This course will explore the topic of biblical theology but do so historically. These two approaches, the theological and the historical, are frequently pinned against one another, taken implicitly and sometimes explicitly as diametrically opposed. But we shall reconsider this frame of mind, and ask whether in fact the opposite is more accurate: Biblical theology is best appreciated in the light of the world(s) from which the biblical texts come. To accomplish this task we will look at writings from the ancient Near East and from first-century Mediterranean world(s) that bear on some of the main themes of biblical theology, including ideas of origins, monotheism, revelation, the nature of the divine-human relationship, the names and natures of God, eschatology, redemption, and sin and forgiveness.

By taking on this challenge we do not aim to excavate the biblical text for the reconstruction of the historical Israel or the historical Jesus and historical first-century Christ-believing communities. Our project is intended to shed light on theological ideas, when compared to the world in and from which this idea come. Naturally, in order for this experiment to work, the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean world, too, must be considered in theological terms.

Technological developments, medical and bio-medical progress, the possibility to live in cyberworlds, new forms of relationship, advances in neurosciences require a new reflection of the fundamental elements of human existence. Boundaries between human/animal, man/woman, nature/technology, body/mind can no longer be drawn with certainty; instead, the specifically human seems to be to be situated right at these boundaries. Such a reflection about the human being under conditions of his/her concrete socio-historical, cultural context is not only reasonable in theology, but a necessary contribution for the understanding of God-human relationship. In this seminar, we will explore themes in the theological reflection about the human being (creation, freedom, identity, failure, etc.) in relation to the contemporary cultural context, asking both about the challenges posed by new socio-cultural developments to theological anthropological reflection, and theology’s contributions to the understanding of the human being.

Analyzing essays by Orthodox and Catholic theologians, and relevant documents, the seminar will consider the important and sensitive issues of primacy (and the authority of the
primate) and the role of councils and synods in the historical development of the Church. It will study the theological traditions that developed around those issues over the centuries and explore their implications for contemporary ecclesiology and inter-Christian dialogue. In that regard, it will consider John Zizioulas’s *Being as Communion*, and his theological argument that the reality of the Church is inseparable from the communion revealed in the Eucharist. Zizioulas contends that that the foundational ground of the Church is not the papacy or synodality. Communion (*koinonia*) is the ontological foundation of the Church “con-stituted” by the Spirit, acting simultaneously in the one and the many, the local and the universal. He sees the need for a Third Vatican Council “to make communion condition the very being of the Church.”

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**THM: Racial Justice and Christian Ethics**

Dr. Vincent Lloyd  
**THL 9310-001**  
*Non-PhD students with permission of PhD Program Director*

In this course we will explore problems of racial injustice, with a particular focus on the US context, and we will explore resources within the Christian tradition to advance racial justice. After a survey of key theories of race, including accounts of whiteness, black feminist theory, and decolonial theories, we will turn to historical accounts of the role racial thinking has in the Christian tradition – in late antiquity, in the medieval world, and in the United States. Then, we will turn to a variety of constructive projects attempting to advance racial justice in dialogue with the Christian tradition, including the work of Delores Williams, Emmanuel Katongole, and Gil Anidjar. The course aims to equip students to think about racial justice in their future scholarship, whether that scholarship is historical, ethnographic, systematic, or ethical.

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**THM: Models of Medieval Theology**

Dr. Kevin Hughes  
**THL 9420-001**  
*Non-PhD students with permission of PhD Program Director*

This course will take as its starting point the now-classic typology of modes of medieval theology – Monastic, Scholastic, Vernacular. But we take this up with the conviction that theological plurality is not only inevitable in a tradition, but essential to it. We will explore texts that both fit and test the limits of the typology, discerning how each mode or style might illumine the mystery of God in a particular way, but also the ways in which it might obscure that mystery. This will be of historical value insofar as it allows us to see precisely what kind of contribution various medieval theologians and/or modes of theology have made to the history of Christian thought and practice. Beyond this, however, an understanding of a certain kind of theological plurality contributes richly to our own present theological *ethos* and serves as an important witness to the diversity of gifts in the church. Texts will include: Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, and Angela of Foligno.

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**THM: Sober Inebriation: The Apophatic Tradition**

Fr. Martin Laird, OSA  
**THL 9430-001**  
*Non-PhD students with permission of PhD Program Director*

The apophatic tradition remains all the rage as books and articles continue proliferate and inspire. Rooted in the prayed theology of the Early Church, East and West, the pole star guiding this ship is the transcendent mystery we call God, who is too intimate to human identity for concepts, words, and images to pin God down by having the final word. Adapting Rowan Williams only slightly, the apophatic tradition is “the great speaking absence between the
cherubim.”

Famous for its paradoxes such as sober inebriation, ever moving repose, learned ignorance, luminous dark, this course will trace its historical development of the apophatic tradition (including its philosophical and Scriptural moorings) over the course of centuries. We shall consider those key theologians most representative of this tradition such as Gregory of Nyssa, Denys the Areopagite, Eriugena, Meister Eckhart, among others. We shall also consider its expression in the Philokalia, where we see its practical role in the training of the theologian’s mind through the cultivation of stillness. Finally, we shall consider how this tradition lives on in our own culture, by considering, for example, select poetry of T.S. Eliot, R.S. Thomas, Czeslaw Milosz, among others.

**Early Modern Spirituality**

THL 9530-001

Dr. Brett Grainger

Tuesday 4:30 – 6:50 pm

Non-PhD students with permission of PhD Program Director

This graduate seminar offers a survey of the devotional worlds of early modern Christian spirituality, Roman Catholic and Protestant, as those systems developed in response to the dramatic transformations ushered in the Age of Reformations. After familiarizing ourselves with the distinctive methods (historical, theological, and social scientific) used by scholars in the field, we will attend to some of the central movements, figures, themes, and tensions that characterized early modern Christianity as a “lived religion,” which a special focus on traditions of “heart religion,” affective modes of piety rooted in patterns of late medieval devotion.

**Postmodern Spirituality**

THL 9540-001

Dr. Christopher Barnett

Thursday 2:00 – 4:20 pm

Non-PhD students with permission of PhD Program Director

This doctoral seminar has three overarching goals: (i) to survey the intellectual context of (post)modern spirituality, (ii) to explore several key issues in the field, such as the relationship between spirituality and the sciences and spirituality and nature, and (iii) to investigate the writings of a few major figures in (post)modern spirituality, including persons such as Søren Kierkegaard and Dorothy Day. At the end of the course, students should have a greater familiarity with spirituality’s evolving place in the modern world, along with a greater facility in analyzing and discussing it.