The Bible as Literature  
Dr. Ruth Anolik  
THL 2490-001  
TR 11:30 – 12:45 pm

The Bible represents many things to its many readers: moral guidance, history, science, spirituality, religion, ritual. The Bible is also a great work of literature, presenting powerful and complex figures, and unfolding narratives filled with love and hate, despair and exaltation. In this course we will explore the Bible as a literary text, embarking upon the approach outlined in Robert Alter’s *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, and applying the approach to selected biblical readings. Additionally we will consider literary texts that situate themselves within the canon of biblical literature, texts that retell some of the most profound stories in the Bible. We will begin with the stories of the first human family: Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel, reading Mark Twain’s whimsical *Diaries of Adam and Eve* and George Byron’s tragic play *Cain*. The theme of family tensions – and of social tensions – between the young and the old reappears in the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, and in the retelling by the Israeli poet Yehudah Amichai in “The Real Hero.” Turning to the book of Exodus, we will read a number of responses to the story of the Hebrews’ escape from Egypt: the Gospel songs, “Go Down Moses” and “Wade into the Water”; Laura Range’s poem, “Horse and Rider.” Before leaving the Hebrew Bible we will read the complicated story of David the king and Jonathan the prince, considering a queer-theory approach to this story. Turning to the Christian Bible, we will read the accounts of the seductive Salome in Mark and Matthew, and then consider Oscar Wilde’s surprisingly sympathetic accounting of Salome’s sexual subversion. We will consider literary approaches to the story of Jesus: T.S. Eliot’s poem, “Journey of the Magi,” A.S. Byatt’s short story “Christ in the House of Martha and Mary” and Colm Toibin’s powerfully imaginative novel, *The Testament of Mary*. We will end the semester with two African American texts that powerfully invoke myriad biblical allusions and themes: Frederick Douglass’s slave narrative, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, and Gloria Naylor’s novel *Mama Day*. As we read this diverse group of texts, we will consider how they rework, challenge and illuminate the literature of the biblical narratives.

Understanding Jesus  
Dr. Anthony Godzieba  
THL 3200-001  
TR 1:00 – 2:15 pm

This course focuses on Jesus of Nazareth and Christianity’s central belief in him as the “human face of God,” the revealer of God’s salvation in history. We will examine the development of the Christian understanding of the person and significance of Jesus Christ and pay special attention to the “quest for the historical Jesus” and the various responses to him in the New Testament, throughout the history of Christianity, and in the twenty-first century. A major guiding concern of the course is the application of the life-style, praxis, and message of Jesus Christ to our own contemporary context.  
The *course requirements* are personal and active presence at all class sessions, two research assignments (between 3 and 5 double-spaced pages in length), two interim tests (1st quarter and 3rd quarter of the course), a mid-term exam, and a final exam.
“I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.”
The final line of the Creed underscores the importance of Christian hope for eternal life. The branch of theology which addresses Christian beliefs about the world to come is called eschatology, that is, the study of “the last things” (eschata in Greek). What are the last things? Death, judgment, purgatory, heaven, and hell.

In this course, we will address a number of critical questions: What happened on Easter morning? What is “the resurrection of the body,” and what does it mean in light of modern science? Is everyone saved? How does Christian hope differ from other religions? What does it mean to say that Christ descended into hell, ascended into heaven, and will come again? How do Christian beliefs about eternal life shape action now – for example, funeral rites, feast days (like All Souls Day), the celebration of the sacraments, and Christian responses to the evil and injustice of this world? We will also address some less critical questions: Do animals make it into heaven? What’s the deal with hell: dry heat or humidity? Was Dante right about purgatory? The Rapture: What are my odds? and others.

This is an especially fascinating topic in theology, and students will be encouraged to engage the material with curiosity and imagination.

Required Texts

Church Architecture and Worship
Dr. Bernard Prusak
THL 3790-002
MW 3:00 – 4:15 pm

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

Theology, Capital and (In)Justice
Prof. Gregory Grimes
THL 3790-003
TR 11:30 – 12:45 pm

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this course continues to deepen an understanding of the rich living tradition of Christianity encountered in the foundational course: Faith, Reason and Culture. 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 holistic 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.

**Ethics of Life and Death**

Prof. John Groch

THL 4200-100

Tuesday 6:10 – 8:50 pm

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

In addition to attending class lectures, course work includes readings, class discussion (in class and online, written examinations (2), paper(s), and guest speakers.

