Sub-Catalog of Undergraduate Theology Course Descriptions
Fall 2017

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<tr>
<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
<th>Prof. Kenneth Fleischer</th>
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<td>THL 1000-001</td>
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After establishing a foundational understanding of the relationship of faith and reason within modern and postmodern thought, the course surveys both Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament to extract the key elements of Christian faith found in the Nicene Creed. From this platform, the course then examines “theology in thought” focusing primarily on the development of the Christian doctrine of God. Finally, the course explores “theology in action” within both individual and collective investigation of several environmental crises through the lens of Christian ethics. Throughout the journey, particular effort is made to balance tradition and contemporary thought in scriptural interpretation and systematic theology. Several out-of-class learning experiences are required in addition to classroom instruction.

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<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
<th>Prof. Scott Grapin</th>
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Grounded in sources that inform Catholic tradition, our thematic practice of theology will first consider how personal and collective experiences of faith shape Christian appreciations of God. Reasonable questions arise in relation to contemporary culture. How might we understand human relationship with the divine? What might a Christian God, understood as love, have to do with personal relationships? If Jesus is the Word of God, what do we make of the ways people reason and communicate in the digital age? What kind of community does faith invite? And what might our class’s active experiences of deep listening, silence, mindfulness, and Christian contemplative practice contribute to it? Each person’s negotiations of such questions will inform one’s further perspectives on social justice and ethics. We will therefore discern Christian responses to complicated issues confronting us when creation signals a need for human care and compassion, thereby challenging the faith, reason, and culture we all inherit and pioneer in our daily lives.

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The world culture is derived from cult, and so in the broadest sense we could say that cultures are formed and shaped by faiths or worldviews. For this class we will look at Christianity’s relation to culture – and suppose that the connector between faith and culture is reason or philosophy. A class about faith, reason and culture has to examine those three things in respect of what they are in themselves, and how they relate to each other, either favorably or critically, and this we will do from a Christian perspective. John Paul II wrote about faith and reason that they, “…are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.” The critical term there is truth. In Christianity the standard of truth is the person and reality of Christ, but truth is also a term that implies reason and good philosophy and the reasoned effort to achieve it.
Faith refers to what is believed, why it is believed, and how that belief has been lived. Therefore, we will look at that faith in its origins and how it has appeared in history and developed in history. That exercise will show us, among other things, how Christianity has impacted culture, and by analogy how it may do so today.

Paul said that our faith (worship) should be “reasoned” (Rom 12:1). Peter said we should “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have”. The Church has a long tradition of using the best reason or philosophy available to explain its faith to persons and cultures from ancient Greece to modern China. This is always the challenge of Christianity.

We will seek in this class that reasoned faith, in dialogue with culture where those connections can be made. That means examining everything from the central Christian doctrines like the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Bible, the history and development of the Church and theology, and the mutual influences between Christianity and culture from the beginning. The goal is that at the end students will have a knowledge of the faith and an understanding of the rich connections between faith and culture, and that students could explain and apply these in their futures.

Faith, Reason and Culture
THL 1000-004
Dr. Timothy Brunk
MWF 9:30 – 10:20 am

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces students to the rich living tradition of Christianity: the sources, traditions, practices, and major thinkers that have shaped Christianity’s response to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning. With a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, students engage Christianity as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in local and global cultural and religious contexts and that, loyal to the living God to which they point, are ready to be transformed again. Students also engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. In this course, students are equipped to appreciate the ongoing quest of Christian faith seeking understanding as it enters into conversation with all human knowledge and experience, including other faith traditions.

We read in the Mission Statement of Villanova University: “Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the University is grounded in the wisdom of the Catholic intellectual tradition and advances a deeper understanding of the relationship between faith and reason.” From this mission, “Faith, Reason, and Culture” acquires its unique significance in the curriculum of the University. Through the exploration of classic texts, central ideas, and the historical development of Christian theology, students are equipped for the practice of critical reflection on the person and work of Jesus Christ, the revelation of the Triune God, the nature and interpretation of Scripture, and the contours of Christian faith and morality. Throughout the course we will address the role of faith and reason in cultures ranging from biblical times to modern times.

Books for this course will be available in the UShop in Kennedy Hall.

Required:
• Students will need approximately 40 index cards for this course, measuring 4” x 6”.
• Donald Luck, Why Study Theology? (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999) ISBN 0827242425
• A Bible (preferably New Revised Standard Version). Since bibles are widely available, I am not placing any bible orders through the bookstore.

• Recommended:
  • Mari Rapela Heidt, *A Guide for Writing about Theology and Religion* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2012). ISBN 9781599820033 (This book offers examples of how to use the Chicago style for formatting papers. This course requires that you write papers in that style, using footnotes. This text also contains tips on grammar and punctuation.)

