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*University of St. Michael's College Academic Plan*

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## Introduction

### History and Vision

The institution of the university is born from the heart of the Catholic Church. Its existence demonstrates the esteem and need for higher learning that has always characterized the life of the Church. The origins of the University of St. Michael's College (USMC) lie in this esteem and need, expressed by Bishop Charbonnel of Toronto through his call to the Basilian Fathers in 1852 to come into his fledgling diocese to establish an institution of higher learning. In the past, the ecclesial character of USMC has evoked a generous desire to participate in its life and mission on the part of many members of religious orders, diocesan priests, and lay men and women—especially the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Loretto Sisters.

USMC embraces the legacy of the three original religious congregations by seeking inspiration in their mottos: “Teach me goodness, discipline, and knowledge” (Basilian Fathers); “Finding God in all things” (Loretto Sisters); and “The love of Christ has gathered us together into one” (Sisters of St. Joseph).

USMC is Canada's leading Catholic university. The laws of Ontario mandate USMC “to be a post-secondary institution in which the faith and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church are maintained and witness is borne to the Christian message.”<sup>1</sup> As such, USMC is an academic community that, within the framework of its federation with the University of Toronto (U of T), contributes to the transmission and expansion of knowledge, and prepares young people for research, teaching, service to Church and society in public and private offices, the practice of the professions, participation in the world of work generally, and the satisfactions and challenges of family life.

USMC fulfills these functions principally through the provision of programs informed by the Catholic intellectual tradition while respecting the autonomy proper to each form of knowledge. It does so according to a conception of knowledge as intended to serve the human person and social life, both also seen in their transcendent dimension, taking a high view of the foundational place of a disciplined freedom in human life. At the heart of a Catholic university is an unwavering commitment to academic freedom, “which is the guarantee given to those involved in teaching and research that, within their specific specialized branch of knowledge, and according to the methods proper to that specific area, they may search for the truth wherever analysis and evidence leads them, and may teach and publish the results of this search, keeping in mind the cited criteria, that is, safeguarding the rights of the individual and of society within the confines of the truth and the common good.”<sup>2</sup> As federated college in the U of T, USMC also subscribes to the U of T's *Statement on Freedom of Speech*.<sup>3</sup>

Within the limits of its practical possibilities, it is also the particular task of USMC to make accessible to its own students and to all interested persons some of the rich and various elements that make up the Catholic intellectual tradition, and to do this in a way that is neither strident nor apologetic.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://stmikes.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/USMC-Act-2005-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Ex corde ecclesiae*, par. 12, note 15.

<sup>3</sup> <https://stmikes.utoronto.ca/news/st-michaels-adopts-university-torontos-freedom-speech-policy/>

Just as any university is a place where society does its thinking, a Catholic university is one place where the Church does its thinking—about anything and everything. Cosmopolitan and confident, USMC is a Catholic university that flourishes because of its dialogue with the leading currents of secular life and scholarship and with a variety of faith traditions. USMC thrives through its multifaceted relationship to one of the world’s leading public research universities. Making a distinct and timely contribution to U of T, USMC proposes that the life of faith and the life of the mind engage each other in ways that are inspiring and demanding, and that the search for the true, good, and beautiful shares the same source and summit as the call for social justice.

USMC offers its students, staff, librarians, and faculty a hospitable, yet demanding, community. It welcomes and respects members of all faiths and those with none, those who seek to nurture a concern for the common good and who share an enthusiasm for the challenge of responsible and productive citizenship in order to build a just and peaceful world. In sum, USMC invites and empowers all of its members to pursue lives of excellence.

### The Federation Context

When Henry Carr, CSB, (1880-1963) first promoted the idea of federation for St Michael’s College, his goal was to move Catholic higher education from its insular state to a more robust and inclusive context. He saw federation as a conversation, a collaboration, where Catholic students could glean from the very best scholarship of a secular university and where secular and non-Catholic students could engage Catholic scholars of different disciplines. USMC remains the flagship for federation to this day.

