INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL LITERATURE THL 2490-001

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays. 12:40 – 1:30 PM. Fr. Joseph Wimmer, O.S.A.

The Bible is an anthology of books written over the space of about 1000 years. With full use of archaeological discoveries of thousands of written texts in the ancient Near East, current advances in chronological and historical developments, and above all, application of the principles of the historical-critical method of studying literary texts, this course will focus on the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament in terms of origin, when they were written, by whom, and within what cultural and scientific environment. We will discuss the nature of religious language and revelation, and the general approach of reading the Bible as the Word of God in human words, that is, as expressed in the culture and time of composition, but read with our current understanding of an expanding universe over billions of years and the evolutionary development of human life on earth. We will look at specific texts of both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, to understand their historical development, but also with awareness of their religious significance for both Judaism and Christianity.

HISPANICS IN THE U.S. CATHOLIC CHURCH THL 2900-001

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays. 9:10 – 10:00 AM. Sr. Ruth Bolarte, I.H.M.

This course presents a historical and theological overview of Hispanic Catholic presence and ministry in the United States. It highlights the vital contributions of Hispanic/Latinos to American religious and social life, demonstrating in particular how their engagement with the U.S. cultural milieu is the most significant factor behind their ecclesial and societal impact. The course incorporates the role of ecclesial documents and Encuentros that provide direction for effective ministry among culturally diverse communities.

UNDERSTANDING JESUS THL 3200-001

Tuesdays, Thursdays. 8:00 – 9:15 AM. Dr. Jessica Murdoch

This course will explore the history of Christian theological reflection on Jesus Christ. We will discuss Christology from Scriptural, historical and contemporary perspectives. First, we will trace the development of the biblical understanding of Christ. Then, we will consider the central historical moments of the Church’s reflection upon the mystery of Christ. Lastly, select modern Christological issues and questions will be addressed in the course. The approach to this course will be both systematic and Thomistic.
LIBERATION THEOLOGY THL 3740-001  
DIVERSITY 1, LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES, PEACE & JUSTICE

TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 8:00 – 9:15 AM. FR. ARTHUR PURCARO O.S.A.

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. This course will introduce students to Latin American Liberation Theology, one of the most profound contemporary theological movements in the Church. Liberation Theology emerged out of the concrete struggle in Peru to overcome poverty, oppression and repression. We will examine the biblical and ecclesial roots of liberation theology, its “unconventional” theological methodology, the powerful insights of Gustavo Gutierrez and some other of its theologians and religious leaders, its impact, the price paid for prophetic witness, the controversy that surrounds it, and its ongoing challenge to theology today, to the Church and its institutions, and to a global society plagued by growing inequality.

THEOLOGY, CAPITAL, & INJUSTICE THL 3790-001  
DIVERSITY 1, PEACE & JUSTICE

TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 11:10 -12:25 PM. PROFESSOR GREGORY GRIMES

In the present course, we will explore what theology has to offer by way of a critique of capitalism, as manifested historically and in the present, with a focus on recognizing, understanding, and undoing the structural injustices endemic to its logic and systems. Christianity’s ‘preferential option for the poor’ and vision of the ‘reign of God’, based upon Jesus of Nazareth’s life and ministry, as well as Catholicism’s holisitic worldview, offer a fundamental reproach to the flawed anthropological assumptions of capitalism, as a political and economic system; while offering alternative ordering principles, orientation, and living witness to a truly just vision of society, marked by love of God, neighbor, and all
creation. We will engage thinkers who offer fundamental insights as to the violence, exploitation, and systemic abuse of power, essential to capitalism; linking these insights to real-world examples of how this affects all people, but especially the oppressed and marginalized; while envisioning and experimenting with socially just models and understandings that can bring about authentic societal transformation.

CHRIST IN THE SCIENTIFIC AGE THL 3790-002

TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 3:55 – 5:10 PM. SR. ILIA DELIO, O.S.F.