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**Faith, Reason and Culture**

Prof. Joanna Scholz

**THL 1000-009**
MWF 10:30 – 11:20 am

**THL 1000-013**
MWF 11:30 – 12:20 pm

Life is a mystery. It is a challenge to understand ourselves, our beliefs, our relationships, our world. This course invites and challenges students to do theology, that is, to think critically and to reflect on the ultimate mystery, the mystery of God, who is revealed through the Word in Scripture, and through the Word Made Flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ. Throughout our study of the Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Testament we will explore key themes such as God as Creator, and the human person made in the image of the one God who loves us. We will reflect on the topic of faith, and the realities of grace and sin. We will focus on the theme of redemption through the saving power of Jesus, his cross and resurrection. We will explore the concept of the Paschal Mystery which gives us meaning and hope for the future. We will discuss the theme of discipleship in each of the four gospel and reflect on the call of each person to follow Jesus in his/her own unique way. We will explore the themes of faith and culture and discuss the influences of culture on religion and the influences of religion on culture. We will read and discuss current events that relate to religion, theology, culture and the world. Course requirements: Active participation in class discussions, which will include evidence of having completed the assigned readings; three tests and a final examination; one major writing project which includes the opportunity for revision; smaller writing assignments. The final grade will be an average of five grades: four test grades (including the exam), and the major writing assignment. Grades for other written assignments will be factored into the test grades. Class participation will also be taken into consideration when computing your final grade.

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**Faith, Reason and Culture**

Prof. Matthew Riddle

**THL 1000-012**
MWF 11:30 – 12:20 pm

**THL 1000-016**
MWF 12:30 – 1:20 pm

Theology has traditionally been understood as “faith seeking understanding.” Seeking to delve more deeply into the questions, mysteries, and truths that are at the heart of existence and experience such as ‘Who am I?’ and ‘What is my place and purpose in the world?’ is what the theological endeavor is about. It is part of an ongoing journey that has been unfolding throughout the centuries as people have sought to answer these questions in the light of their Christian faith. In this class, these themes of seeking, questioning, journey and story will help us to engage more critically and personally with the ideas, beliefs, wisdom and practices at the heart of the Christian tradition and the particular cultural contexts in which they have developed and by which they are currently being shaped. Through reading, discussion, lecture, and writing we will explore key persons throughout Christian history, practices of prayer and meditation, and themes such as the relationship between God and the World, Christ and Salvation, and Life in the Spirit, among others. Furthermore, we will explore how their understanding has evolved over time and how they are currently being understood in light of our contemporary culture, scientific understandings of the universe, theological reflection, and personal
experience. In the end, these reflections will help us to examine the ethical implications of these ideas on our life in the world and in response to the cultures in which we live.

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This course is designed to use historical, biblical, theological, and social science approaches to studying the relationship between theology and popular secular culture. Students will also examine contemporary American culture with the goal of developing ways to discern images of God, the people of God, human nature, good and evil, salvation, and life beyond death. These concepts operate underneath the surface of the common cultural life in America that professes a separation of church and state.

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The meaning of Christianity always has been thought out via interpretative models that reflect and are linked to the horizons of human experience. In other words, the essence of the faith is one thing and its articulation is another. In that regard, this section of the course will presuppose and be in dialogue with the scientific understanding of an evolving universe, a process of some 13.8 billion years. Intelligence or reason—as embodied in science and culture—engaged in a dialogue with the perspectives of faith can mutually challenge and enrich our human creativity, freedom, self-mastery, and solidarity. The course will focus on contemporary Christian understanding of God, Creation understood as an ongoing relationship, God's self-giving relationship with humans, human freedom and its effects, the problem of suffering, Jesus as a divine way of being fully human, and the community coming from Jesus. It will incorporate an overview/application of current biblical methodology, through analysis of selected passages from the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures.

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This course will examine what it is we believe as contemporary Christians. In the character of St. Augustine and in the words of St. Anselm, we will approach our beliefs with an attitude of “faith seeking understanding.” We will begin with our notion of God and consider how this notion developed throughout history. The course will then consider the sources and traditions of Christianity and reflect upon how our experiences and actions have been influenced by these foundations.

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To be a part of a culture, a faith, or a people is the process of gathering deep understanding while also losing track of where the gathered knowledge came from. As such, we know more than we can articulate. This is true for our theologies too. Everyone has a theology, whether they know it or not. This course is designed to help make conspicuous those things we know but have yet to articulate. Specifically, we will reflect on the cultures in which we live, the Gods we worship, and the reasons we give for our action. This class will attempt to unearth our ignorance in order that we might begin the
lifelong examination ourselves, God and each other. To this end, we will examine how theologians, artists, scholars and thinkers have sought to make sense of human beings, the mysteries of God, the limits of our knowledge, and the care of neighbor. This class will operate under the assumption that theology is a posture of humility that seeks to meet the mysteries of this world with courage and wisdom. The class will gather diverse course materials from across history, culture and continents. Moreover, the classwork will be inspired by theological thinking in a variety of mediums—from scripture to fairy tale, from ancient hymns to rap music, from roman graffiti to abstract art.

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In whom do I place my trust? Who am I? How do we relate to one another? How do I find purpose in the midst of so many “options” for meaning? These are questions that every individual asks and that every culture attempts to answer. How does faith make a difference in responding to these questions?

Drawing on sources from the Bible, theological tradition and contemporary culture, this course will provide a basis from which to be able to discuss the continued relevance of Christian approaches to these questions. With a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, students will engage Christianity as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in local and global cultural and religious contexts and that continue to engage with the culture of today. They will be introduced to theology as the critical, reasonable and methodical reflection on God and on what Christians believe. The desired goal is that students become more capable of engaging in dialogue regarding some of the larger questions of meaning in contemporary culture, and of “giving reason for the hope” (1 Pt 3:15) that is the basis of the Christian existence.

