THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Christopher Neyhart)
As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces you to the rich living tradition of Catholic Christianity. We will examine sources ranging from the pre-Christian Hebrew Scriptures to key contemporary voices in Catholic life. The course aims to illuminate ways in which Catholics seek to have a dynamic relationship with a living tradition - standing in it without being stuck in it, so to speak. Between a rejection of tradition as unnecessary, outdated baggage, on the one hand, and a dogmatic insistence on unchanging assertions which ignore the changing world on the other hand, lies a middle path of a living tradition. That middle path will be surveyed through an examination of how Catholic thinkers inherit, expand, and critique ideas from through the Church's history - ideas about the nature of God, the God-Man Jesus Christ, ethics, prayer, sacraments, art, and more.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Jacques Linder)
This section of THL 1000--Catholic Studies will examine the social imaginary (or worldview) of two primary groups of Catholics--Black Catholic nuns during the Black Freedom Struggle and the Transform Now Plowshares, a trio of Catholics who committed civil disobedience protesting the existence of nuclear weapons. We will use these two case studies to examine questions regarding the boundaries of "Catholic Studies" and the theology, ethics, and values that these groups embody. Assessments will primarily consist of reflection papers, a midterm conversation, and a final project. Students can expect class sessions to be filled with a mix of lecture, group discussions and activities, and individual writing.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Jaisy Joseph)
W.E.B. Du Bois once claimed that the “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line.” Taking this proposition seriously, what would it mean to look at the entangled and wounded histories that constitute the US Catholic Church? How might the histories of unassimilable, conquered, and enslaved Catholics challenge the dominant narrative that the US Catholic Church is an immigrant church that achieved full assimilation and Americanization with the election of President John F. Kennedy? Considering the Catholic vision of unity-in-diversity, this course seeks to examine the multiple wounds that emerge from a recognition of this color-line within the Church and a desire for how the healing of broken relationality may better help the Church to respond to Jesus’ prayer “that they may all be one” (John 17:21). Whether you embrace the tradition, question its relevance, approach in curiosity, or wrestle with faith, all voices are welcomed and find value in this community of learning.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (John Abubakar)
As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces you to the rich living tradition of Christianity. This course is a theology course with a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, through the exploration of classic texts (Bible, theology, and Church teaching), central ideas, and 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, the contours of Christian faith and morality, and the relationship between the Church and the world. In the course students engage Christianity as a
living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in local and global cultural and religious contexts. The focus on Catholicism is not understood in a confessional way, but in relationship with other Christian traditions and other faith traditions and in a multicultural and multi-religious world. This course will ask students to engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges considering knowledge and personal experience.

**THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Kevin DePrinzio)**

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course in theology 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 local and global 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. 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/religious traditions.

**THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Sharon Gutkowski)**

This core course explores Catholicism through theological, biblical, ethical, ecclesial, and spiritual themes while examining their cultural, ecumenical/interfaith, and local/global contexts within the contemporary world. Students investigate Roman Catholic beliefs, practices, and traditions through the dynamic of “faith seeking understanding” (St. Anselm of Canterbury) as they engage a variety of sources (texts, media, and art) and distinguished thinkers. Students analyze and critically evaluate the religious and cultural relationships involved in themes such as the person and mission of Jesus, the Catholic Church, the Sacraments, spirituality, the theological and cardinal virtues, Catholic Social Teaching, and ecumenical/interfaith dialogue.

**THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Tim Brunk)**

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 responses to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning.

As the Vatican put it in 2013: “It must be pointed out that teaching the Catholic religion in schools has its own aims, different from those of catechesis. In fact, while catechesis promotes personal adherence to Christ and maturing of the Christian life, school teaching gives the students knowledge about Christianity’s identity and the Christian life. Thus, one aims to enlarge the area of our rationality, to reopen it to the larger questions of the truth and the good, to link theology, philosophy and science between them in full respect for the
methods proper to them and for their reciprocal autonomy, but also in the awareness of the intrinsic unity that holds them together.”

This course is intended to be an introduction to theology. Whatever your beliefs, you are welcome. This is not a course in catechism or Sunday school. It is a critical examination of the theological claims and devotional practices of the Christian tradition. No questions are off the table.

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 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 / religious 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.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Brandon Ambrosino)
Faith, Reason, and Culture studies Christianity with a particular focus on Roman Catholicism. Animated by Augustine’s concern to relate Christian faith to human culture, this course will help students think through some of life’s most pressing questions, like What do I believe?, How can I experience God?, and Was Jesus really a drag queen? Christianity claims that Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14). If this is true, then we should expect God to be a willing conversation partner with the “fleshy” stuff of our everyday lives. What this means, then, is that there’s no theological reason why we have to think about God separately from popular culture — so we’re not going to do that. Instead, what we’re going to do in this class is to construct and deconstruct various Catholic theologies while overthinking the “fleshy” stuff that makes up our world: Disney movies, social media, musical theatre, drag bars, antique stores, restaurants, fashion, collectible toys, and of course … sex robots.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Christopher Barnett)
Researchers at MIT have 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: can we demonstrate that God exists? 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.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason and Culture (Edward Hastings)
This course will examine the ways in which experience, faith and culture intersect. Utilizing the searching mode of St. Augustine and the questioning methodology of St. Anselm, we will approach the Catholic Christian faith tradition with an attitude of “faith seeking understanding.” From these viewpoints we will consider what is meant by the notion of God and consider if this notion and faith in general has any relevance for today.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, & Culture (Gregory Grimes)
Based upon the Christian notion that God became human in Jesus of Nazareth, who intimately interacted with the people of his own time, addressing their needs, this course begins by diagnosing characteristics of contemporary culture. In short, asking: what are the most urgent needs of our time? We will then explore how an understanding of God as Creator and our relationship to God as creatures in a created world provides an ultimate orientation for how we are to live in the world today. Here we will explore a thoroughly Augustinian understanding of the God/human relationship. Then this will be related to Pope Francis’s encyclical, “Laudato Si’”, which addresses quite concretely how this understanding of the God/human relationship is of the utmost importance for the ecological, economic, and social challenges we currently face as a society. From here we will delve more deeply into an understanding of Jesus: who he was, the central message of his ministry, and the importance of Christians carrying out that ministry today. Having examined more closely both God and Jesus, we will apply this more specifically to the question: how can Christianity improve our ways of thinking of and implementing more just economic systems that encourage sustainable, integral human development?