There is a popular belief that religion and science are opposed to each other and offer rival statements about human existence. Yet, modern science emerged out of western Christianity and shares common ground with Christian religious principles. This course will explore the relationship of religion and science from the perspective of western Christianity, with a particular emphasis on the meaning of Jesus Christ. We will examine the significance of religion in view of biological evolution and explore what kind of God is at work in an unfinished universe. We will examine the meaning of Christ in terms of emergent evolution, artificial intelligence, transhumanism, and future life. Our course will explore the significance of human personhood as the leading edge of evolution, oriented toward the fullness of life in God, and the significance of Christ as the source and goal of evolution.

INTRODUCTION BIOMEDICAL ETHICS THL 4480-001

TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 2:20 – 3:35 PM. DR. BRETT WILMOT

The purpose of this course is to develop tools for critical analysis of biomedical ethical issues within a Catholic Christian context. From the conception of life to the end of life, we are faced with new technologies and a stunning array of choices that affect ourselves and our loved ones. We will be considering a range of topics that affect patients, care providers, and the broader society in which Christians and non-Christians seek to live good lives with moral integrity. The vision of personal development and human flourishing from a Catholic perspective will be given special consideration in answering questions of medical ethics. Critical examination of competing moral traditions will be encouraged. By examining major frameworks of ethical analysis, the student will gain confidence in critically analyzing current issues of bioethics which include informed consent, reproductive technologies, stem cell research, abortion, organ donation, definition of death, physician assisted suicide, and end of life decisions. Critical analysis of emerging biomedical ethical challenges will be encouraged. How do we render Christian faith intelligible and relevant to transform our world with so many
competing influences in a pluralistic society? By the end of the course students should have a foundation from which they can approach emerging bioethical questions.

**SOLIDARITY IN EASTERN EUROPE THL 4490-002**

*DIVERSITY, PEACE & JUSTICE*

**MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS. 1:50 – 3:05 PM. DR. GERALD BEYER**

Throughout the twentieth century, “Eastern European” connoted “second class” or “uncivilized territory,” as historian Timothy Garton Ash has written. This course will focus attention on two countries in the region that have suffered tremendously in the twentieth century, Poland and Bosnia and Herzegovina. We will explore Poland under Communism, the rise of *Solidarność*, its demise after 1989, Poland’s transformation to capitalism and democracy and its recent illiberal turn. We will also examine the case of the Bosnian war and why ethnic and religious groups, especially Bosnian Muslims, were demonized and targeted during the war. We will discuss the ongoing challenges to building peace and solidarity in this historically marginalized and misunderstood part of Europe, “the Balkans,” highlighting the vital contribution of women to the peacebuilding process, and considering what forms of solidarity from other nations might be beneficial.

**THE CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION THL 4550-001**

**TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 9:35 – 10:50 AM. FR. MARTIN LAIRD, O.S.A.**

Feelings of loneliness, isolation, depression, anxiety, fear, among other afflictive thoughts that prevent our discovery of what already lies within each of us: inner peace and the indwelling presence of God. The Christian contemplative tradition is concerned with developing those interior skills (contemplation or meditation) that bring to silence the inner noise and confusion in our heads and lead us to the discovery of interior calm, clarity, and Love.

Christianity has a sophisticated tradition of cultivating interior stillness and peace that leads to the silent depths of the heart. This interior stillness facilitates the deepening of personal identity and ultimately the overcoming of the sense of alienation from God and others. The course is both (1) theoretical and (2) practical.

(1) On the theoretical level there will be an interdisciplinary sampling of texts. We will read ancient Christian authors (4th-14th centuries) who talk about the search for God by first dealing with the sources of anxiety within—what we will come to call the world of “mind-tripping.” But in order to highlight the contemporary relevance of this ancient wisdom, we
shall also look at contemporary authors on such topics as depression, eating disorders, relationship junkies, the process of addiction. The purpose of the reading, writing, lecture and discussion is to cultivate and value an integrated sense of what is involved in that deep spiritual flourishing of what St. Paul might term our life “hidden with Christ is God (Col 3: 3).”