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This course is an introduction to Catholic theology. In this course we will examine the central themes of Christian thought, including: the relationship between faith and reason, the nature and purpose of revelation, the Christian understanding of the human person, the doctrine of the Trinity, the person of Christ, and the sacraments.

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<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
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One of the hallmarks of Augustine’s contribution to theology is his concern for oneness of mind and heart, which he used not only to form his own community of friends modeled on the Christian community found in the Acts of the Apostles, but to construct the basis of his pastoral ministry. Using this Augustinian principle and its various dimensions, this course seeks to explore the Christian tradition as a living faith that is rooted in unity and union but with diverse expressions through the centuries, with an eye toward deepening, reform, and renewal in the lived reality of the Christian community.
"Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther …. are not dead but living. They still speak and demand a hearing as living voices"

Karl Barth

THL 1000 is not a “series of lessons” as much as it is a substantial, disciplined and spirited exploration of landmarks in the historical development of thoughts about God, Jesus, and the nature of shared life in a gathered community of committed believers. Secondly, this course is structured to condition scholarly encounter with specific issues such as the following: How can one speak of the existence of “one Church” when there are so many different (and at times, competing) denominations? How can community members claim membership in a “Holy Church” when so many members fall short of that holiness? What is the relation between the Sacred Scriptures (plus subsequent authoritative writings) and the Apostolic Tradition within which they were produced? What are the prospects for mutual enrichment and edification in the dialogue between Christians and those who do not identify with the Christian Tradition? Finally, what are Christian perspectives on the ultimate destiny of us all?

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces students to the rich living tradition of Christianity: the sources, traditions, practices, and major thinkers that have shaped Christianity’s response to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning. With a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, students engage Christianity as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in local and global cultural and religious contexts and that, loyal to the living God to which they point, are ready to be transformed again. Students also engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. In this course, students are equipped to appreciate the ongoing quest of Christian faith seeking understanding as it enters into conversation with all human knowledge and experience, including other faith traditions.

Researchers at MIT recently hailed Jesus of Nazareth as the most influential person in the history of the world, and Christianity stands as one of the major forces behind the development of Western culture. At the same time, however, religious faith is increasingly under attack, and some persons are claiming that atheism has won “the culture war.” How can we make sense of such a situation? This course will aim to do so in three main ways. First, under the rubric of “Culture,” it will survey the contemporary social and religious landscape, focusing on the rise of atheism in modernity and on how Christians have sought to address it. Second, with regard to “Reason,” it will explore what may be the greatest question to confront the human mind: does God exist? Finally, with an eye to “Faith,” it will examine the origin and nature of what Christians believe about God. The upshot, it is hoped, will be a course that will not only equip students to better understand the core teachings of Christianity, but also
will help them to situate those teachings in the context of humanity’s perpetual interest in, and questioning of, the possibility of transcendence.

Faith, Reason and Culture  Fr. Allan Fitzgerald, OSA
THL 1000-034  TR 2:30 – 3:45 pm

This course, *Christian Faith and Life*, will explore theological issues that are foundational for Christian faith and practice. Theology should not be left to “the professionals” – not only because that’s a “cop out,” but also because the value of thinking about God as a way to know oneself. The ability to engage in theological conversation can be stimulating and a way of making sure that diversity is encouraged, not hamstrung.

This course offers a way to understand faith and to engage culture today by exploring the experience of today and of other times as well. Christian theology, after all, builds on the way previous generations read and interpreted the Word of God – a book that is clear in one place and mysterious in another. Should the Bible be taken at face value? Can mere stories say anything about truth? How is anyone to find the deeper meaning of individual stories? Such questions are raised when by thoughtful people. They were also raised by St. Augustine and his experience will be part of this course because of its relevance to our changing time.

Thinking theologically may or may not be part of everyone’s experience, but learning how to reflect along with others, how to write in a way that communicates, and how to ask questions that stretch minds and hearts are skills that apply to all of human life. A theology course is one of the ways to test and develop those skills.

Faith, Reason and Culture  Dr. Stefanie Knauss
THL 1000-037  TR 4:00 – 5:15 pm

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces you to the rich living tradition of Christianity: the sources, traditions, practices, and major thinkers that have shaped Christianity’s response to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning. With a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, you will engage Christianity as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in local and global cultural and religious contexts and that, loyal to the living God to which they point, are ready to be transformed again. You will also engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. In this course, you are equipped to appreciate the ongoing quest of Christian faith seeking understanding as it enters into conversation with all human knowledge and experience, including other faith traditions. After a consideration of the horizon of our reflections – culture –, we will engage with four basic human questions about faith, self, community and meaning, interrelating, according to the intention of the course, Christian and contemporary cultural perspectives in order to discuss the continued relevance of Christian approaches to these questions and their transformation in today’s culture. We will work with different genres of material and include diverse perspectives in our discussions.