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, & Culture (Hadassah Bergstrom)
As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this Foundation course introduces students to the rich living tradition of Christianity: the sources, traditions, practices, and major thinkers that have shaped Christianity’s responses 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 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/religious traditions.

This course offers students a path towards ‘faith seeking understanding and engaging culture’ through a historical survey of church/societal/spiritual controversies and conflicts. In this course we will endeavor to better understand the historical circumstances, political, economic, social, and religious factors, surrounding these issues in an effort to surmise what these controversies suggest about the time and place in which they arose. Furthermore, we will consider how people understood God and how these issues altered conceptions and ideas about God(s) and God’s role in humanity. In other words, we will investigate how controversy changes both the Church and the society at-large? Ultimately, students will analyze not only how these historical controversies affected/changed contemporaneous understanding(s) of God, but also modern understanding(s) of faith, identity, community, the meaning of existence, and God.

**THL 100: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Hector Varela Rios)**
During the next 16 weeks, we will read scholarship on material religion and theology to understand the latter’s concepts, methods, goals, and implications for culture (and of culture for theology). After some background on the concepts material and theological, we will engage existential/cultural questions alongside theological statements (and vice versa) and have them interact using the Latinx world as case study. Our task, then, is nothing less than to think and ask about our world and its problems, even if provisionally and incompletely. Our sources will be the Bible, Gaudium et Spes (a document that emerged from the Vatican II Council in the 1960's), theologians from the European/U.S. and Latinx contexts, and Latinx culture in general (i.e., its colonial history, ways of being and living, arts, worship spaces, home, community, and church devotions, and the objects and practices that surround all). Whenever relevant, we will also use current news to contextualize the lesson. The main goal of this course is to evaluate the relationship between faith, our selves, and our world.

**THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Ho Thi Nguyen)**
As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this Foundations course involves students of every faith tradition, culture, and worldview in examining the Augustinian vision of “understanding what we believe” (On Free Choice of the Will 1.4) and the questioning methodology of St. Anselm with an attitude of “faith seeking understanding.” In this course, students will examine Christian and non-Christian religious practices, beliefs, and traditions that have developed throughout history as they investigate the interconnections between faith, religion, and culture.

The Faith, Reason, and Culture track explores Christian theological traditions in their cultural contexts and introduces students to key terms and thinkers that have shaped responses to the fundamental human questions relating to God, oneself, and others. Students also engage religious truth claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges.
THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Ilea Delio)
As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this Foundation course introduces students to the rich living tradition of Christianity, its sources, traditions, practices, and major thinkers that have shaped Christianity’s responses to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning.

With a particular focus on faith engaging culture, students will engage fundamental religious questions within the context of world events. We will explore the rich living tradition of Christianity with its focus on practical wisdom. Emphasis will be on the Christian tradition as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in local and global cultural and religious contexts. More so, we will explore Christian faith within a scientific and technological milieu.

This course is a foundational course for the Liberal Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum. It is meant to help address the questions, “What do I desire to know?” “What do I believe? “What do I hope for?” Emphasis will be on living faith in an unfinished universe, that a process of life in evolution. We will explore Christian themes, writings, values, and practices in relationship to specific contemporary challenges, such as global warming, racism, poverty and the challenges of social media. The Vatican II document, Gaudium et spes (Joy and Hope), will be our starting point, and we will navigate the terrain of Christian faith since the late twentieth century into the twenty-first century. The course essentially aims to challenge, provoke and inspire the God-quest which is at the heart of human longing and desire.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Jaisy Joseph)
What do we mean by liberation? Liberation from what and for what? In this course, we will explore how responses to these questions lie at the heart of the Christian tradition, especially considering God’s preferential option for the poor and the marginalized. We will begin with the theological foundations of this option found in a renewed understanding of God’s being and action in history. We will explore how this liberating message begins with the experiences of the Israelites and is manifested in the life of Jesus Christ. We will then examine the liberative experience of the Gospel as it is received in feminist, Latino/a, African American, and Asian American experience. Whether you embrace the tradition, question its relevance, approach in curiosity, or wrestle with faith, all voices are welcomed and find value in this community of learning.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Jillian Langford)
This section of Faith, Reason, and Culture will explore the relationship between faith and culture from an interdisciplinary lens. Students will have the opportunity to examine, understand, and evaluate major theological traditions and their history, social impact, and spiritual practices. Through these explorations students will be able to gain a deeper understanding of how culture is shaped by theological traditions, including Catholicism, and how spiritual practices are exercised in the 21st century. This course contains opportunities for hands-on spiritual practices and self-reflection.
THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Joseph Loya)
This THL 1000 course 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 called Church. This course is structured to condition scholarly encounter with specific issues such as the following: What is Christianity’s relation to its “elder sibling in religion” which is Judaism? How can one speak of the existence of “one Church” when there are so many different (and at times, competing) denominations – and how did those differences arise? What is the relation between the Sacred Scriptures (plus subsequent authoritative writings) and the Church Tradition within which they were produced and handed on? What has been the development of Christian worship rituals? What are the prospects for mutual enrichment and edification in the dialogue between Christians and those who do not identify with the Christian Church Tradition (including agnostics, “nones” and atheists)? What are some specific examples of the nexus between Christian faith and culture? Finally, what are Christian perspectives on the ultimate destiny of us all.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Joshua Kammerer)
As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this Foundation course involves students of every religion, culture, and worldview in examining the Augustinian vision of “understanding what we believe” (On Free Choice of the Will 1.4). Students investigate Christian and non-Christian religious practices, beliefs, and traditions that have developed over time in diverse cultural and religious contexts as they explore faith, reason, and culture in their many, textured relationships.

