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## The case for the liberal arts, Part VI: Examining perspectives other than your own

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## Quad 136

### The Case for the Liberal Arts, Part VI: Examining Perspectives Other than Your Own

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## The Case for the Liberal Arts, Part VI: Examining Perspectives Other than Your Own

The Dean of the School of Theology\*Seminary at Saint John's, Bill Cahoy, sent a link to a recent [Atlantic article](#) on studying theology.

“Study Theology, Even If You Don't Believe in God” argues that training in theology requires being an “historian, a philosopher, a linguist, a skillful interpreter of texts both ancient and modern, and probably many other things besides,” according to one Oxford professor. The author makes an important additional point, “Yet, for me, the value of theology lies not merely in the breadth of skills it taught, but in the opportunity it presented to explore a given historical mindset in greater depth.”

In a world in which domestic and international disagreements often result from an unwillingness to attempt to understand world views different than one's own, surely this kind of study is likely to encourage empathy and be useful in all manner of interactions—both personal and professional.

The author laments that “few schools (with the exceptions of historically Catholic institutions like Georgetown and Boston College) offer theology as a major, let alone mandate courses in theology alongside other ‘core’ liberal arts subjects like English or history.”

The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University offer both a major in theology and require two theology courses as part of our common curriculum. This curricular choice comes from a belief in the academic rigor of the discipline, as described above, and from the Catholic Intellectual Tradition that is arguably the basis of the modern university and the founding tradition behind many of the world's greatest universities, even if that history is poorly remembered at many of these same universities.

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### About the

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Michael Hemesath is the 13th president of Saint John's University. A 1981 SJU graduate, Hemesath is the first layperson appointed to a full presidential term at SJU. You can find him on Twitter [at] [PrezHemesath](#).