## Faith, Reason and Culture

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<th>Course Code</th>
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<td>THL 1000-001</td>
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<td>MWF 8:30 – 9:20 am</td>
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<td>THL 1000-006</td>
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The world culture is derived from cult, and so in the broadest sense we could say that cultures are formed and shaped by faiths or worldviews. For this class we will look at Christianity’s relation to culture – and suppose that the connector between faith and culture is reason or philosophy. A class about faith, reason and culture has to examine those three things in respect of what they are in themselves, and how they relate to each other, either favorably or critically, and this we will do from a Christian perspective. John Paul II wrote about faith and reason that they, “…are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.” The critical term there is truth. In Christianity the standard of truth is the person and reality of Christ, but truth is also a term that implies reason and good philosophy and the reasoned effort to achieve it.

Faith refers to what is believed, why it is believed, and how that belief has been lived. Therefore, we will look at that faith in its origins and how it has appeared in history and developed in history. That exercise will show us, among other things, how Christianity has impacted culture, and by analogy how it may do so today.

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

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

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## Villanova University

Villanova University was founded as a religious institution to instruct and educate on the values, morals, ethics, and history of our great Christian faith. This course will make students evaluate their faith, life, and culture through readings in our texts and biblical scriptures. Students of every religion, culture, and world view will explore the faith-reason-culture relations through the academic lenses of theological and religious studies disciplines.

As students at Villanova, it is important to relate theology and scripture to our everyday experiences and world views. The class will focus on the historical aspects of Christianity starting with the question: who is God? The course will then take you on a journey starting with the foundational roots of Judaism through the birth and death of Christ. After the death of Christ, the class will learn about the significant theologians of the Church including St. Augustine as well as St. Thomas Aquinas and their impact on Christian faith and life. Students will also discuss Christian
spirituality as well as religious spirituality, including the power of prayer. The course is designed for students of all faiths, and cultural backgrounds who seek to learn about Christianity and grow in their own relationship with God.

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<tr>
<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
<th>Prof. Kenneth Fleischer</th>
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<td>THL 1000-003</td>
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After establishing a foundational understanding of hermeneutics combined with awareness of the dynamic tension of faith and reason within modern and postmodern thought, the course initially surveys both Hebrew scripture and the New Testament to extract the key elements of Christian faith found in the Nicene Creed. From this platform, the course examines “theology in thought” focusing primarily on the development of the Christian doctrine of God. Finally, the course explores “theology in action” through an introduction to Christian ethics and morality. Throughout the journey, particular effort is made to balance tradition and contemporary thought in scriptural interpretation and systematic theology. Several out-of-class learning experiences are required in addition to classroom instruction.

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<tr>
<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
<th>Dr. Edward Hastings</th>
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<td>THL 1000-004</td>
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This course will examine what it is we believe as contemporary Christians. In the character of St. Augustine and in the words of St. Anselm, we will approach our beliefs with an attitude of "faith seeking understanding." We will begin with our notion of God and consider how this notion developed throughout history. The course will then consider the sources and traditions of Christianity and reflect upon how our experiences and actions have been influenced by these foundations.

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<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
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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 biblical culture and modern times.

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<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
<th>Prof. Joanna Scholz/Dr. Jessica Murdoch</th>
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This course, through the exploration of the Bible, classic texts, central ideas and the historical development of Christian theology, assists students in their own pursuit of theology, “faith seeking understanding” (St. Anselm). While Christian students will study from a faith perspective, all students will engage in critical analysis of texts and ideas and explore the influence culture has on
religious practice. The topic of worship and its meaning, both in the life of the individual and in the life of the community, will also be explored.

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

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<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
<th>Prof. Gregory Grimes</th>
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The focus of this course is on the relevance of the Christian message and the Catholic tradition for confronting and dealing with the most pressing concerns of contemporary culture. In short, how does this message and tradition equip people today for living a more meaningful existence, oriented toward God, and for working toward a more peaceful and just society, as envisioned in the reign of God?

We begin with a diagnosis of the contemporary situation: how history impacts our preconceived understandings; how market and cultural forces as well as technology impact our sense of self, how we think and how we engage the world; how economic trends and practices, political and social violence, ecological concerns, scientific naturalism and the resurgence of atheism, challenge claims for meaning, truth and respectability of worldviews informed by rich traditions, namely Christianity.

With a properly historical examination of Biblical sources, we will attempt a lively rendering of what Jesus meant by the reign of God, how he sought to reorient people toward this vision of God’s intentions for humanity, and how this message was demonstrated in his own life. Students will learn interpretive skills that help to open a conversation between Jesus’s message and contemporary cultural concerns and questions.

These same skills and fundamental understanding of Jesus’s message will be applied in examining the role of the church in today’s world, as well as the issue of the relationship between faith, reason and culture. Here we will examine the role of Christianity in culture and civil society, as well as discuss key issues that challenge the church’s role in the world, as well as how these challenges can be faced.

Thus a more vivid and lively understanding of the Gospels and early Christianity is sought with a view toward gaining insights as to how a more relevant understanding of Christianity can be achieved in today’s world. And further, how this understanding can lead to a better existence for particular persons and the world as a whole.
Faith, Reason and Culture  
THL 1000-013  
Prof. Donald Giannella  
MWF 12:30 – 1:20 pm

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

Faith, Reason and Culture  
THL 1000-014  
Prof. Christine Keffer  
MWF 12:30 – 1:20 pm

At the heart of all theological inquiry is the question: who is God and what is God's relationship with me? To answer this question, however, we must understand the different modes of God's self-revelation in history, as well as the various human responses to that self-revelation. Throughout the course we will examine Christian scripture, sacraments, traditions, and teachings, and evaluate these in light of our own modern perspectives and experiences. We will also explore the concept of a triune God, as well as its theological and practical applications. The course will provide the students with a basic understanding and vocabulary, which will serve as a basis for other theological pursuits.