The course may explore Christian theological traditions in their cultural contexts. With these foci, the course introduces students to the sources and major thinkers that have shaped responses to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning. Students engage religious truth claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Laura Simpson)
What is “religion”? This section of THL 1000 engages religion as a category that operates at the intersections of faith, reason, and culture, unveiling the overlap and slipperiness between those terms. We will explore religion as it relates to ethics, politics, art, community, and imagination, with special attention to the theological tools we invoke to impact and interpret the worlds we inherit.

THL 1000 Faith, Reason, and Culture (Margaret Mell)
As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this Foundation course involves students of every religion, culture, and worldview in examining the Augustinian vision of “understanding what we believe” (On Free Choice of the Will 1.4). Students investigate Christian and non-Christian religious practices, beliefs, and traditions that have developed over time in diverse cultural and religious contexts as they explore faith, reason, and culture in their many, textured relationships. The course may examine Catholicism theologically, historically, and culturally (Catholic Studies track); explore Christian
theological traditions in their cultural contexts (Faith, Reason, and Culture track); or survey religiosity in general and global religions, including Christianity, in particular as well as their commonalities, differences, and cultural expressions (Global Religious Experience track). With these foci, the course introduces students to the sources and major thinkers that have shaped responses to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning. Students engage religious truth claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges.

This particular course explores Christian theological traditions in their cultural contexts (Faith, Reason, and Culture track). Students investigate Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. 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/religious traditions.

THL 1000 Faith, Reason, and Culture (Mary Catherine O’Reilly-Gindhart)
This course invites students to critically read, analyze, and interpret diverse religious, theological, and cultural texts (including women, minorities, non-western) and related genres or media, art, and artifacts (e.g., prayer, mystical writings, autobiographies, film, music).

The Department of Theology and Religious Studies is committed to the time-honored definition of its task as “faith seeking understanding” (Anselm of Canterbury). It draws upon the rich legacy of St. Augustine’s passionate pursuit of truth, a purposeful endeavor that evokes the union of mind and heart, links faith with rational reflection and, in dialogue with culture, builds unity in the midst of diversity. Thus, the department accepts “faith seeking understanding” as a process that takes place in specific cultural contexts that also must be analyzed.

Villanova University exists within a world of profound religious, theological, racial, economic, and cultural diversity, some of which can be seen on campus. Globalization and information technologies effectively collapse walls and barriers that once defined the boundaries and borders of our lives and of the disciplines within which we have learned to study. We, therefore, have an opportunity to open windows for understanding ourselves in relationship to others, the social order, and the social divisiveness and violent confrontations rooted in deep economic, political, ethnic, and theological/religious world views (cf. Gaudium et Spes 37).

Christianity itself is changing in the midst of these forces that bring faith into question. It is crucial that students recognize that what they believe has implications in relation to the lives of others in our own society and across the globe (particularly poor and marginalized people), the planet, and diverse religious traditions and cultures. Theological and religious literacy is not only the mark of a liberally educated person but also an indispensable resource helping us to understand ourselves in order to empathize with one another and contribute to shaping a more just, compassionate, inclusive, and peaceful global society. Students and teachers thus have a triple task: to be steeped in the rich tradition of Christianity and the faith-claims that it makes; to understand how the Christian construal of reality

This particular course explores Christian theological traditions in their cultural contexts (Faith, Reason, and Culture track). Students investigate Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. 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/religious traditions.
interacts with and has a continuing impact on the global society today and for the future; and to engage in a thoughtful and practical inculturation of religion/theology.

Theology and Religious Studies courses acquire their unique significance in the Liberal Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum because of their inner need to make the dialogue between faith(s)/religion(s) and culture(s) authentic. Understanding the substantial relationship of faith(s)/religion(s) and culture(s), instructors accept the challenge to render faith(s)/religion(s) intelligible, meaningful, and relevant in diverse contemporary cultural contexts – both local and global. With their own canons of inquiry and verification and with increasing degrees of methodological complexity, theological and religious studies disciplines probe rigorously broader questions of relevance to Christian and non-Christian beliefs and practices, the union of mind and heart, life as a whole, and the discovery of God who is at the center of it all. This emphasis is characteristic of the University itself: “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.” (Villanova Mission Statement)

In this course we will have a special focus on the feminist, social and racial justice issues facing Catholics and Catholic universities today.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Naomi Washington Leapheart)
This course operates under the simple premise that everyone has a theology—from the devout Christian to the atheist. The study of theology, then, entails not only developing one’s personal faith, but also deepening one’s understanding of the myriad of theological decisions one must make. In this course, students will survey biblical texts, scholarly writings, and other material from a variety of traditions and sources. Some of the questions we will explore during the semester include: What is the relationship between power and religious identity? What are moral values and who gets to name them? What role do gender identity and sexual orientation play in spiritual formation? What is the academic study of religion? As we explore these themes and questions, please note that this discussion-based course is taught with a commitment to justice as such we will claim ownership of our assumptions and strive for intellectual growth and evolution.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Rebecca Irwin-Diehl)
The Faith, Reason, and Culture track of THL1000 explores Christian theological traditions in their cultural contexts and introduces students to key sources and major thinkers that have shaped responses to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning. Students in this section will embark on a pilgrimage styled after a unicursal (single-path) labyrinth. We begin at “home” by rehearsing our personal faith histories and recognizing our own social location, before exploring the Christian tradition and its resources for engaging and evaluating contemporary culture.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Robert Nicastro)
As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this Foundation course introduces students to the rich living tradition of Christianity: the sources, traditions, practices, and major thinkers that have
shaped Christianity’s responses 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.

