscles and Strength

Explores muscular system: voluntary/involuntary, endurance, atrophy. Students log simple strength-building exercises and reflect on fortitude.

Week 22 – Heart of the Matter

Returns to the cardiovascular system: detailed heart structure, arteries/veins, blood pressure. Lab work on heart rate and pulse. Devotion to the Sacred Heart revisited.

Week 23 – Breath and Spirit

Respiratory system revisited: gas exchange, lung capacity, breathing practice. Reflection on the Holy Spirit and Ruach (breath) of God.

Week 24 – Fueling the Body

Digestive system revisited in more depth: macronutrients, enzymes, gut-brain connection. Students track a 2-day food log and analyze digestive health. Anchor: the Eucharist and fasting.

Week 25 – The Mind-Body Connection

Nervous system revisited: myelination, stress response, sleep. Journal assignment on attention and tech. Reflect on renewal of the mind (Romans 12).

Week 26 – The Endocrine Orchestra

Intro to hormones, glands, puberty, and cycles. Exploration of stewardship of moods, fertility, and metabolism. Scripture on inner peace and spiritual maturity.

Week 27 – The Body’s Defenders

Immune system, inflammation, fever, and immunity. Students learn basic terms like T-cell, antibody, and autoimmunity. Moral dimension: how the body mirrors the spiritual battle.

Week 28 – Waste and Purity

Urinary system: kidneys, filtration, hydration. Reflection on spiritual cleanliness (Psalm 51). Lab connection: urinalysis indicators.

Week 29 – Reproductive Design

Basic biology of male and female reproductive systems. The focus is theological: design, chastity, and reverence. Clear, reverent, and age-appropriate. Includes reflection on Theology of the Body.

Week 30 – Body and Beauty

Students consider what classical beauty means: proportion, balance, harmony. Light drawing exercise of the hand or foot (Leonardo style). Anchor: Song of Songs (symbolic reading).

Week 31 – Sickness and Sin

Students explore the relationship between sickness and sin in Scripture—not causal, but analogical. Explore the healing miracles of Christ. Compare spiritual illness to bodily dysfunction.

Week 32 – Discipline and Delight

Focus on food, movement, and pleasure. Students examine how discipline leads to freedom and joy. Anchor: Galatians 5 and fruit of the Spirit.

Week 33 – Burnout and Renewal

Students reflect on fatigue, stress, adrenal health, and school/life balance. Guided journal on burnout and spiritual dryness. Psalm 23.

Week 34 – Review and Synthesis Part I

Students begin a system-by-system review in preparation for their final. They revisit favorite weeks and complete a concept map.

Week 35 – Review and Synthesis Part II

Cumulative quiz and oral Socratic prep. Students share one insight they’ve carried from the course.

Week 36 – Final Assessment and Showcase

Final test (mixed-format), optional oral presentation or showcase. Reflection question: “What does it mean to live wisely in the body?”