(2) There is also a practical component. The first 13-15 minutes of each class meeting will be devoted to contemplative practice itself, so that the student not only gains a theoretical understanding of the ancient Christian practice of contemplation / meditation, but also knows how to practice it in daily life. Moreover, each student is expected to devote at least 10 minutes each day outside of class to the practice of contemplation.

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**Mondays. 6:10 – 8:50 PM. Dr. Margaret Mell**

Most of us have heard about contemplative (or, meditative) spiritual practices. However, creative spiritual practices are also becoming more common as people begin to experience the real presence of the Spirit in their everyday lives. Contemplation and creativity inspire (Latin root: *inspirare*, breathe in) every element of our lives. Both contemplative and creative practices bring our awareness and attention to Beauty that lies underneath the surface of all aspects of our everyday lives—including our academic studies.

Contemplative and creative practices enliven qualities of our being and doing that bring life and new energy into all our “usual” activities. They help develop, strengthen, and fine-tune multiple aspects of individual and group spirituality. Contemplation and creativity can become acts of prayer that help our attention and awareness to deepen, broaden, and become more integrated into everything that matters to us—including the world around us—as our life-paths continue to unfold, both during and after our study programs here, at Villanova.

**Course Segment Descriptors**

*(NOTE: This course opens time and space for full, active, and conscious student participation in multiple modalities of contemplative and creative work whether the classes are meeting in person or online.)*
1. Meetings for this course are retreat-like with significant academic input.
2. For the duration of the course, student’s reflections and comments on required readings, and, student’s sharing of contemplative and creative experiences will take place on the course’s BlackBoard Homepage as well as in-class.
3. Reflection papers are also uploaded to BlackBoard at regular intervals.
4. A final creative project using the expressive arts will be presented at the close of the course.

**Learning Goals**

Students will...

1. Learn contemplative practices that can be adapted appropriately and incorporated into their daily lives.
2. Learn, work, and play with various creative practices.
3. Learn and practice contemplative, reflective, *lectio divina*, and integrative styles of reading, writing, gazing, listening.
4. Create a particular expressive arts project that she/he/they will present to the class at the close of the semester.

**Class Meeting Requirements**

1. This course is an intensive, retreat-style seminar, whether meeting in-person or online.
2. There are **no excused absences** and **no early departures** for any kind of a course-required meeting—**no exceptions**.
3. Check the in-class course day/date/time parameters to be absolutely certain you can attend all class meetings before you register for this class.

**Some examples of the Expressive Arts:** music, dance, poetry, some genre of prose, painting, drawing/sketching, pastels, collaging, photography, videography... the instructor is open to receive, discuss with you, and approve your creative suggestions.

**SPORTS AND SPIRITUALITY THL 4990-001**

**TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 12:45 – 2:00 PM. DR. EDWARD HASTINGS**

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 focus 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.

**WISDOM OF SUFISM THL 4990-002**  
*ARAB & ISLAMIC STUDIES*  
**TUESDAY, THURSDAY. 2:20 – 3:35 PM. DR. YASEMIN AKIS**

*Come, come, whoever you are, wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving, it doesn't matter.*

-Rumi

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 Bektas-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 its philosophical roots.

**RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST THL 4990-003**  
*ARAB & ISLAMIC STUDIES*  
**TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 3:55 – 5:10 PM. DR. YASEMIN AKIS**

Understanding the modern Middle East is almost impossible without first developing an appreciation for the importance of its diverse religious traditions, and the role that religion has played in the development of the region since antiquity. This course examines the many ways that religion has functioned in Middle Eastern societies, beginning with ancient, pre-Islamic practices, such as the Zoroastrian religion of the Persian Empire, the development of Judaism among the ancient Israelites, and the spread of Christianity in the eastern Roman Empire. Of special interest will be the rise of Islam in the seventh century, and the development of unique and localized Islamic traditions in the rapidly expanding Arab empires of the medieval period. The class will focus on such themes as the differences between Sunni and Shia Islam, the position of non-Muslim minorities in Islamic history. The class will conclude by looking closely at the many ways religion is practiced in the Middle East today, from the official secularism of states like Turkey, to the post-revolutionary religious politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
The concept of Orientalism was developed by the literary scholar Edward Said who, in his seminal work Orientalism (1978), defined it as “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.” Starting from a careful reading of Said’s work, this course will reflect on the many ways in which Orientalism has shaped the concept of religion in the Middle East. This course will look at the relation of orientalism and religion, including the criticism of Said’s work, exposing areas of inquiry that have been neglected by his volume. The course aims to demonstrate a better understanding about the religion in the Middle East and clarify the misconceptions caused by orientalism.