USMC’s relationship with U of T is bound by two agreements. The *Federation Agreement* binds the College to the policies, procedures, and pedagogy of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, as well as the Kelly Library to the University of Toronto Library system. The *Memorandum of Agreement* between the University of Toronto and the Toronto School of Theology connects the Faculty of Theology to the policies, procedures, and pedagogy of the School of Graduate Studies. These two relationships form the context of learning at USMC, while this community makes USMC a centre of Catholic intellectual thought and an institution of influence, offering perspectives both global and local, historic and contemporary.

In January 2015, the Senate of USMC issued a discussion paper that predicted that a “unified vision will foster a sense of belonging and collegiality, and prevent a retreat into divisional silos. It will demonstrate a commitment to a single purpose, in which the academic divisions are seen to be interconnected, mutually supportive, collaborating—not mutually irrelevant and competing for resources. This is a Catholic vision of solidarity and subsidiarity in pursuit of the common good.”<sup>4</sup>

This *University of St. Michael’s College Academic Plan* seeks to provide a unified vision that is fiscally prudent, but driven by mission.

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<sup>4</sup> Michael O’Connor, Michael Attridge, Richard Carter, Julia Lauwers, *The Academic Mission of Senate: A Discussion Paper for the Senate of the University of St Michael’s College*, (Toronto: n.p., 2015), 3.3 (p.6).

## Mission

The University of St. Michael's College, federated with the University of Toronto, seeks to excel as Canada's leading Catholic university.

## Values

### 1. Hospitality

- A. Building bridges and embracing ecumenical, interfaith, and intercultural dialogue
- B. Bringing together and honouring diverse voices, actively removing barriers to participation
- C. Seeking to be a boundless community, where any member of the community is able to feel at home
- D. Making space for mutual curiosity, collaborative inquiry, and courageous vulnerability

### 2. Goodness

- A. Committing to uphold the dignity of every human being and common good of all
- B. Modelling good citizenship
- C. Nurturing good “ancestors”—who look to the consequences of their lives and decisions seven generations from now
- D. Seeking to live and promote justice and mercy, integrity and honesty, compassion and gratitude

### 3. Discipline

- A. Pursuing academic excellence and critical thinking at all levels in a focused and purposeful manner
- B. Fostering a contemplative gaze, developing the ability to take time (to look, to listen, to reflect)

### 4. Knowledge

- A. Approaching the curriculum in an intentionally Catholic way and fully committed to academic freedom, seeking knowledge for its own sake, and exploring connections with the Catholic tradition in all its breadth
- B. Pursuing academic excellence and aiming to educate the whole person
- C. Engaging wholeheartedly with the worlds of politics, business, science, sports, media, and the arts—in and out of the classroom
- D. Embracing the humanistic values of liberal education that have typified Catholic education at its best

### 5. Wonder

- A. Allowing questions of ultimate meaning and purpose to surface and inspire
- B. Assuming the intelligibility of the universe and human openness to the transcendent