Faith, Reason and Culture  Dr. Ilia Delio, OSF
THL 1000-100  Wednesday 6:10 – 8:50 pm

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces students to the rich living tradition of Christianity: the sources, traditions, practices, and major thinkers that have shaped Christianity’s response to the fundamental human questions that underlie religion and
shape the human search for meaning. With a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, students will engage Christianity as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in various cultural and religious contexts. Students will also engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. A fundamental aim of the course is to appreciate the ongoing quest of the Augustinian theme, *faith seeks understanding*, as it enters into conversation with a range of human knowledge and experience, including other faith traditions.

**Faith, Reason and Culture**  
*THL 1000-101*  
**Dr. José R. Irizarry**  
*Tuesday 6:10 – 8:50 pm*

The historical dialogue between human reason and divine revelation has produced a rich tradition of religious expressions and practices throughout time and across cultures. This dialogue is grounded in the human need to understand the world he/she inhabits and, by understanding, to find meaning in all life endeavors. Christian belief is at the center of the meaning-making process as it generates the need for a more intelligible world. Therefore, the dialogue that this course attempts to foster will reflect the dialogue between faith that seeks understanding and the reasonability of faith. The African Church Father, St. Augustine, referred to this dialogue when he pointed out that “there are some things which we do not believe unless we understand them, and there are other things which we do not understand unless we believe them.” (In Ps. CXVIII). This course will engage students in the consideration of this dialogue through three major perspectives the Church and Christian believers have utilized to address the relationship of faith and reason; asserting the reasonability of Christian beliefs in Culture (apologetic task), understanding Culture through the use of sources for Christian knowledge such as Tradition and Sacred Texts (hermeneutical/interpretive task), and engaging the world as a way of grasping the meaning of faith experientially (ethical and transformational task).

**Faith, Reason and Culture**  
*THL 1000-102*  
**Dr. Pedro Govantes**  
*Monday 6:10 – 8:50 pm*

Woven into the fabric of our humanity are perennial questions. We wrestle with ‘Who are we?’ and ‘Why are we here?’ They are inescapable for us. The answers we provide to these and other similar kinds of questions express our philosophy or theology or worldview. Our answers inform and shape how we live our lives, our character, our choices, and what we value. The real issue, though, is, do our answers to these perennial questions match up to Reality—how life actually works, what is actually True—and how do we know if that’s the case.

We are going to begin a journey together to find out. We will ask tough questions of all the material we read and talk about together and tough questions about ourselves. As we will see, this will demand intellectual rigor, honesty and a profound commitment to community. Throughout our time together we will explore our culture, Christianity, friendship, and some competing ideas about life, meaning and purpose. We will do this through our readings in literature, culture, philosophy and theology, as well as our discussions and writings.

Our objective is not to engage in mere philosophical or theological speculative banter. Rather, our objective is to better discern and understand, as best as we are able, what is Real and True and how we might live in better accord with it.

Along the way, we will develop a better understanding of the major theological issues in Christianity, a more thoughtful approach to our culture and our relationships, and we will enhance our ability to use our reason to help us discern what is Real and True.
THL 1000 is one of five foundation courses in the Liberal Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum. It introduces you to the rich living tradition of Christianity: sources, traditions, practices, and major thinkers that have shaped Christianity’s response to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning.

With a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, you will engage Christianity as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time — in diverse local and global, cultural and religious contexts. These beliefs and practices, developed within specific places and times, point toward the living God and are ready to be transformed again and again in further times and places.

You also will engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. In this course, you are equipped to appreciate engage the ongoing quest of the Christian faith community as it seeks to understand and enter into conversation with all human knowledge and experience, including other faith traditions.

In this particular section of the course, you will use historical, biblical, theological, and social science approaches to studying the relationship between theology and popular culture, which will include an examination of contemporary North American culture. The goal of this section of the course is to develop ways of discerning images of God, human nature, good and evil, salvation, and life beyond death that often operate below the surface of the common cultural life in North America.

Our culture retains some of the vocabulary of the Christian faith (we've heard of Jesus, and Trinity), and thinks it knows what Christianity is all about. But most people mistakenly think Christianity is about ‘being good’ or something of the sort, which means that our culture has actually forgotten what it is all about, and why it matters. Christianity is not interested so much in your being good (and hardly at all in your being “nice” or “decent”) as in your being saved. But from what, and why? Those are the questions we pursue in this class. The answers are not superficial.

For 2,000 years, Christians have thought long and hard about all the truly big questions: Does God exist? Does He speak to us? How does He want us to live? What does it take to be happy? How should we interpret the Bible? Are science and religion in agreement or opposition? Why do bad things happen to good people? What happens after death? Who can be saved? This course examines the fundamentals of Christian belief and practice, with particular emphasis on the “fullness of the faith” proclaimed by the Roman Catholic Church. Through the exploration of primary texts, central ideas, and the historical development of Christian theology, students will learn to think critically about the person and mission, the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ; the revelation of the Triune God; the nature and interpretation of the Bible; the role of Mary and the saints in the life of a believer; and the contours of sacramental worship and prayer, along with the moral life which arises from them. Spirited class discussion, the development of a common theological vocabulary, and disciplined reflection upon the relationship of Christian belief and behavior with the arts and sciences, the issues of the day, and the students’ personal experience, will be key elements in our exploration of the distinctively Christian answers to the big questions. Required Text • C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity
Throughout this course students will gain competence in Christian theological language in order to examine critically the theological claims of the Christian tradition. The course is organized along themes that, woven together, make up the vision of Christian living. This course will also provide a basis for subsequent theological study.