**Required Reading:**

**Racism, Resistance and the Church**

Dr. Kathleen Grimes

THL 4490-001

TR 2:30 – 3:45 pm

Diversity 1; Peace and Justice

Although the Catholic Church understands itself as the Body of Christ, the lived history of the church in the United States shows that the church has not been able to bring blacks and whites together as members of one body. But even as the church has participated in white supremacy, it has also been mobilized as an instrument of resistance to it. In addition to analyzing why and how the church surrendered to white supremacy, this course also looks to the example of African-American Catholics who have engaged in theology as a way to unmask, expose, and endure the evils of white supremacy. Uniquely capable of grasping the truth of the Gospel, black theology makes a vital theological contribution to the global church. Inspired by their example, this course seeks to empower you to supply solutions to the theological problem of white supremacy.
Stewardship of Creation  
Fr. Arthur Purcaro, OSA  
THL 4490-002  
TR 8:30 – 9:45 am  

Peace and Justice  

This course presents Catholic Social Teaching on the environment, centering on Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato Si*, “On Care for our Common Home”. We will treat the Sustainable Development Goals identified by the community of nations and how achieving them depends highly on an ethos of sustainable living. We will consider the particularly Augustinian contribution to this topic.

The methodology of the course follows that of the Encyclical itself: See-Judge-Act, and encourages involvement in sustainability activity.

Contemplative Tradition  
Fr. Martin Laird  
THL 4550-H01  
TR 11:30 – 12:45 pm  

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.

Saints, Mystics, Witches and Demoniacs  
Dr. Rachel J. Smith  
THL 4990-001  
MW 1:30 – 2:45 pm  

Women have been understood in ambivalent ways throughout the Christian tradition. Identified with the body, and thus believed to be less able to ascend to the realm of immaterial ‘spirit,’ they were nevertheless also understood to be more ‘porous’ than men, and thus susceptible to the influence of spiritual entities, both divine and demonic.

In this course, we will examine the profoundly different yet intimately linked representations of women in relation to the spiritual realm as witches, saints, demoniacs, and visionary mystics in the Middle Ages. We will study both male representations of women and women’s own writings, asking what the differences between these writings are and reasons for such differences. We will trace the rise
of the witch hunts in Western Europe and track the changing fortunes of women through a long arc of Western history.

**Sports and Spirituality**

THL 4990-002  
*Dr. Edward Hastings*  
TR 1:00 – 2:15 pm

Fr. Thomas Keating states, “Everything in the universe is meant to be a reminder of God’s presence.” This course would like to take Fr. Keating at his word and attempt to look to the world of sports as a locus for discovering the presence of God in our midst. Sports are a significant aspect of the American culture, extremely popular and always revelatory. This course will explore and evaluate the various aspects of the sports experience (participants, coaches, fans, officials) as vehicles to help us connect more deeply with God.

**The Wisdom of Sufism**

THL 4990-003  
*Dr. Yasemin Akis*  
TR 2:30 – 3:45 pm

“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.

**Contemplate, Create. Repeat.**

THL 4990-100  
*Dr. Margaret Mell*  
Monday 6:10 – 8:50 pm

Most of us have heard about contemplative (or meditative) spiritual practices. Creative spiritual practices are becoming more common as people begin to experience the real presence of the Spirit in their everyday lives. They 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 can become acts of prayer that help our attention and awareness deepen, broaden, and become more integrated into everything that matters to us and the world around us as our paths of life continue to unfold—during and after our study programs here, at Villanova.

**Course Segment Descriptors**
1. In-class meetings for this course will be retreat-like in nature.
2. Required reading comments and conversations, and, contemplative practice session sharings will take place online (BlackBoard) for the duration of our course.
3. Reflection papers will be 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 and incorporated into their daily lives.
2. learn, work, and play with various creative practices.
3. learn and practice reflective and \textit{lectio divina} styles of reading, writing, gazing, listening.
4. create a particular expressive arts project that she/he will present to the class at the close of the semester.

Class Meeting Requirements
1. This course is an intensive seminar.
2. There are \textbf{no excused absences for in-class meetings—no exceptions.}
3. Check the in-class course day/date/time parameters to be absolutely certain you can \textbf{attend all in-class meetings before} registering for this class.
4. During the first half of the semester, classes meet 6:10-8:50 p.m. on Mondays.
5. After the fall break, students will work online and on individual projects, which will be presented in class on Monday, Dec 9, 6:10-9:50.