C. Fostering a joyful openness to beauty and mystery

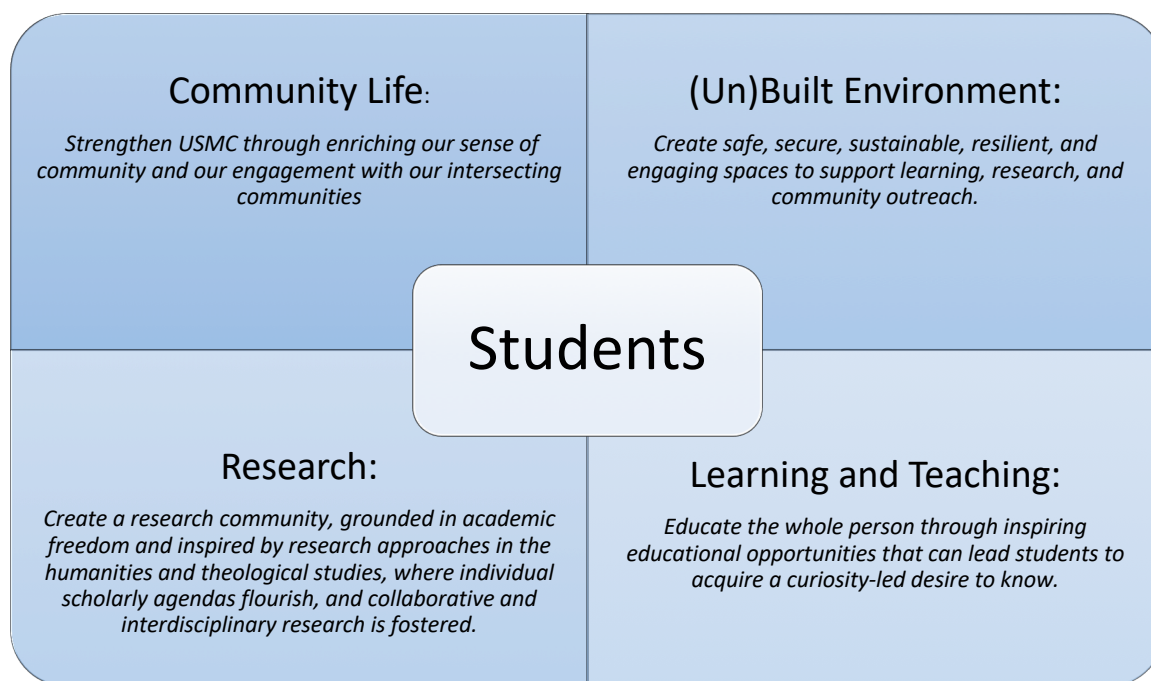
6. Solidarity

- A. Sharing each other's highs and lows, capable of festivity, remembrance, and celebration
- B. Sharing a sense of time, history, heritage, and providence
- C. Drawing on the best of Catholic tradition, and carrying that tradition forward (the method of *resourcement* and *aggiornamento* employed by Vatican II)

## Our Priorities

In seeking to fulfill the mission in conjunction with our shared values, we have identified four priorities: community life, the (un)built environment, research, and learning and teaching. All of these are standard fare for academic plans, and we have adopted two related approaches in how we understand them. First, while each priority comprises a set of discrete goals and objectives, they are interconnected and ultimately each represents one perspective on the university as a whole, so there is no explicit hierarchy of these goals. That means there will be some overlap in actors and actions amongst the various goals of different priorities. However, we also see a sequence among these priorities, in that some are the conditions for the successful implementation of others.

This plan begins with what we consider to be the essential foundation of a Catholic university: community life. That community needs a physical space to flourish and the care of that space must be commensurate with our Catholic values. Community and our environment should then provide the context for research. Finally, community, environment and research should culminate in learning and teaching.



## P1. Community Life

*Strengthen USMC through enriching our sense of community and our engagement with our intersecting communities.*

When the university emerged during the European Middle Ages, community was its very essence. These institutions were known as the “community of masters and students” (*universitas magistrorum et scholarium*) because they had come together for the common purpose of learning. Today, community life at university is highly complex and multivalent. USMC has the challenge of maintaining community when in fact it is the intersection point of multiple groups and associations. USMC is where commuter students pass through to their university departments on the other side of campus. It is where some students live in residence. But there are students who live in residence who have never taken a course on the USMC campus. There is a community of graduate students in theology who intersect with six other theological colleges. There are the groups of students defined by the College-sponsored programs, as well as smaller ones created by the new SMC One programs. USMC is also attuned to the fact that newcomers to Canada and international students both constitute groups who also cross into the larger USMC community. These intersecting student communities are then served by intersecting clusters of faculty, some of whom are jointly appointed at USMC and the University of Toronto (and partly belong to an off-campus department), while others hold their tenure or teaching appointment fully at USMC.

Fostering community should emerge from the application of a core set of values in Catholic higher education. Hospitality, goodness and solidarity—all these are elements of community. USMC seeks to form men and women to live for others, and this overriding goal is impossible to reach without a commitment to community. There is also the pedagogical benefit that what is learned communally is retained longer and the application of theoretical ideas becomes more readily apparent. Furthermore, Catholic Social teaching reminds us that we are called to care especially for the neglected and marginalized, and so one priority of community life must include a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We must discover ways for our community to be of service to Indigenous peoples.

To maintain a healthy educational community, USMC has identified three goals: to establish ways to invigorate our sense of belonging to the culture of USMC; to inspire engagement with our Academic Communities; and, to engage communities beyond USMC boundaries.