The focus of this course is on the relevance of the Christian message and the Catholic tradition for confronting and dealing with the most pressing concerns of contemporary culture. In short, how does this message and tradition equip people today for living a more meaningful existence, oriented toward God, and for working toward a more peaceful and just society, as envisioned in the reign of God? We begin with a diagnosis of the contemporary situation: how history impacts our preconceived understandings; how market and cultural forces as well as technology impact our sense of self, how we think and how we engage the world; how economic trends and practices, political and social violence, ecological concerns, scientific naturalism and the resurgence of atheism, challenge claims for meaning, truth and respectability of worldviews informed by rich traditions, namely Christianity. With a properly historical examination of Biblical sources, we will attempt a lively rendering of what Jesus meant by the reign of God, how he sought to reorient people toward this vision of God’s intentions for humanity, and how this message was demonstrated in his own life. Students will learn interpretive skills that help to open a conversation between Jesus’s message and contemporary cultural concerns and questions.

These same skills and fundamental understanding of Jesus’s message will be applied in examining the role of the church in today’s world, as well as the issue of the relationship between faith, reason and culture. Here we will examine the role of Christianity in culture and civil society, as well as discuss key issues that challenge the church’s role in the world, as well as how these challenges can be faced. Thus a more vivid and lively understanding of the Gospels and early Christianity is sought with a view toward gaining insights as to how a more relevant understanding of Christianity can be achieved in today’s world. And further, how this understanding can lead to a better existence for particular persons and the world as a whole.

St. Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274) is one of the towering figures of world culture, and arguably the greatest Christian thinker (perhaps St. Augustine beats him by a nose). His works include prayers and hymns, Biblical and philosophical commentaries, treatises on disputed theological topics, and two systematic expositions of Christian belief - *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologiae* - which serve as standards for all subsequent theology. To read his works, to enter his mind and see the world as he does, is a challenging and exhilarating intellectual experience.

These are some of our goals this semester:
• Explore the historical context of Aquinas’ work, with special attention to the theological and philosophical themes and ideas central to medieval scholasticism.
• Investigate Aquinas’ thinking about the nature of Christian theology; the central Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation; the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ; the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love; the Church and the sacraments.

• Imitate Aquinas’ method of sustained questioning and rigorous argument, centered on a fair assessment of the strongest objections to his views and a probing and creative reading of the Scriptures. Taking St. Thomas as our model, students will be expected to engage in thoughtful reflection, spirited discussion, and careful writing.

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**Liberation Theologies**

THL 3740-001  
*Fr. Arthur Purcaro, OSA*  
TR  8:30 – 9:45 am  

*Peace and Justice; Sophomore Service Learning*  
*Community only; Diversity 3*

This course is designed for students in the Service Learning Community. Fr. Art is an Augustinian who served with the poorest of the poor in Peru for 30 years. He brings a wealth of experience and love for the poor to this course. Liberation Theology calls us to see how the poor are marginalized by society, describes how to work among them in order to advocate on their behalf, and most importantly to use what we have in order for the poor to find their power so they can advocate for themselves. Liberation Theology proposes that Christ desires to free our fellow human beings from the social structures that keep them impoverished. St Augustine stated: You give bread to a hungry person; but it would be better were no one hungry, and you could give it to no one. (Tractate 1 John 8,8) This course will examine the role of Charity and the pursuit of Justice, as well as how we think about and work with and for the poor.

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**Saints, Sinners and Grace**

THL 3790-001  
*Dr. Jessica Murdoch*  
TR  1:00 – 2:15 pm

This course will explore the theology of grace and conversion from the vantage point of the lives of the saints. What is grace and how does it operate in the spiritual life? What does it mean to live a life dedicated to spiritual realities? Is this possible in contemporary times? What difference does a broken life make to the life of sanctity? Can sin and brokenness become the basis upon which a life of faith can be built? Or are the saints only “perfect” people untouched by worldly concerns? What can the saints offer us in terms of our very modern lives? These are just some of the questions that we will discuss in this course.

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**Ethics of Life and Death**

THL 4200-100  
*Prof. John Groch*  
Wednesday  6:10 – 8:50 pm

Students will examine contemporary medical-moral issues, especially as they impact both the student's life and society at large. Through critical reflection and informed discussion about these issues on both a theoretical and practical level, the student will develop a personal stance toward each issue. In addition to shaping informed and responsible personal conclusions, social policies will also be evaluated. Early in the course, students will acquire an understanding of key concepts necessary for analyzing issues clearly and comprehensively. Issues treated include abortion, treatment of handicapped infants, death and the dying process (including physician-assisted, or rational, suicide), care for the elderly, organ transplants, genetic engineering/reproductive technologies, human experimentation and patient rights. Special attention will be directed to holistic health care and the internal, natural capacity for self-healing.
In addition to attending class lectures, course work includes readings, class discussion (in class and online), written examinations (2), paper(s), and guest speakers.