This course explores the spiritual and religious lives of children and young people, with a focus on Christian/Catholic contexts. Drawing on biblical, historical, theological, and social science sources, this course considers different models of childhood and youth and examines the lived experience of young people's spirituality in diverse contexts. With attention to social, cultural, and economic forces that affect young people's well-being today, students will learn to understand, listen to, advocate for, and support children and young people.

What would Jesus say about the killings of Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Rekia Boyd or Aiyana Stanley-Jones? What would he preach/teach concerning the legacy of chattel slavery of the economic exploitation of the Black poor? How have people of faith and moral conscience? In this course, we will explore the implications of “Racist Ideas” embedded within American Law and Policies. We will juxtapose those ideas and practices against Theological ideas and practices to drive towards a call for justice and liberation commonly articulated in the “Black Lives Matter” movement. A fundamental question is one of Theodicy: If God is benevolent, just and powerful, how can/does He permit evil
As we study together, we will engage the Bible, religious scholarship and the texts of historical narratives, literature, visual art and films to explore key topics from a Theological perspective (to include: racism, antiracism and humanity). Ultimately, we will seek to be empowered to integrate a new understanding into our own moral practice, in order live up to the prophetic call to fair and equitable justice for all.

In this course, students will study the concept of gender in relation to faiths and the secular world around them. We will explore understandings of gender as it intersects with culture, race, religion, and relationship with the Divine. Students will expand their understanding of the broad experience of gender, how this relates to faiths, and what modern social science contributes to the discussion. We will explore concepts such as: masculinity, femininity, cisgender, transgender, and non-binary experiences, feminism, womanism, how various faiths interpret these, and the role of power therein. Through this exploration, students will gain a clearer picture of how gender has affected their lives and the lives of those around them. Special attention will be given to the Catholic understanding of these concepts and their intersection with the social sciences and pastoral care. With this foundation, we will build skills necessary to interact with genders across cultural contexts.

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, CULTURE THL 5150-001**
*AFRICANA STUDIES, ARAB & ISLAMIC STUDIES*

**TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 9:35 – 10:50 AM. DR. SHAMS INATI**

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.

**ISLAMIC MYSTICISM THL 5160-002**
*ARAB & ISLAMIC STUDIES*

**TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 11:10 – 12:25 PM. DR. SHAMS INATI**

This course covers the sources, principles, and traditional and contemporary developments of mysticism in Islam.

**RELIGION IN RUSSIA THL 5200-100**
*DIVERSITY 3, RUSSIAN AREA STUDIES*

**WEDNESDAYS. 6:10 – 8:50 PM. FR. JOSEPH LOYA, O.S.A.**

“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 AND LITERATURE THL 5800-001**

**TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 11:10 – 12:25 PM. FR. MARTIN LAIRD, O.S.A.**

The purpose of this course is to examine ways in which contemporary literature explores, develops, confirms and challenges traditional doctrines central to Christianity. A common approach to the study of Christianity is by way of a presentation of its doctrines. While this approach has certain merits, one can come away with the impression that Christianity is first and foremost a bundle of doctrines divorced from life experience. In reality Christianity is a sustained encounter with ineffable Mystery, an encounter that gives birth to traditions of doctrine, lifestyle, and wisdom, cultivated through centuries of struggle with what it means to be alive.

The advantage of approaching Christianity through literature is that the focus of reflection remains firmly grounded in life experience. Consequently, one can see more clearly the human experiences that give rise to various teachings and wisdom traditions that characterize Catholic Christianity.

