

## The Benedictine Raven designation

### Why the name “Benedictine Raven”?

Religiously-affiliated peer and aspirant colleges frequently describe portions of the curriculum using names associated with their heritage. As examples:

<u>Institution:</u>	<u>Name tied to heritage:</u>	<u>What the name identifies:</u>
St. Scholastica	→ Dignitas, Veritas	FYS-like course, core curriculum
St. Anselm	→ Conversatio	FYS-like course
Holy Cross	→ Montserrat	FYS-like course
Notre Dame	→ Moreau	FYS-like course
Loyola Baltimore	→ Messina	FYS-like course
Creighton	→ Magis	core curriculum
Concordia (MN)	→ Credo	Honors program

Currently, there is no nomenclature within the Integrations Curriculum that is indicative of CSB/SJU’s Benedictine heritage. Therefore, using such a name for the portion of our curriculum specifically intended to educate about a Benedictine perspective is fitting.

We chose to name this designation the Benedictine Raven because the raven has long been associated with the life of Benedict. In St. Gregory’s account of the life of St. Benedict, he describes how a raven flew away with a loaf of poisoned bread intended for Benedict. Ever since, many depictions of St. Benedict are accompanied by a raven, including the prominent statue in the plaza outside of the SJU Stephen B. Humphrey theatre. The accompanying attachment contains photographs of Benedictine ravens currently displayed on our campuses. While there are contemporary non-Benedictine connotations with ravens, one goal of a liberal arts education is to help students to see things in a new light. Therefore, the name of this designation itself provides a first step in educating students about an aspect of our Benedictine heritage. It begins the conversation.

### Place in the Integrations Curriculum

The opening sentence of the Integrations Curriculum document (updated 1/13/20) states:

*The College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University provide students an education grounded in two key traditions: the Catholic Intellectual Tradition as guided by the Benedictine principles of the colleges’ founders, and the liberal arts tradition of broad, multi-disciplinary, inquiry.*

For a curriculum to be “grounded in” our Catholic Benedictine liberal arts mission, students must be exposed to such content outside of their Theology courses. The Benedictine Raven would replace the formerly proposed Benedictine Engagement designation. It targets almost the same learning goal, with only minor changes:

[Original] Benedictine Engagement Learning Goal: Students develop an awareness of Benedictine practices, values, and heritage through texts and experiences inside or outside the classroom and reflect on how these might apply to questions in individual or social lives.

[Revision\*] Benedictine Raven Learning Goal: Students develop an awareness of a Benedictine perspective (practices, values, and heritage) using texts or experiences inside or outside the classroom and reflect on how a Benedictine perspective might apply to questions in contemporary life.

\*wording changes are underlined

The Benedictine Raven provides students with more advanced (scaffolded) learning of Benedictine practices, values, and heritage throughout the curriculum. The intent of this designation is to encourage students to reflect on

a Benedictine perspective throughout their curricular work, and especially outside of the exposure they typically receive in their Theological coursework or their co-curricular activities.

In regard to its placement within the conceptual framework of the Integrations Curriculum, the Benedictine Raven designation would fit well within the category of “Purposeful Living.”

**The Benedictine Raven can be met in a variety of ways. This designation can be applied to:**

1. *Thematic Focus courses.* Though not required, it is likely that faculty teaching courses entirely devoted to the topics of Justice, Truth, Movement, Environment, or Technology and Society may find meaningful connections with a Benedictine perspective.
2. *Cultural and Social Difference: Systems courses.* Though not required, it is likely that faculty teaching courses devoted to examination of how constructions of race, gender and ethnicity shape structural inequities and affect access, participation in the communal life, and other questions of justice may find meaningful connections with Benedictine perspectives.
3. *Any course within one’s discipline* (regardless of whether or not it contributes to the Integrations Curriculum in any other way) where the instructor sees an opportunity to integrate a Benedictine perspective with their course content.
4. *Any other course within the Integrations Curriculum* where the instructor sees an opportunity to integrate a Benedictine perspective with their course content.
5. *Study Abroad Seminar courses*, particularly for Greco-Roman, Roman-Greco, and Galway programs, surrounding their visits to Subiaco (where St. Benedict experienced his conversion) and Glenstal Abbey, respectively. Also available for any other semester-long or short-term study abroad that lends itself to Benedictine content.
6. *One-credit courses built around intensive experiences* such as a Benedictine Living & Learning Community, Benedictine retreats, or Alternative Break Experiences that intentionally weave in a Benedictine perspective.
7. *One- or two-credit courses currently in the catalog that primarily focus on a Benedictine perspective*, including:
  - COLG 102 – INTRODUCTION TO THE BENEDICTINE TRADITION: An introduction to Benedictine history, thought, and practices at the lower-division level.
  - COLG 103 – TOPICS IN THE BENEDICTINE TRADITION: An exploration of one or more specific elements of the Benedictine tradition in the context of their manifestation in Benedictine communities today; taught at the lower-division level. Offered on campus or abroad.
  - COLG 201 – BENEDICTINE HERITAGE AND PRACTICE: Benedict as portrayed by Gregory the Great and in subsequent literature and art, the spread of Benedictine monasticism worldwide, historical reforms of Benedictine monasticism; the history of Metten and Eichstatt and those monasteries’ role in founding Saint John’s Abbey and Saint Benedict’s Monastery; the early histories of Saint John’s and Saint Benedict’s, key historical figures in women’s and men’s monasticism; and key themes in applying monastic practices to one’s life in college and beyond: Awareness of God, Community, Living, Dignity of Work, Hospitality, Justice, Listening, Moderation, Peace, Respect for Persons, Stewardship, and Care for the Environment.
  - COLG 202 – TOPICS: COMPARATIVE STUDY IN THE BENEDICTINE TRADITION: A study of applications of Benedictine thought and practice in multiple cultural, societal, or historical contexts.
8. *Any other courses that may develop over time that meet criteria a.-d. below.*

**To qualify for The Benedictine Raven designation, the course/experience will:**

- a) Carry curricular credit
- b) Be taught outside of a THEO course number and outside courses that fulfill Theology 2
- c) Produce a reflective artifact for the portfolio that addresses the criteria in The Benedictine Raven rubric, a draft of which is provided below

**Benedictine Raven Artifact**

Explains or demonstrates how the student used a Benedictine perspective as a lens for examining or interpreting questions in contemporary life.