**Required Reading:**

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<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saints, Witches and Mystics</td>
<td>Dr. Rachel J. Smith</td>
<td>THL 4990-001</td>
<td>MW 1:30 – 2:45 pm</td>
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<td>Women have been understood in ambivalent ways throughout the Christian tradition. Identified with the body, and thus believed to be less able to ascend to the realm of immaterial ‘spirit,’ they were nevertheless also understood to be more ‘porous’ than men, and thus susceptible to the influence of spiritual entities, both divine and demonic. In this course, we will examine the profoundly different yet intimately linked representations of women in relation to the spiritual realm as witches, saints, demoniacs, and visionary mystics in the Middle Ages. We will study both male representations of women and women’s own writings, asking what the differences between these writings are and reasons for such differences. We will trace the rise of the witch hunts in Western Europe and track the changing fortunes of women through a long arc of Western history.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports and Spirituality</td>
<td>Dr. Edward Hastings</td>
<td>THL 4990-002</td>
<td>MW 1:30 – 2:45 pm</td>
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<td>Fr. Thomas Keating states, “Everything in the universe is meant to be a reminder of God’s presence.” This course would like to take Fr. Keating at his word and attempt to look to the world of sports as a locus for discovering the presence of God in our midst. Sports are a significant aspect of the American culture, extremely popular and always revelatory. This course will explore and evaluate the various aspects of the sports experience (participants, coaches, fans, officials) as vehicles to help us connect more deeply with God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisdom of Sufism</td>
<td>Dr. Yasemin Akis</td>
<td>THL 4990-003</td>
<td>MWF 8:30 – 9:20 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arab and Islamic Studies</td>
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<td>“Come, come, whoever you are, wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving, it doesn't matter.” Rumi</td>
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<td>Sufism is a mystical belief and practice in which murids (committed one) seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. This course offers an introduction to the Sufi thought and culture through the lives and teachings of Sufi thinkers such as Rumi, Yunus Emre, Haci Bektaş-i Veli, and Ibn Arabi. Sufi literature’s most influential works will be considered through sample materials and the lives of their writers. During the course we will examine the central concepts of Sufism such as tasawwuf, murid, dervish, pir and sama. The class considers the Sufism’s conceptualization about the development of the self in it’s philosophical roots.</td>
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**Problem of Evil**  
THL 5000-002  
Dr. Shams Inati  
TR 11:30 – 12:45 pm  
Philosophy; Arab/Islamic Studies

One of the most puzzling issues that the human mind encounters is why it is that a God with absolute knowledge, power, and goodness causes or allows so much evil or even an instance of evil. This issue known as “the problem of evil” is the central focus of this course and is addressed primarily from the point of view of Muslim and Christian philosophers and theologians. Various formulations of this problem will be presented, and various solutions will be drawn from different Islamic and Christian perspectives and periods of thought. Includes videos and possible guest speakers. Fulfills requirement for Philosophy and major and minor in Arab/Islamic Studies.

**Do Black Lives Matter to God?**  
A Theological Exploration of Race & Resistance  
THL 5000-100  
Dr. Naomi Leapheart  
Wednesday 6:10 – 8:50 pm  
Peace and Justice attribute

Has God sanctioned #BlackLivesMatter? Would Jesus protest the killings of Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Rekia Boyd, or Aiyana Stanley-Jones? How should people of Christian faith respond to Black protest? In this course, we will attempt to construct a Divine argument for resistance to racialized violence and oppression. To do this, we will engage the biblical text and the texts of historical narrative, literature, poetry, music, visual art, and film to explore key theological topics, including sin, suffering, and salvation. As we center the perspectives of Black, womanist, mujerista, queer, and Native theologians, scholars, organizers, artists, and activists, we will seek to discover a theological framework for the contemporary Movement for Black Lives. Ultimately, we will seek to be empowered by this framework, integrating it with our own faith and practice in order to live into the prophetic call to do justice.

**Islam: History, Thought and Culture**  
THL 5150-001  
Dr. Shams Inati  
TR 10:00 – 11:15 am

History and development, beliefs and rituals, sects and intellectual movements: Pre-Islamic Arabia, emergence of Islam, Muhammad as prophet and statesman, territorial expansion, religio-political factions, intellectual development, rituals and beliefs, sharia and its sources, legal schools, religious sects, philosophical trends, mystical orders, art, reasons for the decline, Islam today. Films and visits to mosques. This course fulfills requirement for diversity, Africana Studies, and concentration or minor in Arab/Islamic Studies.

**Religion in Russia**  
THL 5200-001  
Fr. Joseph Loya, OSA  
TR 4:00 – 5:15 pm

Diversity 3

“`A nation can be best understood in the light of three main factors .... the geography of the land ... the history it has experienced ... the religion it has embraced.” (Nicolas Zernov)

Course Objectives:
• To provide students with a solid grounding in the History, beliefs, spirituality, and life of religious believers - especially those of the Russian Orthodox Church - as they seek to live and prosper in a modern, complex and pluralistic world.
• To be sensitized to the truth, “The History of the Russian Church cannot be separated from the History of Russia… Even the simplest delineation of the development of the Church inevitably includes a definite attitude toward Russia's past.” (Alexander Schmemann)
• To obtain a firm grasp of relations between the state and traditional religious bodies in Russia throughout the major periods of Russia’s History.
• Be able to visit a Russian Orthodox church here or abroad without experiencing “culture shock,” i.e., students are to be made confident in knowing the religious worldview that a Russian Orthodox church represents.