### P1, Goal 1:

*Invigorate our sense of belonging to the culture of USMC.*

#### Our Approaches

- A. Promote a USMC culture that is student-focused, participatory, and inclusive, respecting and encouraging diversity.
- B. Foster an understanding of, and engagement with, our institutional legacy, namely the Congregation of St Basil, the Sisters of St Joseph and the Loretto Sisters.

- C. Encourage a shared sense of belonging through co-curricular and extra-curricular programs and opportunities.
- D. Promote the development and reputation of USMC institutes and related initiatives as tangible manifestations of our research and educational commitment.
- E. Recognize contributions by staff, faculty, librarians, students, and alumni to initiatives that strengthen USMC culture and community.

## P1, Goal 2:

### Inspire engagement with our academic communities

#### Our Approaches

- A. Enhance awareness of the institutional heritage of USMC and its contributions to U of T's mission.
- B. Collaborate on public events engaging the broader U of T community with USMC on the USMC campus.
- C. Encourage participation by faculty at U of T in the USMC Fellows program.
- D. Strengthen the engagement with the resident language departments and research institutes such as PIMS.
- E. Investigate ways in which resident departmental arrangements might evolve to effect more appropriate synergies with USMC's strengths.
- F. Invigorate initiatives through the Federation Framework that foster closer and more active collaborations between the U of T federated universities and associated colleges.

## P1, Goal 3:

### Engage communities beyond USMC boundaries.

#### Our Approaches

- A. Increase the opportunities for high school students to engage with initiatives and life at USMC.
- B. Create spaces of dialogue that reach across the university/public boundary and invite broader participation by Toronto citizens in the life of USMC.
- C. Construct initiatives, particularly through the Division of Continuing Education, to engage the wider religious communities in Toronto in the life of USMC with a focus on inter-religious dialogue.
- D. Engage with parents and families of students through special events
- E. Engage St Basil's Church as a bridge between USMC and our local community.
- F. Establish partnership programs with private and public institutions that will enable USMC to serve communities in need more effectively.
- G. Demonstrate our commitment to social justice through more visible engagement with marginalized groups, such as First Nations communities, and provide opportunities for those groups to become part of the USMC community
- H. Celebrate contributions by our faculty, staff, students, and alumni to the socio-cultural life of Toronto and Canada.



## P2. The (Un)Built Environment

*Create safe, secure, sustainable, resilient, and engaging spaces to support learning, research, and community outreach.*

Perhaps one of the best-known principles of Catholic social teaching is “care for God’s creation.” The growing emphasis in Catholic thought on the environment and care for the earth as humanity’s common home is the result of the 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si’* of Pope Francis. Here Pope Francis challenged all his readers to think about everyday practices, social policy, and elements of statecraft in terms of their environmental impact.

There is a tendency in the popular mind to think of ecology as only concerned with forests, oceans and fields. Catholic teaching reminds us that everything that issues from the creative minds of human beings also belongs to the domain of creation, and so there is a theological and spiritual dimension to the care of buildings as much as there is for greenspace. For the USMC community, this means when we strategize about facilities we have an additional question to answer. All responsible universities want to ensure that academic planning is the engine that drives the development and maintenance of an institution’s facilities. USMC also wants to ensure that the integration of academic planning and facilities management is ecologically responsible.

There is also the aesthetic dimension of our built environment. We all want to maintain the elegant beauty of our campus, both in terms of how we retain our greenspace as we consider building new buildings as well as in how we responsibly maintain our historic buildings with limited financial resources. We also seek responsible use of our land is to ensure the safety of students, staff and faculty everywhere on campus.

To develop an ecologically balanced approach to our built environment, USMC has identified four goals: to leverage our urban location for the mutual benefit of USMC and the city; to develop a *strategic plan* that facilitates and supports the Academic Plan; to ensure campus-wide hospitality, safety, and security for our students, staff, faculty, and visitors; and, to invigorate the land entrusted to us and steward it through an environmental sensibility and financial sustainability

### P2, Goal 1:

#### Leverage our urban location for the mutual benefit of USMC and the city

#### Our Approaches

- A. Encourage student-led initiatives mentored by faculty or staff that create opportunities to enhance our environment while connecting to, collaborating with, educating, and providing opportunities for the larger community, (e.g., a vegetable garden, apothecary(?), beekeeping).
- B. Enhance our fabric to support our ability to host events that bring the university community together.
- C. Expand the art collections, an invigorating force on the USMC campus, and develop a plan for their management, promotion, conservation, and preservation.