In this course, students are equipped to appreciate the ongoing quest of Christian faith seeking understanding as it carefully collaborates with all human knowledge and experience. After a consideration of the horizon of this course—the relationship between faith and culture—we will engage with four fundamental human questions, namely, what we believe, who we are, how we can live in community, and where to find meaning. As we discuss these questions, we will test the validity of traditional Christian statements of belief in light of contemporary cultural perspectives—particularly the discoveries of contemporary science—in order to discuss the continued relevance of Christian approaches to these questions and their transformation in today’s culture.

**THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Andre Price)**

Global Religious Experience has at its heart the study of religiosity in general and of global religions (including Christianity) in particular, as well as their commonalities, differences, and cultural expressions. These courses will explore religious beliefs and practices in a broader global context, and/or experiences deemed “religious” in Christianity, non-Christian religions, and religions in non-Western regions of the world. Thus, the track provides a broad-based religious literacy to students, which is one of the hallmarks of an Augustinian education, in addition to placing students in a position to understand and appreciate various religious traditions as they exist and interact in our globalized context.

I am or I am not “religious” are common phrases used to describe people’s investment (or lack thereof) in religious institutions or spirituality. But what does/doesn’t it mean to be religious? The fundamental question of this course is whether all of life is religious. Might religion be bigger and more robust than the “thing” you think it is? To get at this question we will approach “religion” prismatically.

**THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Brett Grainger)**

This course is an introduction to the scholarly study of religion and theology. It is offered as part of the Department’s “Global Religious Experience” track, which provides a broad-based religious literacy to Villanova students, in addition to placing them in a prime position to understand and appreciate various religious traditions as they exist and interact in our globalized context. Through your close engagement with the course materials and thoughtful participation in weekly discussions, you will become acquainted with some of the foundational tools of analysis that scholars employ to understand the everyday, “lived religion” of human beings. You will also be exposed to some of the rich diversity of the world’s religious traditions, including Christianity. Whether you are an atheist, an agnostic, or a believer (or find yourself shifting from one seat to another depending on the day of the week), you are welcome. We begin by discussing some “big picture” questions (What is religion? How do scholars study it?), followed by a multidimensional exploration of religious dimensions of human experience, organized in seven themes: spirituality, embodiment, materiality, emotion, aesthetics, moral judgment, and
narrative. Throughout the semester, Christianity will be put in conversation with other religious traditions. Though our approach will be scholarly and critical, I expect that over the course of semester we will encounter ideas that challenge and help to illumine aspects of your own experience and of modern life.

**THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (John Buck)**

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this Foundation course involves students of every religion, culture, and worldview in examining the Augustinian vision of “understanding what we believe” (On Free Choice of the Will 1.4). Students will investigate global religious practices, beliefs, and traditions that have developed over time in diverse cultural and religious contexts as they explore faith, reason, and culture in their many, textured relationships. The course will survey religiosity in general and global religions, including Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism, their commonalities, differences, and cultural expressions. The course introduces students to the sources and major thinkers that have shaped responses to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning. Students engage religious truth claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges.

The course is structured in two parts. In Part 1, we examine general questions: What is faith? What is culture? How have these concepts evolved over the period of recorded history, especially post-modernity? Is religious faith essential, or is it, as described by Karl Marx merely, “das opium des volkes?” Is it possible for an individual to engage these questions without bias? To answer these questions, we will examine religious faith from the perspective of philosophy, anthropology and sociology. We will draw on the work of, *inter alia*, Karl Jaspers, Charles Taylor, Peter Berger, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Georg Gadamer, Karl Rahner, and students’ unique perspectives. In Part 2, we survey the world’s major religions. We will examine what each of these faiths has to say about the divine nature, the cosmos, personhood, human suffering and death, the environment, and its believers’ engagement with aspects of contemporary culture (including sexuality, gender, and race). We will consider the unique challenges that contemporary culture places on faith traditions. We will draw on the works of, *inter alia*, Raimon Panikkar and Teilhard de Chardin.

**THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Kerry San Chirico)**

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 responses to the fundamental human questions that underlie religious traditions and shape the human search for meaning. Because this THL 1000 course is within the Global Religious Experience (GRE) track, throughout the semester we will be examining Christianity, or Christianities, in relation.

No religion hovers above time and space. Rather, it is embodied by living, breathing human beings, constituted by persons and societies of varying beliefs and practices. This religious tradition (or traditions) developed in response to a first century Galilean Jewish teacher named Yeshua ben Yusef.
Throughout the world he is variously known as Īsa, Yesu Masih, Jesucristo, Tian chu, Jidu, Xristos, and Christ. From its inception, Christianity has been a cross-cultural phenomenon, born from the encounter of Judaism and Hellenism in a time before the inception of a genus called “religion.” Since that time, Christianity has both encountered culture, been a bearer of culture, and has itself been shaped by culture—leading to tremendous global diversity. We will employ various fields of learning in this course: theology, anthropology, social theory, comparative religion, philosophy, and history, ever conscious that with a subject so vast and with questions so vital, no one methodology and no one interpretive lens is itself adequate to the task. Finally, the method of instruction will vary. You can expect lectures, textual exegesis, films and documentaries, and discussion—lots of discussion.

**THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Matthew Riddle)**

This course in “Global Religious Experience” is an introduction to the comparative study of religious practices and theological beliefs that provides a broad-based religious literacy to students, placing them in a better position to understand and appreciate religious traditions and expressions as they exist and interact in our globalized context.

Through close engagement with course materials and thoughtful participation in weekly discussions, we will engage with some of the fundamental questions at the heart of religious inquiry and become better acquainted with the tools that scholars use to study religion today. During the course of the semester, we will attend to the various dimensions of “lived religion” in order to explore more deeply the similarities and differences present throughout the world’s religious traditions in all their diversity and complexity. This endeavor will expose students to the varieties of religious experience with the hope that understanding people, practices, beliefs, and cultures different from our own will also help to illumine aspects of our own lives and modern life in general. While this study of religion will be critical and scholarly in nature, it will always be done in an effort to answer in a more articulate and sophisticated way the question that is at the heart of all THL-1000 courses: “What do I believe?”

**THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Sherine Green)**

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces students to the rich living tradition of Christianity through the lens of the Global Religious Experience: the sources, traditions, practices, and major thinkers that have shaped responses to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning and justice. Be prepared to introspect on deep issues of faith and justice related to the Global Religious Experiences; some topics may be uncomfortable; many we are now plagued by globally. Individual Contemplation, Active Engagement and Group collaboration are key ingredients to successful conversations in class.

The focus is on Roman Catholicism; however, students engage and learn different religious, sociological and cultural traditions and charisms.
THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Stephanie Wong)
This section of THL 1000 Global Religious Experience is a comparative study of Christian and Chinese (Confucian, Moist, Daoist) religiosity. The course considers how these traditions have engaged questions of fundamental human concern: Where do we come from, and who or what can we trust? Why do we struggle individually or communally in life, and what can we do about it? And finally, for what should we aspire in this life or the next? We will consider both the sacred or classical texts in each case, as well as the lived religious experiences of people drawing upon these religious traditions to navigate life in past and contemporary times.

THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Yasemin Akis)
The study of religion is the study of a rich and fascinating dimension of human experience that includes but goes well beyond beliefs and ritual practices. In this religion course, students explore case studies about how religious are internally diverse, how they evolve and change through time, and how religions are embedded in all dimensions of human experience. Students investigate Christian and non-Christian religious practices, beliefs, and traditions that have developed over time in diverse cultural and religious contexts as they explore faith, reason, and culture in their many, textured relationships.

THL 2490: THM Intro to Biblical Literature (Joseph Wimmer)
For over 3000 years the Hebrew Bible has been considered to be the Word of God, guiding ancient Israel and contemporary Judaism towards a religious understanding of the world. For about 2000 years Christianity, with faith in Christ Jesus as the long awaited Messiah and divine Son of God, has done the same, but with the addition of the New Testament. As religious documents, these ancient texts are still valuable, but for a proper interpretation of them and of their message, they should be subjected to the methods of “historical criticism,” with an appropriate study of Middle Eastern archaeology, history, comparative literature, hermeneutics and other social scientific and literary approaches, especially those of literary forms or genres. Underlying this whole study is the nature of divine revelation and religious language as a presentation of God’s will in human language with all its limitations. Through lectures, readings, discussions and short videos, as we pass through the various sectors of the Bible, the nature of religious language will be discussed, along with such important theological themes as creation, covenant, grace, liberation and redemption, with a view towards understanding the Bible’s relevance for today’s world.

THL 2590: Themes in Modern Christianity: Sex abuse crisis in the Catholic Church: history and ecclesiology (Massimo Faggioli)
The sex abuse crisis is arguably one of the most serious crises in the history of the Catholic Church since the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. The revelations of the sexual abuse of minors by clergy and the failure of the Church to punish and prevent these crimes are an essential part of the picture of Catholicism today.
The course will try to address two issues: first, the readings and discussions will open an historical perspective on the crisis, which has gone through different phases, with antecedents in the medieval and early modern period, and different phases in the contemporary period (the first revelations in the 1980s and 1990s, the *Boston Globe*’s “spotlight investigation” in 2002, the beginning of a new phase with the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report in 2018). This historical study of the sex abuse crisis will have a global perspective: not only the USA, but also other countries, and especially Ireland, Australia, Chile. Secondly, the course will address the issue of what the sex abuse crisis tells us about the institutional and theological culture of the Roman Catholic Church such as the model and formation of priests, the hierarchical structure and the role of the laity and women, the way the Vatican and national bishops’ conferences have acted in response to the crisis, the interaction between secular justice and the justice system of the Catholic Church.

This course runs with the Peace and Justice attribute of Center for Peace and Justice Education at Villanova. This course counts toward the Gender and Women’s Studies major or minor. Majoring or minoring in Peace and Justice and in Gender and Women’s Studies at Villanova is highly flexible, allowing students to get credit for their activism and including many requirements that can be fulfilled through core courses. *The program values diverse perspectives and invites students from all disciplines, especially those invested in social change.*

*Given the nature of this course, students will be required to read, talk, and write about sexual and religious practices which may seem foreign, disturbing or even repellent. If you are unable to do so with a respectful attitude and a curious disposition, you should not be in this class.*

**THL 3450: Pastoral Care of the Sick (Tim Brunk)**

In its mission statement, Villanova University commits itself to “concern for the common good” and a “vigorous and respectful pursuit of truth and wisdom in every area of humanity.” The mission statement further emphasizes the importance of “service experiences” and “compassion for the suffering.” The Department of Theology and Religious Studies in turn commits itself to the pursuit of “a distinctively Augustinian way of knowing and loving God and neighbor that is holistic, integrative, and transformational.”