In this course we shall witness the theological imagination collaborate with the literary imagination as we explore such themes as faith in a God who seems more absent than present; the fear of death and what survives it; the lust for power and the confrontation with the shadow side of life; the nature of divine mystery and its relationship to human weakness and spiritual blindness.

**WHAT IS A GOOD LIFE? THL 5999-001**

**MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS. 1:50 – 3:05 PM. PROFESSOR JULIA SHEETZ-WILLARD**

How have different religions defined what it means to live a good life? What can we learn from engaging with the beliefs and practices of our neighbors of diverse faiths? This course introduces students to the history, challenges, and opportunities of religious diversity in the United States. Through reading, discussion, site visits, guest speakers and experiential opportunities, we will develop skills and appreciative knowledge that will help us address some of these critical questions: How have different religious traditions shaped the human quest for meaning? What can we learn from their distinctive perspectives, and where do they find common ground? What about those of no faith, and those who identify as spiritual but not religious? What is at stake when people who orient around religion
differently interact? And how might the modern interfaith movement challenge religious stereotypes and address the divisiveness and polarization of our contemporary culture?

**THE CHURCH OF BASEBALL THL 5999-002**

**TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 2:20 – 3:35 PM. DR. CHRISTOPHER BARNETT**

“I believe in the Church of Baseball,” so states Annie Savoy, the fictional narrator of Ron Shelton’s classic film *Bull Durham* (1988). Played by Susan Sarandon, in a critically acclaimed performance, Annie’s profession of faith is not meant to oppose religion but, rather, to show that baseball itself is a kind of religion. After all, she explains, baseball contains many religious elements. It has sacred objects and rituals; it has sin and redemption. Thus baseball “truly feeds the soul day in, day out,” and, for Annie, it is preferable to “Jesus, Buddha, and Brahma.”

Annie’s “Church of Baseball” is meant to be humorous, but it is by no means absurd. In recent years, a great deal of scholarly literature has been devoted to the study of “religion and sports,” albeit from a range of perspectives. Some scholars view sports as a kind of surrogate for religion in a world that has become increasingly secularized. On this reading, for example, the rampant popularity of the National Football League means that tailgate parties have supplanted Mass on Sundays and that the Super Bowl has supplanted Christmas Day as the nation’s most popular holiday. However, other commentators take a more complementary approach, seeing sports as embodying a number of the concerns and questions raised by religion and, moreover, inculcating many of the values cherished in faith traditions such as Christianity. On this interpretation, the internal structure and logic of a given sport can shed light on the significance of religion, as when Paul the Apostle compares the Christian life to running a race (Phil. 2:16) and his ministerial labors to a boxing match (1 Cor. 9:26-27).

Despite Annie’s fidelity to the “Church of Baseball,” this course will focus more on the complementarity between religion and sports, using baseball as a test case. Often referred to as the “national pastime,” baseball came to prominence in the United States in the nineteenth century and today remains one of the most popular sports in North America as well as in Latin America and East Asia. Needless to say, much of baseball’s popularity hinges on feats of skill and strength—a tumbling curveball, a towering homerun, a diving catch. And yet, as author and philosopher Alva Noë puts it, “No other American sport...has come close to attracting the attention not only of fans and specialists but also of intellectuals
who feel called on....to understand it.” For Noë, the fact that baseball is “a thinking game” stems from its conspicuous “looped reflective structure”: the “world of baseball” is one in which questions of praise and blame are central for players and fans alike. Noë, as a philosopher of mind, is particularly interested in baseball’s similarity to language and law. But is that all? Indeed, one aspect of this course is to explore how baseball can be understood in various ways—as a historical institution, as a science, as a myth. And yet, it will also suggest that the game’s relationship to religion might be most illuminating. This does not mean that baseball is a religion, nor should it imply that those who play baseball are more religious than others. The point, rather, is that just as baseball can shed light on, say, American history, so can its structure and values elucidate humanity’s religious concepts and desires, including “home,” “sacrifice,” and even “heaven.”