**The Benedictine Raven Rubric**

The following rubric will be used to: a) determine if proposed courses can acquire The Benedictine Raven designation and b) how the reflective artifact for the portfolio will be assessed.

	<b><i>Meets Expectations</i></b>
<b><i>Articulates awareness of a Benedictine perspective</i></b>	Identifies and describes prominent elements of a Benedictine perspective.
<b><i>Applies a Benedictine perspective to questions in contemporary life</i></b>	Describes relevant applications of a Benedictine perspective.
<b><i>Provides relevant evidence for the portfolio artifact</i></b>	Provides relevant evidence that demonstrates how the student applies a Benedictine perspective to questions in contemporary life.

**Supporting exposure to Benedictine ideas outside of The Benedictine Raven:**

- 1) College Success (INTG 105) courses orienting student to Benedictine values as part of their session on “Community”
- 2) Theology 1 meeting its department-specific Benedictine learning goal, in which students recognize Benedictine perspectives and connect them to topics in the course
- 3) XPD inclusion of a Benedictine reflection question as part of its Bonner Leader and Summer Leadership Fellows programs as well as suggesting (though not requiring) such questions for service-learning and internships
- 4) Programming and experiences provided by Student Development
- 5) Learning Integration (Write 3) courses are intended to help students make connections across their coursework, in particular, giving students the chance to thoughtfully reflect on how required components of the Integrations Curriculum tie together. As such, students will use this course to reflect on the Benedictine Raven designation and its relationship to their liberal arts education.

**Integration and Assessment:**

- 1) The above rubric is a draft of the rubric that will be used to assess the reflective artifacts students must place in their portfolios by the completion of their Benedictine Raven course.

- 2) Courses carrying the Benedictine Raven designation will assess the criteria of the Benedictine Raven designation.

### **Advantages of The Benedictine Raven:**

- 1) Opt-out flexibility. No instructor will be required to adopt The Benedictine Raven designation for their course. The spirit of The Benedictine Raven is to encourage broad participation among faculty in integrating a Benedictine perspective into their courses. Therefore, we encourage all faculty to reflect on how they might do so, but especially faculty teaching Thematic Focus courses or Cultural and Social Diversity Systems courses.
- 2) Opt-in flexibility. Any course (outside of THEO-numbered courses or courses that fulfill Theology 2) ordinarily offered to sophomores through seniors may apply for The Benedictine Raven. This will allow the vast majority of faculty to explore connections between their course content and our Benedictine mission.
- 3) Pedagogical flexibility. Unlike the engagements model, faculty are free to integrate a Benedictine perspective into their courses however they wish. Courses could be experiential in nature, having students engage with the monastic communities or in service roles from a Benedictine perspective. However, courses could meet The Benedictine Raven goals by doing a more theoretical analysis of Benedictine characteristics without an outside-of-the-classroom experience.
- 4) Courses incorporating a Benedictine perspective can include critical evaluation. Instructors can determine how to best educate students about a Benedictine perspective. It is fair game to examine Benedictine practices, values, and heritage through a lens of critique, provided the coverage accurately and fairly represents the perspective.
- 5) Allows experiences outside of traditional courses. The Benedictine Raven meets the spirit of the former engagements model by allowing experiences such as retreats and ABE's to potentially count. This Benedictine Raven widens opportunities for mentoring students in a Benedictine perspective to qualified individuals beyond the faculty.
- 6) Ensures appropriate rigor. The Benedictine Raven must connect to a credit-bearing curricular experience. This will help ensure that it is an intellectual academic experience rather than purely reflective. Experiences outside of traditional courses must require substantive material regarding the foundations of the Benedictine perspective and require analysis as well as reflection, thereby meeting the same criteria as any other course applying for this designation.
- 7) Provides clear oversight. Because The Benedictine Raven is connected to credit-bearing curricular experiences, there will be an instructor of record in each case. The instructor will provide the foundational background on the Benedictine perspective, design and assign the artifact for the portfolio, and mentor and assess student work.

### **Benedictine Raven Certificate Program & Banquet**

Although not a formal part of the proposal, Benedictine Raven courses create an opportunity for students to tailor their education around courses steeped in our Benedictine mission. The Benedictine Institute would be interested in creating and potentially funding a certificate program and annual banquet for students who completed at least four Benedictine Raven courses, showing their commitment to thinking about their education from a Benedictine perspective. This certificate program could assist in marketing our schools to prospective students. It may also be incorporated into the Pathways to Distinction program.

**Throughout this process we have consulted many others through:**

- Anonymous surveys sent to all faculty, staff, and monastics
- Conversations with Shane Miller and the IICC board, Kris Nairn and the JFS Executive Committee, Barb May, Julie Gruska, Angie Schmidt Whitney, Adia Zeman Theis, Kari Shane Davis Zimmerman, Rachelle Larson, Terry Johnson, Kevin Clancy, Margaret Nuzzolese Conway, and S. Sharon Nohner, and the CSB/SJU Department of Theology.

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