“Pastoral Care of the Sick” is a course being offered in response to these ideals. The course will begin with a treatment of the theological understanding of the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, including reading of primary texts on pastoral care from the Roman Catholic Church. The course will continue with a pastoral-theological exploration of the entire range of care provided to the ill and dying. The course will conclude with an examination of the spirituality of caregivers, specifically Christian nurses and other Christian medical professionals. The course thus seeks not only to ground students in the Catholic pastoral / theological tradition of care for those who are ill but also seeks in a special way to prepare pre-med and nursing students at Villanova for the gifts and challenges that await them in their chosen careers.

Materials for this course will include readings and at least one video. The course may also feature guest speakers such as chaplains at area hospitals.
THL 4100: THM Justice and Sustainability (Arthur Purcaro/William Lorenz)
During our course, Social Justice in Sustainability, we will employ the See, Discern, Act methodology in order to learn more about our own sustainability footprint, what our impact means for the planet and for current and future generations of people, why it’s so important to care, and how to take action to reduce it. This course presents the four principles of Catholic Social Teaching - human dignity, common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity - and applies them to the environment, centering on Pope Francis’ Encyclical Laudato Si, “On Care for our Common Home.” We will look at sustainability from the four most common personal pathways – Shelter & Energy, Transportation, Food & Water, and Consumer Purchases – and identify first steps towards a more sustainable future for all. By looking at sustainability through different lenses, we are better able to understand how sustainability is crucial to our survival as a species, but also to humanity and social justice.

THL 4480: Introduction to Biomedical Ethics (Brett Wilmot)
The purpose of the course is to learn about the distinctive method of Catholic bioethics and to explore some of the tensions within that tradition with respect to a range of biomedical controversies. How do we render Christian faith intelligible and relevant to 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 formulate answers to bioethical question from a Catholic perspective in the context of contemporary bioethical debates. We will be considering a range of examples that affect patients, care providers, and the broader society in which Christians and non-Christians seek to live lives with moral integrity. The vision of the human person and the ideal of human flourishing from a Catholic perspective will be developed as the foundation for Catholic bioethics. At times, we will contrast a distinctively Catholic approach with secular, philosophical alternatives, but the focus of this course will be to develop a richer understanding of what is distinctive about the method and conclusions of Catholic bioethics. Students will become familiar with theories, principles, terminology, values, and resources that are used in answering bioethical questions in a manner that is theologically and philosophically robust. Critical analysis of emerging biomedical topics will be encouraged. Many clinical examples found in the daily practice of medicine will be discussed in class.

THL 4550 The Contemplative Tradition (Martin Laird)
Feelings of loneliness, anger, anxiety, fear, self-loathing, among other afflictive thoughts and feelings prevent our discovery of what already lies deep within us: inner peace and the indwelling presence of God. The Christian contemplative tradition is concerned with developing those interior skills (the practice of contemplation) 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.

THL 4990: Spiritual Journeys (Joshua Kammerer)
We live in an era of not only increasing polarization but also of spiritual searching and fluidity. These societal shifts have spiritual elements to them and, therefore, in part, require spiritual engagement. The learned skill of careful listening to oneself and to others is such an engagement. Using the genres of biography, autobiography, and spiritual meditations as a starting point, students will learn to empathize and understand others, including what others believe, practice, and experience spiritually. While operating from a Christian framework, we will engage the experiences and perspectives of those outside it. Students will grow in greater understanding of themselves and others different from them through both self-reflective exercises leading to a spiritual autobiography and the interviewing and construction of a spiritual biography of another.

THL 5003: Catholic Social Thought (Gerald Beyer)
Is the use of force justifiable to promote peace and justice? Should companies pay some workers low wages while others earn exorbitant salaries? Is Catholicism responsible for environmental degradation? How should we confront the ongoing problem of racism and other forms of discrimination and marginalization? Do women and LGBTQ people have a voice in the Church? This course explores answers to such questions from the perspective of modern Catholic social thought.

THL 5003: THM Contemporary US Catholics (Mary Ellen O’Donnell)
In 2020, the United States saw the nomination of its sixth Catholic Justice currently serving on the Supreme Court and its election of the second-ever Catholic president. Clearly Roman Catholics have established themselves politically and culturally in this country despite some challenging beginnings. Curiously, though, the nature of the respective Catholicism of Justice Amy Coney Barrett and President Joe Biden point to significant difference in the ideology of these co-religionists. While they might share demographic similarities, the personal divergence of these high-profile individuals draws attention to
the wide variety within American Catholicism in the twenty-first century. It raises the question: who is an American Catholic today? Across a wide spectrum of race, ethnicity, sexual identity and orientation, theological understanding, religious upbringing and ideological position, Americans identify as Roman Catholic and find a home in its Church. Who are these diverse Catholics and, ultimately, what unites them in the claim to this tradition? This will be the focus of our course. While we could never achieve comprehensive coverage, we will consider a range of individuals and groups in an effort to grasp the diversity within the Church in the United States and with an eye toward the connections and commonalities that link its disparate members to the faith.

THL 5003: THM Hispanics in the US Catholic Church (Ruth Bolarte)
Hispanic presence in U.S. Catholicism continues to expand rapidly. Hispanic Catholics have lived in what is now the United States twice as long as the nation has existed. This course introduces an analysis of the lived experience of Latinos living in the United States as they engage in critical and faithful reflection about their relationship with the God of life revealed in Jesus as well as their relationship with others in light of their particular social, historical, cultural and ecclesial circumstances.

THL 5003: THM Liberation Theology (Arthur Purcaro)
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.

THL5003: Women Doctors of the Church (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.