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.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Theology and Poetry} \\
\textbf{THL 5000-002} \\
Prof. Scott Grapin \\
MWF 9:30 – 10:20 am
\end{center}

This class will engage poems of faith and the faith of poetry, considering processes of composition and reception, listening in on conversations about poetry’s work in relation to ultimate concerns, and perhaps even experimenting with practices modeled by poets and their craft. Receptive to what others have thought about the correspondence of faith and poetry (or language more generally), we will conduct our own close readings of poetic projects in various forms and media from diverse contexts and traditions, always curious about how the practice of a poetic sensibility might relate to our own faiths and time.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Black Theology and Black Power} \\
\textbf{An Exploration of Race, Justice and Christianity} \\
\textbf{THL 5000-003} \\
Prof. Scott Grapin \\
MW 4:30 – 5:45 pm
\end{center}

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 or the economic exploitation of the Black poor? How have people of faith and moral conscience responded to racist practices throughout history and modernity?

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 persist in the lives of Black people living in the United States of America?

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.
Purity and romance in Twilight, religious dating platforms with their ideals of femininity and masculinity, Beyoncé’s, Kanye West’s or Drake’s negotiation of sex, gender, race and religion in their music and videos, a section dedicated to gender and religion on the Huffington Post – media, religion and gender intersect in various ways and at various levels, and these interactions have an important impact on individuals, religious communities and societies. How does gender structure religious identities and traditions within a media culture, and how do these shape the actions and relationships of individuals? How do media representations contribute to the reinforcement of religious gender norms? Can new media provide a space where these norms are questioned and challenged? How can media help to develop possibilities of religious agency and authority that would not be available in traditional communities because of their gender norms? In our discussion of these and similar questions, we will look at different media (TV, internet blogs and forums, advertising, music videos etc.) and different religious traditions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, new religious movements).

The course format is more similar to a seminar than a lecture: we will discuss central concepts, theories and methods of the study of religion, media and gender always in relation to specific media examples, many of them chosen by the participants of the course.

Required text: Mia Lövheim (ed.), Media, Religion and Gender: Key Issues and New Challenges, New York: Routledge 2013. Other required readings will be posted on Blackboard at the beginning of fall term.
mystical worldview has inspired rich theological and philosophical discussions as well as beautiful poetry, art, music, and dance. However, mysticism is not restricted to private spirituality alone—it is influenced by and responds to its historical, cultural, and political contexts.

This course will explore Islamic mysticism’s theological and artistic expression through reading primary source materials from Sufism and other forms of esoteric spirituality. We will also discuss various historical and cultural trends in Islamic mysticism by examining mystics from diverse geographical regions and time periods.

Religion in Russia
THL 5200-001

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.

Exodus in African American Religions Expression
THL 5999-001

The course examines the appropriation of the Exodus in Afro-American religion and culture. The Exodus text and background will be explored through attention to its reception history for primarily Afro-American religious traditions and political expression (e.g., slave religion, Black Theology, Rasta, and the Civil Rights Movement). Key theological motifs of the Promised Land, Redemption, enslavement, Empire, and freedom will be explored in the biblical text and in the subsequent religious expression they inspired.

In this course, students will analyze biblical perspectives on slavery in the Old and New Testaments, and the development of the institution of slavery in America and the Caribbean Islands. Then, students will explore the psychological and spiritual effects of oppression when reading a variety of responses to slavery, in the development of Black and Womanist Theologies, and the thought of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Nelson Mandela. Importantly, they will learn that the effects of systemic dehumanization do not end with emancipation. Black Theology, in general, privileges religious experience, art, literature, music, and lived narratives. To that end, during the course, students will critically analyze slave narratives, folk and rap lyrics, and films that deal with these motifs.
Your Neighbor’s Faith:  
Appreciative Engagement in a Multifaith World  
THL 6000-001  
Dr. Julia Sheetz-Willard  
TR 8:30 – 9:45 am

This course introduces students to the history, challenges, and opportunities of religious diversity in the United States, and to the beliefs and practices of our neighbors of diverse faiths. Through reading, discussion, site visits, guest speakers and experiential opportunities, we will develop religious literacy, skills and appreciative knowledge that will help us address some of these critical questions: What is at stake when people who orient around religion differently interact? How can I dialogue respectfully with someone of a different religious (or non-religious) background? How do I counter prejudice based on (mis)perceptions of religious difference? What is pluralism and how is it different from diversity? What is interfaith leadership and what would it mean for me to embrace this role – as an expression of my own faith or ethical perspective – in my community and vocation? How might interfaith leaders help to overcome the religious divisiveness and polarization of our contemporary culture?

Research Seminar  
THL 6300-100  
Wednesday 6:10 – 8:50 pm

Open to Theology Majors and Minors only

Research intensive seminar that satisfies a CLAS requirement for the Major.