

Department of Theology and Religious Studies
Graduate Master's Courses
Spring 2020

Please be aware that dates and times listed below may change.

Foundations in Systematic Theology
THL 8000-001

Fr. Francis Caponi, OSA
Monday 11:30 – 1:50 pm

The Roman poet Martial counted among life's choicest blessings "Res non parva labore, sed relictis." And Jesus commends to our attention the lilies of the field, "how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." But between earthly wealth and heavenly treasure stands theology, and here T.S. Eliot hits the mark: "Tradition cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour." In this light, the course in foundational theology provides the student with the opportunity to wrestle with primary texts of major thinkers from throughout the Church's history, with particular attention to the Scriptures and the teaching of the Magisterium. The class will explore the historical development and internal logic of some of the seminal theological positions which contribute to the Catholic worldview regarding, for example, faith and reason, method and hermeneutics, natural theology and revelation, religious experience and miracles, and doctrine and dogma. This intellectual endeavor has its natural flowering in the student's prayer life and ministry, and provides a solid grounding for advanced study of the Scriptures, Christian anthropology, Christology, ethics, and sacramental theology.

Foundations in Bible
THL 8001-001

Dr. Paul Danove
Tuesday 11:30 – 1:50 pm

The course introduces students to research skills that will allow them to participate in the discourse of biblical studies. It is designed to deepen the student's overall understanding of the biblical literature ("biblical literacy"), including the background literature of early Israel, biblical and post-biblical Judaism, and early Christianity. To this end, study in this course provides an orientation to

1. biblical studies as a discipline;
2. the contexts (literary, cultural, social, political, historical, archaeological, comparative, etc.) of Jewish and Christian canonical scriptures;
3. the methods of modern critical study of the bible with a particular focus on those that isolate cultural data;
4. the living tradition of the reception of biblical themes/texts; and
5. faith/culture and heart/mind dialogues as they advance biblical theology.

Foundations in Spirituality
THL 8003-001

Dr. Rachel J. Smith
Thursday 4:30 – 6:50 pm

What is spirituality? What does it mean to have a spirituality? How can one properly discuss and diagnose spirituality? This course will examine these questions as we explore the various methodologies of spirituality not only as an academic discipline but also as a "field of practice" with key foundational texts to guide our discussion.

Foundations in Ethics
THL 8004-001

Dr. Kathleen Grimes
Tuesday 4:30 – 6:50 pm

Examination of basic questions and research methods in Christian ethics. Special attention to the relationships between faith and culture.

Theological Vision of Teilhard de Chardin
THL 8090-001

Dr. Ilia Delio, OSF
Wednesday 7:00 – 9:20 pm

Prerequisite: Foundations in Theology [THL 8000]

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was one of the most original thinkers of the 20th century. He devoted his life to bridging faith and science and saw his work in the tradition of the Greek Fathers, developing an integrated theological vision that resonates with the insights of Maximus the Confessor, Bonaventure and Karl Rahner. He posited that Christianity is a religion of evolution and devoted his writings to elucidate the significance of Christianity as a religion of evolution. We will explore Teilhard's theological vision in detail, the main influences of his ideas, and the implications of his theological vision for a world of global consciousness, religious pluralism and a technological age.

Visions of the Afterlife
THL 8090-002

Dr. Joshua Wise
Monday 7:00 – 9:20 pm

Prerequisite: Foundations in Theology [THL 8000]

The ideas of heaven and hell, so entrenched in the popular Christian worldview, have a complex history. This course will explore this history in three main stages: First, it will look at ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean constructions of the afterlife by looking at beliefs in cultures such as Sumerian, Ugaritic, Egyptian, and Greek. Next, it will look at ancient Israelite views of death and the development of the idea of an afterlife in Jewish religion. Finally, it will look at how these concepts set the stage for the Christian understanding of the Easter events and their subsequent interpretation. Students will read both ancient and modern texts to explore the background of modern conceptions of the afterlife.

Wisdom Literature
THL 8130-001

Dr. Carey Walsh
Wednesday 11:30 – 1:50 pm

Prerequisite: Foundations in Bible [THL 8001]

The concerns of biblical wisdom are practical and universal. They have to do with human experiences in life: suffering; sexuality; ecology, and contentment. Ancient Israel offers its philosophy on these themes in its most pragmatic writing, the Wisdom tradition. Wisdom mines human life and its capacity for virtue for its core meaning. It reflects the timeless pursuit of happiness for individual and community alike. Wisdom is for people who want to thrive and not merely exist in life. It offers a playful, robust, and earnest discovery of life's struggle and joys.