- D. Maintain, use, and celebrate our religious spaces.

P2, Goal 2: Develop a strategic plan led by USMC's Collegium that facilitates and supports the Academic Plan.

#### Our Approaches

- A. Develop fundraising priorities based on divisional strategic plans to augment and modernize our built environment.
- B. Maximize the classroom experience by updating technology and furniture.
- C. Leverage our material resources to enhance the curriculum and engage the larger community.
- D. Enhance and maintain the beauty of the campus.

#### P2, Goal 3:

Ensure campus-wide hospitality, safety, and security for our students, staff, faculty, and visitors.

#### Our approaches

- A. Work with the city to increase pedestrian safety on public streets that intersect the campus.
- B. Adopt protocols, procedures, and practices that enhance security on campus.
- C. Conduct risk analysis to develop and implement a risk management plan.

#### P2, Goal 4:

Invigorate the land entrusted to us and steward it through environmental commitment and financial sustainability.

#### Our approaches

- A. Implement best practices in sustainability to reduce USMC's carbon footprint.
- B. Maintain and refresh green spaces.
- C. Conduct an environmental scan and act to reduce environmental hazards across the campus.
- D. Review spaces for both cost savings and environmental savings, e.g., electricity, water, keys, and other materials that could be minimized with alternative interventions.
- E. Consider re-purposing and refurbishing before buying new.
- F. Secure space to support our academic mission.

## P3. Research

*Create a research community grounded in academic freedom and inspired by research approaches in the humanities and theological studies, where individual scholarly agendas flourish, and collaborative and interdisciplinary research is fostered.*

All university education is grounded in research. Moreover, as a university college federated with an internationally ranked university, USMC has a responsibility to support research opportunities for faculty, librarians, and students alike. While research is fostered primarily in partnership with graduate programs, it is the responsibility of all faculty and librarians to engage in research and to create opportunities for students to participate in research projects.

The USMC community supports both basic and applied research as well as creative endeavours of the fine and performing arts and literary production. USMC is committed to creating an environment that promotes the full freedom of scholars to pose research questions on any topic, and facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration as they seek the answers to those questions. While many universities invest in research in hopes of generating revenue through technology transfer or patents, USMC invests in research because it promotes focused and purposeful academic excellence and critical thinking. Research fosters a contemplative gaze in which scholars and students develop the ability to take time to look, listen, and reflect.

In order to create a successful research community, USMC three main goals: to establish strategies to foster a collaborative research community, to create opportunities for students to engage in research, and to support individual research agendas.

### P3, Goal 1:

Foster a collaborative research community.

#### Our Approaches

- A. Raise the profile of, and increase the resources for, existing research units.
- B. Establish new institutes and creative studios (such as a new Institute of Music and Liturgy).
- C. Make more strategic use of the Kelly Library to provide faculty and librarians opportunities to explore possible collaborative research or discover where research agendas might intersect.
- D. Co-sponsor research seminars and events of interest to related U of T departments (e.g., DSR, English, History, Medieval Studies, iSchool).
- E. Act to strengthen the synergies in research among the Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies (PIMS), the Faculty of Theology, and SMC.

### P3, Goal 2:

Create opportunities for students to engage in research.

#### Our Approaches

- A. Establish and fund opportunities for international research engagement (travel, archival visits, international conferences, etc.).
- B. Convene a research seminar group for each sponsored program. The agenda for each is generated by students' interests and research questions (which should arise from learning in the program's courses). Faculty members, librarians, Fellows and Theology AD students could be the facilitators.
- C. Create internships for undergraduates to assist faculty members and librarians in specific research projects and acknowledge their work in all research output.
- D. Increase the number of SSHRC applications across USMC and encourage applicants to include funds for both undergraduate and graduate research assistants.
- E. Invite SMC Fellows to engage as research mentors.
- F. Implement a research assistantship program (tied to the funding packages) in Theology where up to 10 Advanced Degree students are assigned as research assistants to faculty members in Theology and the SMC.