THL 5004: THM Black Theology & Black Power: An Exploration of Race Justice & Christianity (Timmy Lucky)
Even as a Christian Nation, The United States engages in a long-standing practice of the production and consumption of “Racist Ideas.” In this course, we will explore the implications of “Racist Ideas” historically imbedded within the American legal system and government policies. We will juxtapose those ideas and practices against the backdrop of American/African-American History. We will examine
how Christianity and the United States Justice System have been used as a means to justify slavery and the recurring discriminatory practices that are still seen today. As we study together, we will engage the Bible, historical literature, visual art and films to explore key topics from a Theological perspective (to include racism, antiracism and humanity).

**THL 5004: THM LGBTQ+ Issues in Religions (Stefanie Knauss)**

LGBTQ+ identities and practices represent a particular challenge to many religious traditions. Heterosexuality provides the normative basis not just for ethics of sexuality and family, but represents the matrix in which beliefs are formulated, taught and practiced. In addition, heteronormativity contributes to the establishment and consolidation of power structures in religions and societies. Yet in spite of their marginalization, LGBTQ+ believers are a part of religious communities, and contribute through their presence to the development of traditions that may become more inclusive of diversity. Thus, LGBTQ issues provoke a range of responses in religious traditions, from conservative and prohibitive to welcoming and innovative.

In this class, we will focus on attitudes towards LGBTQ+ identities and practices in Judaism, Christianity and Islam in a global perspective. We will analyze traditional teachings in response to LGBTQ+ issues, as well as innovative theological developments. We will investigate how religious discourses on homosexuality support religious and social power structures through the exclusion of LGBTQ+ persons and identities, and how LGBTQ+ persons can speak back from the margins. We will also investigate the ways in which LGBTQ+ persons negotiate what is often considered as a contradiction: their sexual and religious identities. In doing so, we will explore sacred texts, theological discussions, sociological studies and cultural resources relating to these three religious traditions in their global diversity. Our goal is to better understand and evaluate the variety of attitudes towards LGBTQ+ issues and the relevance of religious traditions for personal and communal living.

**THL 5004: Women Mystics (Kevin Hughes)**

“Mystics” have been treated as outsiders in the tradition., and women mystics most especially found themselves often under suspicion. Some were even burned at the stake. But modern scholars have recovered and studied these texts... texts which offer profound new perspectives on God, the cosmos, the human soul, and more. This course will explore the mystical texts of Marguerite Porete, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Angela of Foligno, Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila, and contemporary mystical writers such as Therese of Lisieux and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. To read the mystics is to see Christianity’s theological vision in a different and much richer light.

**THL 5004: THM Popular Spirituality (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.

**THL 5004: Sports and Spirituality (Edward Hastings)**
This course will explore the many ways sports can help us become more whole persons and link us more closely with God. By reflecting, reading and discussing students will discover the connections between mind, body and spirit that are inherent in sports. The class will use movies, videos, guest speakers to help us explore these themes and topics.

**THL 5004: THM Theology and Film (Christopher Barnett)**
Since its inception, cinema has been used as a means of both raising and answering questions long central to the Western intellectual tradition: Who or what is God? What are the origins and ends of life? Does life possess inherent worth, or is it just a chaotic play of forces? Why do we suffer and how should we respond to it? What is belief? What does it mean to pursue justice and love in an obviously imperfect world? How does or might faith impact this pursuit? In raising these sorts of issues, film has emerged as a distinctive interlocutor with religion in general and with Christian theology in particular.

In recent decades, few filmmakers have addressed theological questions as much as acclaimed American director Martin Scorsese (1942-). The overarching aim of this course will be to investigate Scorsese’s films, paying particular attention to the role that theology plays in them. This task will be carried out in three main ways. First, there will be a general orientation to the nature of cinema and to its historical development, which, perhaps surprisingly, first emerged from Christian catechesis. Second, a number of Scorsese’s films themselves will be viewed and a range of critical methods employed to tease out their philosophical and theological significance. And, finally, direct scholarly attention will be paid to the issues raised, with related readings in theological subjects such as natural theology, theodicy (“the problem of evil”), and spirituality. Throughout, students will be encouraged to engage film in both oral and written form.

**THL 5004: THM Theology and Pop Culture (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, and the spiritual quest 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.

THL 5005: THM Archaeology of Ritual and Religion (Asil Yaman)
This course will provide students with an introductory overview of the archaeological methods, theories, and practices used in the study of religious practices and rituals found throughout the ancient Mediterranean and Middle East. Students will examine themes ranging from landscapes, burials, taboos, cultic sacrifices, and rites. The course will begin chronologically in the Upper Paleolithic period and conclude in the early Middle Ages (c. 10000 – 500 CE). In addition to structured lectures, students will be provided with supplemental materials to be reviewed as their schedule permits.

THL 5005: THM Modern Hinduisms; Diversity 2; Diversity 3 (Kerry San Chirico)
This course examines the variously connected and variegated religious tradition/s now known as Hinduism/s as they collided with Western modernity beginning in late 18th century, resulting in continuity but also profound innovation. It seeks to examine how what were increasingly being called Hindu traditions were changed in the encounter with Western science, technology, philosophy, religion, and especially colonial power while continually querying, “What is Hinduism?” Through the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity, and while learning about Hindu tradition/s even as we interrogate the categories Hindu and Hinduism, we will explore the manifold expressions of contemporary Hindu belief and practice and the various academic discourses arising out of the encounter and their impact on shaping what we now designate “modern Hinduism/s.” Along the way we will study colonialism and post-colonialism, the genealogy of “world religions,” the Hindu pantheon, Hindu theologies, ritual life, bhakti (devotion), class and caste hierarchies, gender and sexuality, inter-religious encounter, god-men and god-women, gurus and their devotees in North America, Hindu nationalism, Indian nationalism, and diasporic Hinduism.