Religion, Art and Science  
Dr. Michael McElwee  
THL 5450-001  
MWF 12:30 – 1:20 pm

This course will examine religion, art, and science as aspects of persons and cultures. The philosopher John Macmurray has argued that there are different dimensions of the personal life, which would therefore also apply to society and culture. These dimensions are science – as the mechanical or mathematical aspect of the personal; art – as the emotional or organic aspect, and religion - as the truly rational or relational aspect of the personal.

Therefore, in this course we will look at those three dimensions of life and culture from the perspective of various thinkers – Macmurray from the philosophical side, Rene Girard and Gil Bailie from the anthropology side, Hans urs Von Balthasar from the theological side, or Stanley Jaki from the scientific side to name a few examples.

In short, we will study religion, art, and science as aspects of persons and cultures. We will explore theology and ritual as they relate to societies, cultures or persons; and we will examine the artistic, scientific and personal aspects of religion in the contemporary situation.

Religion and Nature in America  
Dr. Brett Grainger  
THL 5820-001  
TR 2:30 – 3:45 pm

Raymond Williams has observed that “nature” is perhaps the most complex word in the English language. It is also one of the most important words in the development of American religions. This course explores the place of the natural world in American religious history. Beginning in the colonial period and finishing with the present day, we will survey the various beliefs, practices, myths, and symbols pertaining to the natural world in a range of religious communities and movements, including Native American religions, New England Puritanism, Roman Catholicism, Shakers, Transcendentalism, and “New Age” and “Neopagan” religions. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, we will begin by surveying scholarly theories of religion and sacred space. We will end by consider the rise and impact of environmentalism on religious ethics. The main focus of our meetings will be in discussion of key primary texts, including poetry, music, theology, novels, visual art, and material culture.

Church Architecture and Worship  
Dr. Bernard P. Prusak  
THL 5999-001  
MW 3:00 – 4:15 pm

Fine Arts requirement

The earliest Christians celebrated the Lord’s Supper or breaking of bread in homes. During the fourth century, in the West, they began to build churches in the Roman style called basilica. In Rome,
some basilicas were erected over the site of the house in which the community had earlier assembled. Later centuries saw the rise of Romanesque and then Gothic architecture. After the Reformation, Baroque architecture emerged. The nineteenth century gave rise to the Gothic revival, exemplified by the Villanova University church. In exploring church architecture, art, and music, this course will reflect on the theology and the historical and cultural contexts that shaped the liturgical celebration of each age. The ever changing contexts will lead to asking how contemporary Christian worship should be embodied in architecture, art, and music.

**Theology and Pop Culture: Superheroes, Hip-Hop, and Detective Novels**

*THL 5999-100*

**Thursday 6:10 – 8:50 pm**

Dr. Adam Hearlson

This class will explore the ways in which popular culture is a mode of theological engagement. Within popular culture are sophisticated understandings of God, humans, evil, power, submission and justice. Every day, art created for mass consumption is treading across important theological ground. In order to examine the ways in which popular culture is a source of theological reflection the class will look at three specific genres and assess their theological contributions—superheroes, hip hop, and detective novels. Each of these genres wrestles with important theological questions and the voices within these genres can broaden our theologies and provide new insight for people of faith seeking understanding.

**Attention and Leadership**

*THL 6000-001*

**TR 10:00 – 11:15 am**

Dr. Christiane Lang Hearlson

Paying attention to our lives, and to the people and world around us, helps us become people of spiritual depth, as well as effective leaders. But what exactly is attention? How can we cultivate an attentive spirit amid a busy life and a distracting world? How, as leaders, can we direct and sustain others’ attention? In this course, students will explore the role of human attention in spiritual life and in leadership by learning from scientific and theological perspectives on attention, and by trying out a variety of attentive experiments and practices. The course has six units: (I) Basics of attention and leadership; (II) Mindfulness, discernment, and attention to self; (III) Empathy, listening, and attention to people; (IV) Spirituality, prayer, and attention to God; (V) Delight, responsibility, and attention to the created world; and (VI) Practices of attentive leadership.

**African American Religious History**

*THL 6000-002*

**MWF 9:30 – 10:20 am**

Rev. Jewel Herder

This course is designed to introduce students to the historical development of the rich traditions of African American religions from the invisible institution of slave religion to Black televangelism. Students will learn how colonialism, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement and Women’s Rights Movement influenced the expansion of its diverse expressions. Students will identify how issues of race, class, and gender were woven into the fabric of African American theological thought including Black theology, and womanist theology. Students will read and discuss the writings of key African American religious scholars and leaders both women and men.

**Course Overview**

1. To identify key historical events that led to the development of African American Religions.
2. To summarize various African American religious expressions.
3. To be able to compare and contrast the fundamental theological differences between Black theology and womanist theology.
4. To be able to demonstrate the interconnectedness of African American theological thought with issues of gender, race, and class through select writings of African American scholars, both women and men.