In this course, we will study the history and development of Wisdom in ancient Israel, the perspectives on God and human life, and the theological connections with other portions of the canon with a view to reclaiming Wisdom's importance for modern theological reflection. Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs are the primary biblical texts we will examine. In addition, we will trace wisdom's influence in other portions of the Old and New Testaments, particularly in Jesus' use of parables, and the paschal mystery of the gospels. Lastly, class discussion and research will assess contemporary contributions on the prominent wisdom themes of sexuality in the

writings of Elizabeth Johnson; evil in the post-Holocaust writings of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Emil Fackenheim, and Gustavo Gutierrez; and ecology, animal rights, and popular spiritualities in current events. This course aims to foster in students an appreciation for wisdom tradition and the spiritual quest it bespeaks, and enable them to craft their own pragmatic wisdom for pastoral work.

Sacraments in the Life of the Church
THL 8240-001

Dr. Timothy Brunk
Wednesday 2:00–4:20 pm

Prerequisite: Foundations in Theology [THL 8000]

Drawing upon relevant documents from the Second Vatican Council and upon works by Joseph Martos, Kenan Osborne, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Louis-Marie Chauvet, this course will examine the history of sacramental theology and practice as well as the interplay of ecclesiology, Christology, sacramentology, and day to day Christian life. This course will emphasize the nature of Christian existence as essentially sacramental. Vatican II denounced the “split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives,” characterizing it as “among the more serious errors of our age” (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 43); this course will investigate how three representative theologians have addressed this concern with particular reference to worship.

Faiths, Cultures and Sexuality
THL 8360-001

Dr. Mark Levand
Monday 4:30–6:50 pm

Prerequisite: Foundation Ethics [THL 8004]

In this course, students will study the intersection of sexuality, culture, and faith traditions. What is sexuality? What does it say about embodiment or humanity’s relation to the divine? How does culture impact faith and sexuality? Most religious belief systems have views or teachings on human sexuality including sexual behavior, orientation, gender, relationship structures, love, and intimacy. These teachings might be part of a faith’s doctrine or other sociocultural factors impacting the faith throughout history. Throughout the semester, students will study various religions in relation to culture and what they teach about sex and sexuality.

We will investigate the many aspects of sexuality and how they are commonly discussed in current academic and popular discourse. Understanding how sexuality is presently discussed in the U.S. will allow learners to best examine the diversity of sexuality from a common cultural starting point. This course will also act as a survey of a multitude of faith traditions in a way that allows members of the class to dive deeply into faiths and their interpretation of sexuality. Theological teachings on sexuality can manifest in different ways based on historical or cultural factors. The examination of culture and intercultural dialogue in this course will serve as a lens through which students interpret theological discourse on topics of sexuality.

Through independent projects, students will synthesize what they learn in class with their research about sexuality in a faith tradition. Through readings and critical analysis, students will gain greater insight into how sexuality exists in a faith tradition. Through personal reflection, students will understand more thoroughly how their experience of sexuality and faith, based in their cultural experience, impact their own views on and operation around sexuality in interfaith dialogue. Through this course, students will gain a greater appreciation for the diversity of culture, faith, and sexuality.

**Religious Pluralism: Theological,
Sociological and Comparative Perspectives**
THL 8600-001
Restricted to Ministry students only.

Dr. Kerry San Chirico
Thursday 2:00 – 4:20 pm

The United States has never been more religiously diverse than it is today, but religious literacy is sorely, dangerously lacking. The aims of this graduate seminar are multiple: to impart to religious leaders basic knowledge of religious traditions unto multi-religious literacy; to examine theologies, philosophies, and techniques within and beyond religious traditions that provide tools for conscious, civil engagement across religious boundaries; and to apply and refine multi-religious literacy through practical activities of personal engagement at Villanova University and in the Philadelphia region.

Religion / Theology Education Seminar I
THL 8701-001

Dr. Timothy Hanchin
Wednesday 7:00 – 9:20 pm

This seminar initiates the Heart of Teaching program for MTS students in the Theological Education track and PhD students. It is the first of two seminars that comprise the Heart of Teaching coursework en route to the apprenticeship process. Education Seminar 1 addresses the philosophical foundations and pedagogical approaches for theological education at the level of our time. To this end, the seminar considers the bearing of Villanova's Christian mission and Augustinian charism.

Islam and Muslims in the Contemporary World
THL 8750-001

Dr. Helen Mesard
Thursday 4:30 – 6:50 pm

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.

Multicultural Competencies for Ministry
THL 8804-001

Dr. Julia Sheetz
Tuesday 9:00 – 11:20 am

Restricted to Ministry students only.

This course seeks to equip students to carry out ministry with sensitivity and effectiveness in the current multi-cultural context of American society. Utilizing a theological approach rooted in mutual respect and collaborative learning, the course focuses on developing cultural competencies for pastoral care, worship, and community life in diverse settings. Students will deepen their personal awareness of the intersectionality of identities together with their understanding of systemic injustice and interlocking social oppressions. They will develop skills for dialogue and engagement across lines of identity difference in order to more fully embody ministries of compassion and justice.