The content of this course demands that we step out of our own religio-cultural frameworks to consider different ways of being in the world. This has a twofold effect. On the one hand, it allows us the opportunity for sympathetic and critical engagement with ideas, concepts, practices, and perspectives that might be far removed from our own religio-cultural traditions; on the other hand, it provides us with the rare opportunity to turn back and reflect upon our own religio-cultural traditions from a perspective of comparison unto understanding.

THL 5005: THM Orientalism and Religion (Yasemin Akis)
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.

THL 5005: THM Religion in Russia (Joseph Loya)

It is said that a nation is best understood in knowing the geography of the land it inhabits, the history it has experienced and the religion it has embraced. During the past few decades, the Orthodox Church of Russia has done much to make itself more known in the international ecclesiastical forum. Russian Christians have revealed themselves as subjects of the same issues and tensions that challenge believers everywhere: they, too, have been preoccupied by the central question of how to live a life of faith in the midst of ever-changing political and social conditions; of how to be at one and the same time loyal citizens and dedicated members of the religious community; of where to draw the line between church and state. This course is intended to provide the student with an introduction to the history, mind, spirit and life of Russian Orthodoxy as it has equipped its adherents to thrive in this modern, complex and pluralistic world of ours. Not neglected are studies of other official “traditional” religions of Russia: Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. The religious dimensions of the current war in Ukraine will receive special treatment.

THL 5005: THM Wisdom of Sufism (Yasemin Akis)

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.

THL 6000: THM Bible and Sustainability (John Abubakar)

In the opening chapters of On Christian Teaching (I.1-5), Augustine argues that everything that exists can be divided into two groups: things to be used and things to be enjoyed. “To enjoy a thing,” he proposes, “is to rest with satisfaction in it for its own sake” (I.4). “With satisfaction” is a critical qualification. We desire and pursue many things that do not satisfy. To settle for what fails to satisfy is a form of despair. People struggling against despair desperately search for something to pacify their voracious appetites and end up fleeing from one idol to the next since none can save them. Hence our restless hearts. Augustine insists only one thing we can truly enjoy- one thing we are able to rest in with satisfaction. The true objects of enjoyment then are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Everything and everyone else is to be desired according to its usefulness for enjoying of God. However, many important questions about the use and enjoyment of a thing or person remain open. How are we to use the resources of the
earth? Are we meant to dominate the earth or be stewards? This course attempts to understand how we are to interact with animate and inanimate things in the created order from a biblical perspective. It aims to show how we can use biblical principles and practices to better understand the SDGs and support sustainability in our modern world.


Composed within the century after the death of Jesus of Nazareth, the literature of the New Testament constitutes a collection of documents authored by, and addressed to, people typically outside the social, political, military, economic, and religious power structures of their day—members of an upstart offshoot of Judaism, itself a small religion marginalized in the Roman world due to its non-syncretistic monotheism and its adherents’ apparent social aloofness and self-segregation. As such, New Testament-era Christians truly constituted a marginalized minority within a marginalized minority, rendering the widespread dissemination and the survival of their literature a historical marvel which affords a precious glimpse into how, and to what extent, this marginalized minority might reflect—or seek to subvert—reigning religious, cultural, and political power dynamics in their societies. Historically informed attention to the power dynamics within the societies of these New Testament-era Christians can foster in today’s believing Christians deeper appreciation for the radically novel nature of the Christian message and the commitment of early Christians to it. For precisely this purpose, the course, after exploring some orienting introductory material, will address two broad areas.

First, a survey of the historical experience of Palestinian Jews from the time of the Maccabean Revolt through the end of the New Testament era will illuminate applicable structures of political and religious power and influence which contextualized the activity of Jesus of Nazareth and conditioned the religious environment of Jesus’ disciples after Jesus’ execution. Secondly, an examination of the impact of overarching superstructures of Hellenistic culture and imperial Roman political governance on the thought and teaching of Jesus and Jesus’ disciples will inform analysis of various Christian reactions to Roman governance in New Testament literature, which was generally written for and by Christians in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), and Greece. This analysis will also incorporate relevant insights from postcolonial theory yet eschew uncritical and anachronistic application of all aspects of postcolonial theory to first-century contexts. Assigned readings will introduce these various topics, but regular and frequent consideration in class of relevant biblical passages (primarily from the New Testament) will illustrate and animate them. Supplementing typical Christian awareness of profoundly holy and exemplary New Testament protagonists with a fuller recognition of their unenviable worldly status in their own day will enrich contemporary believers’ understanding of the theological messages of the New Testament and potentially prompt further assessment of how to apply those messages meaningfully in our own time with its own social and cultural challenges and struggles.

**THL 6000: Sacred Place in Antiquity (Ian Kinman)**

This course introduces students to ways that various religious communities have historically appropriated theories of space, place, and design to define their own identity and seek a sense of meaning. Each week the course will focus on a specific topic concerning space and place, highlighting one or several built religious environments and placing them in conversation with a series of historical
sources as well as modern critiques and interpretations, with the goal of identifying what defines “sacred.” The course begins with an exploration of Stonehenge, to allow us to develop a vocabulary and understanding of specific concepts without necessarily privileging a specific contemporary religious tradition. The course continues with an investigation into the larger-scaled themes of center and periphery, before examining structures from the three major religious traditions of the ancient Near East: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

**THL 6000: THM Theology for Military Service (Kenneth Fleischer)**

Focusing on the cultural setting of the individual who is considering or has already chosen military service, this course will initially explore, from a theological perspective, the question of evil and suffering. The course will then examine the particular ethical implications of just war, focusing on both its traditional theological expression (Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas) and contemporary theological thought (Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops). Our academic journey culminates in an investigation of peacebuilding within the context of military service and Christian ethics. Each academic inquiry will begin with a survey of sacred texts, followed by both traditional and contemporary theological reflection. **ATTRIBUTES: Core Theology, Peace & Justice.**