**Required Texts**


**Recommended Texts**


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**Religion and Politics**

THL 6000-003

Dr. Joseph Thompson

MW 4:30 – 5:45 pm

This course is designed to offer students a glimpse at the rich complexity of religious history of the United States with a particular emphasis on the relationship between religion and politics. Students will examine how religion has influenced and informed America’s understanding of itself as “one nation under God,” as well as how religion has been shaped and influenced by its American political cultural. Students will seek to understand religion not only in terms of formal theological doctrines and beliefs, but also in terms of what scholars call “lived religion,” i.e., how people live and give expression to their faith in the American political system through religious practices and its materialistic culture.

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**Music and Religion in the Modern Middle East**

THL 6000-004

Dr. Joseph Alpar

MW 3:00 – 4:15 pm

In this course we will examine the role of music in the religious practices of the Middle East, focusing on Turkey, Iran, and the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa, and the
Persian Gulf. Home to many of the world’s oldest civilizations and major religions, the Middle East remains a region of remarkable cultural diversity. From the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1922 to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, the Arab Spring from 2010 to 2012, and the current refugee crisis, this vast territory has experienced extraordinary political and social change over the past nearly one hundred years. While often riven by conflict, the Middle East is also a site of ever-renewing religious, intellectual, artistic, and political movements. The musical soundtrack to this constellation of dynamic forces is rich and complex, animated by shifting social environments and ongoing intercultural encounters. Arabs, Turks, Persians, Jews, Kurds, Greeks, Berbers, Armenians, Assyrians, and many other ethno-linguistic and religious identities all claim unique forms of musical and spiritual expression, mirroring in many cases their environments—rural, urban, desert, coastal, seafaring, nomadic, antiquated, hypermodern, pious, and defiantly secular. Readings, audio examples, films, and in-class music-making will address the ways that music and sound in the religious cosmologies of the Middle East intersect with nationalism, gender, sexuality, language, ethnicity, media, migration, globalization, and protest movements. Through an exploration of sacred music in classical, popular, and folk genres among others, we will attempt to make sense of the rich and varied soundscapes of the modern Middle East. Though we will also discuss musical structures and terminology, no prior musical training is necessary for this course.

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<th>God in the Courtroom</th>
<th>Dr. Dana Lloyd</th>
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<td>THL 6000-100</td>
<td>Tuesday 6:10 – 8:50 pm</td>
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The U.S. Constitution holds a promise to secure freedom of religion through its First Amendment. Its two religion clauses declare unconstitutional any prohibition on the free exercise of religion and laws respecting the establishment of religion. The consequence is that whenever a group demands to be recognized as religious and be granted the right to exercise its religion, a court, a legislature or an administrative official must determine whether the religious practice in question is legally religious. This means that law plays a uniquely important role in defining religion in the United States.

In this role, it addresses many political, everyday questions: Why are so many people opposed to the public display of Jesus or The Ten Commandments? Should we pray at the beginning of public assemblies? Why do we care who other people marry, or what other people do in their own homes?

In this course we will explore the relation between law and religion in America. We will study the religion clauses in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, the histories of their interpretations by American courts in landmark cases, and the ways that religious studies scholars have understood and critiqued these cases. Finally, we will read legal cases regarding freedom of religion from around the world and compare the American relationship between law, politics, and religion with the relationship between them in other countries.

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<tr>
<th>Whole and Holy: Theology and Psychology</th>
<th>Prof. Chimère Holmes</th>
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<tr>
<td>THL 6000-101</td>
<td>Monday 6:10 – 8:50 pm</td>
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Psychology offers us the opportunity to study why people act, think, and feel the way they do. Theology seeks a deeper understanding through scripture, tradition, and experience. ‘Wholeness’ is defined by soundness of mind, body, and soul, while ‘holiness,’ is considered that which is sacred and set apart by God. Wholeness and holiness can be considered part of God’s original design (Genesis 1:26-28). Just as the physical body itself is a whole unit that is made up of many parts, our souls and psyches were created to function in completeness, encompassing both light and shadow – the good, the bad, and the ugly.
The purpose of this course is to introduce students to some of the key components of psychology and theology through critical analyses of both classic and modern texts. This course will explore what it means to be both whole and holy in a post-modern and post-church society.

We will examine the interplay of theology and psychology and how they relate to one another either favorably or critically. Using a Christian anthropological lens, this course will explore the ways in which a person’s theological premise can affect beliefs, motivations, emotions, and behaviors. We will survey how psychology can enrich our understanding of some of Christianity’s central tenets.

According to Carl Jung, “your perception will become clear only when you can look into your soul.” This semester our class will form a communal inquiry stance as aspiring research practitioners who think critically and engage with exciting texts and seek to answer these overarching questions, Can theology and psychology help a person attain a deeper understanding of the self and the human experience? How does one achieve and live out wholeness and holiness in a contemporary world?

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<tr>
<th>Research Seminar</th>
<th>Dr. Peter Spitaler</th>
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<tr>
<td>THL 6300-100</td>
<td>Wednesday 6:10 – 8:50 pm</td>
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Open to Theology Majors and Minors only

Special topic in theology that includes a research paper that critically integrates the student’s study of the discipline of theology.