### P3, Goal 3:

Support individual research agendas.

#### Our Approaches

- A. Showcase and celebrate the research of individual faculty members, librarians and students.
- B. Assist faculty and librarians in grant writing.
- C. Sustain and enhance Kelly Library services that directly support research.

## P4. Learning and Teaching

*Educate the whole person through inspiring educational opportunities that can lead students to acquire a curiosity-led desire to know*

We assert that there is an “intentionally Catholic way” to approach curriculum, but this does not disconnect us from federation. Rather it reminds us of the rationale behind our commitment to federation. This “Catholic way” refers to two overriding principles. First, we are committed to educating the whole person; that is, we do not simply deliver information to students, but we seek to teach them to think critically and to wonder about the beauty and mystery of the universe. We help them discover what it means to be human and to realize that both difference and commonality within humanity are to be understood, embraced, and celebrated. Higher education must include intellectual, social and spiritual components because they all comprise the reality of being human.

Second, the Catholic intellectual tradition facilitates both a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to the world. Whether the nomenclature is the “Liberal Arts” or “Arts and Sciences”, all the disciplines in university life have a role to play in a Catholic university college. Educating the whole person means we challenge our students to think about the world, people, and even themselves from more than one disciplinary perspective. The commitment to a diverse educational topography is further enhanced by a form of hospitality that particularly welcomes those who do not necessarily share a Catholic worldview.

These two principles demand both academic freedom and a recognition that ultimately the pursuit of knowledge is best achieved when it is oriented to justice and the common good.

In fulfilling this priority, the USMC community has identified two major goals: to invigorate our learning community and to innovate the kinds of learning opportunities with which our students engage. Those two come together in a further goal, namely to regularly celebrate the educational success of the members of our community.

### P4 , Goal 1:

Invigorate our learning community.

#### Our Approaches

- A. Strengthen our ability to attract a diverse and motivated student body.
- B. Develop recruitment policies that attract faculty, librarians, and staff that reflect the diversity of our student body.
- C. Define our commitment to providing our students with an inclusive, responsive, and dynamic learning environment.

- D. Create a vibrant community of teachers, fellows, mentors, and staff to support our students' learning experience as active co-learners.
- E. Maximize the contribution of USMC institutes and the Kelly Library to the educational experience of our students.
- F. Engage our students in the rigorous approaches to assessing, reflecting, and examining ideas inherent in the humanities and liberal arts.
- G. Inspire a focus on the interior life through encouraging the intellectual, psychological, social, and spiritual development of our students.

#### P4, Goal 2:

Innovate the kinds of learning opportunities with which our students engage.

##### Our Approaches

- A. Encourage Faculty and course instructors to adopt and develop a diverse set of teaching strategies that can best serve a variety of learning styles.
- B. Develop a Division of Continuing Education that can serve the needs of alumni and Torontonians in general and can inspire life-long learning.
- C. Construct community partnerships that provide service- and field-based learning opportunities for our students.
- D. Reward learning beyond the traditional classroom setting.
- E. Encourage educational approaches that enable interdisciplinary, inclusive, multimodal, and multilingual learning.
- F. Establish possibilities for our students to engage in both empirical and experiential learning.
- G. Offer our students the chance to engage in original research with leading academics.
- H. Create new institutes that can integrate faculty members' research and teaching interests.
- I. Explore possibilities for collaborative graduate programs with faculties and campuses beyond Arts and Sciences.

#### P4, Goal 3:

Celebrate educational success.

##### Our Approaches

- A. Recognize and reward our outstanding mentors, faculty, librarians, fellows, and staff.
- B. Increase the number and value of merit-based student bursaries in recognition of learning success after year one.
- C. Create student research assistantships to support extra-classroom learning opportunities for students and to support the research of faculty, librarians, and fellows.
- D. Develop graduate programs that reward our students through enabling them to contribute to the delivery of undergraduate education at USMC.
- E. Acknowledge diverse ways of expressing and representing knowledge.
- F. Reward curiosity and engagement with our intellectual tradition