RELIGION & INCARCERATION THL 5999-003
DIVERSITY 1, AFRICANA STUDIES, PEACE & JUSTICE

TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS. 3:55 – 5:10 PM. DR. REBECCA MAKAS

With 2.3 million Americans incarcerated, examining the intersection of religion and incarceration is a vital part of understanding religion in America. One of the most diverse populations in terms of race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status, the prison environment magnifies and illuminates foundational questions regarding power, privilege, and the practice of religion in America. For example, the question “what counts as religion?” is particularly consequential in prison, as it illustrates who is free to practice their religion and which religious rights are protected. Similarly, “How does race affect religion or religious freedom?” is highlighted by anxieties of prison officials regarding traditionally black forms of Islam. Addressing these and other questions in depth, this course explores the religious lives of men and women who are incarcerated and the theology and practices of prison ministry groups. Through reading memoirs and other primary source documents, we will analyze how prison affects one’s religious practice, understanding of religion, and desire for spiritual care, both while incarcerated and after release. In addition to reading texts by formerly incarcerated people, students will explore our two course foci through texts by spiritual leaders and examining the wide array of spiritual programming available in prison.
WOMEN DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH THL 5999-004

Mondays, Wednesdays. 1:50 – 3:05 PM. Dr. Jennifer Constantine Jackson

This course is an exploration of the role of women leaders in religion considered from historical, cultural, and theological perspectives. More specifically, we will focus on women in Catholic Christianity through an in-depth study of the four women “Doctors of the Church”: Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), and Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897). The title, officially given by the Catholic church to 36 men and women throughout Christian history, recognizes the exemplary contributions they have made to deeper understandings of sacred scripture and Christian life and teaching. This is a discussion-based course informed by short lectures and exercises attentive to diverse learning styles, interdisciplinary inquiry, and online resources.

ISLAM & MUSLIMS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD THL 5999-005

Arab & Islamic Studies

Tuesdays, Thursdays. 12:45 – 2:00 PM. Dr. Helen Mesard

Muslims make up almost a quarter of the world’s population, and Islam is a significant religious and cultural force within communities in almost every country across the globe. In this course we will examine a number of issues of particular interest and relevance to Muslims today. We’ll place contemporary considerations and debates within historical context and highlight the ways in which the Qur’an and the traditions of the prophet Muhammad continue to shape and animate Muslim responses to uniquely modern challenges. Some of the topics that will be covered include women and gender, violent and non-violent resistance, and the environment. The course will also examine the unique role and contributions of American Muslims.

POPULAR SPIRITUALITY THL 5999-006

Asynchronous Dr. Margaret Mell

This course is designed to provide an opportunity for students to explore the role theology and religion play in creating and maintaining North American culture through popular cultural expressions such as music, television, film, art, sports, entertainment, or fashion. We will place theology and religion into dialogue with popular culture in an effort to understand the complex relationship between the two. The course takes up this dialogue against the wider background of the critical study of theology/religion and popular culture and by exploring the nature of God, self, transcendence, morality, practices, and spiritual quests as those are construed and configured within popular culture. The course asks to
what extent contemporary expressions of Christian worship and spirituality might better engage popular culture and to what extent these expressions already reflect the values, patterns, and practices of popular culture. Thus, we will attempt to study theology, religion and popular culture not as polar opposites, but as complementary and/or competing sources from which people shape their senses of identity, belief, spirituality, privilege, diversity and inclusion, and meaning.

THEOLOGY FOR MILITARY SERVICE THL 6000-001

Mondays, Wednesdays. 7:30 – 8:45 AM. PROFESSOR KENNETH FLEISCHER

Focusing on the cultural setting of the individual who is considering or has already chosen military service, this course will initially explore, primarily from a theological perspective, the question of evil and suffering. This academic journey will begin with a survey of sacred texts, followed by both traditional and contemporary theological reflection. From this theological foundation, the course will examine the particular ethical implications of just war, focusing primarily on its traditional theological expression (Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas). Recognizing the evolving mission of today’s military forces, our academic journey culminates in an examination of peacebuilding, a proactive approach to conflict resolution, which rejects the fatalistic inevitability of war and seeks to correct the perception of passivity typically cast upon nonviolence.