Faith, Reason and Culture  
THL 1000-017  
THL 1000-019  
Dr. Bernard Prusak  
MW 1:30 – 2:45 pm  
MW 3:00 – 4:15 pm

Our analysis of the Christian tradition will presuppose that the message of Christianity must be (and always has been) thought out within the bounds of interpretative models that reflect and are linked to the horizon of human experience. In that regard, this course will focus on the Christian understanding of God, Creation, God's relation to humans, the human condition of freedom and “sin,” the problem of suffering, Jesus as God become fully human, and the community coming from Jesus. The course will provide an introductory overview of the Bible and of contemporary biblical methodology, with a reading of selected passages from the Hebrew Scriptures and from the Christian Scriptures.

The relationship of theology with a scientific worldview, commitment to peace and justice, and ecological concern are among the pertinent issues. The course presupposes that we will bring the diversity of our contexts and background with us as we consider the development of the Christian tradition.

Faith, Reason and Culture  
THL 1000-018  
Dr. Rachel Smith  
MW 1:30 – 2:45 pm

This course offers an introduction to the history of Christian faith and culture through a careful reading of primary texts from the Eastern and Western traditions. Throughout, we will explore how certain beliefs, doctrines, and practices came to be articulated, defended, and embodied. Basic to
our approach will be the contention that theology grows out of reflection upon lived experience. In order to highlight this intersection of theology and religious experience, we will read texts from a variety of genres—including saints’ lives, mystical writings, sermons, systematic treatises, and contemporary spiritual memoirs. We will also examine practices of devotion and piety—martyrdom, pilgrimage, prayer, meditation, and fasting, among others—in order to show the dynamic relationship between belief and practice, high ideals and the complicated realities of daily life, and the ways in which Christians have lived and understood faith within various cultural contexts.

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<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
<th>Prof. Luke Pigott</th>
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This course seeks to accomplish two goals: the first goal is to introduce the student to the wealth of knowledge found within the Western intellectual tradition (particularly in relation to faith), and the second goal is to create a space for the student to begin "thinking Theologically" for his/herself. The first goal is accomplished through an engagement with the Hebrew Bible, the Christian New Testament, and other various sources (Biblical commentators, Theologians, other religious texts, Philosophers, Artists, Social Critics, and so forth). The second goal is accomplished through various exercises such as personal reflections, group activities, presentations, and a research paper.

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

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As an introduction to Christian theology the course centers on the question: what do I believe? It is structured to introduce the student to an adult, critical appropriation of the fundamental beliefs about God, Christ, and humanity and its implications for Christian life in the world today.

As all theology engages in the ongoing quest of faith seeking understanding, the course critically examines the major components of Christian faith and the role of reason within it: how we come to know and understand the fundamentals of our beliefs: the rationale, methods, and resources used to assess and evaluate Christian faith in the context of contemporary knowledge and culture.

With emphasis on a biblical approach to the above themes, the course seeks to explore the historical and cultural background of the core components of faith, as well as contemporary issues surrounding each theme. The course is structured to help the student become familiar with the
rationale and methodologies used for critical reflection on the **how** and **why** of the core beliefs of Christianity as well as how they engage Christians on both a personal and societal level.

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<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
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As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces students to the rich living tradition of Christianity: the sources, traditions, practices, and major thinkers that have shaped Christianity’s response to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning. The main goal of this class is Christian Literacy, meaning throughout the semester (in class discussions, on quizzes/exams, and written papers), students should demonstrate their working knowledge of terms, concepts, and critical issues involving key theological/philosophical themes examined during the course of the semester, such as, but not limited to: God, Creation, the Mission of Jesus Christ, personhood in contemporary life, spirituality, ethics, and morality...

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<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
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For 2,000 years, Christians have thought long and hard about all the truly big questions: Does God exist? Does He speak to us? How does He want us to live? What does it take to be happy? How should we interpret the Bible? Are science and religion in agreement or opposition? Why do bad things happen to good people? What happens after death? Who can be saved? The central goal of this course is the acquisition of living knowledge of the fundamentals of Christian belief and practice, with particular emphasis on the “fullness of the faith” proclaimed by the Roman Catholic Church. Through the exploration of primary texts, central ideas, and the historical development of Christian theology, students will learn to think critically about the person and mission, the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ; the revelation of the Triune God; the nature and interpretation of the Bible; the role of Mary and the saints in the life of a believer; and the contours of sacramental worship and prayer, along with the moral life which arises from them.

Spirited class discussion, the development of a common theological vocabulary, and disciplined reflection upon the relationship of Christian belief and behavior with the arts and sciences, the issues of the day, and the students’ personal experience, will be key elements in our exploration of the distinctively Christian answers to the “big questions.”

*Required Bible* • Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition

*Required Text* • C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

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<th>Faith, Reason and Culture</th>
<th>Prof. Jeffrey Mayer</th>
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*What do I believe?* Theology at Villanova, drawing upon the legacy of St. Augustine’s pursuit of truth as an endeavor that unites minds and hearts, invites students to join in the unending quest of faith seeking understanding in the context of contemporary global religious, theological, and cultural pluralism. As this sentence implies, discerning “what I believe” is not a matter for the faint of heart! Nor is it one that is best accomplished in a mindset of isolation and individualism.
Together, we will explore the faith-reason-culture relation primarily through the lens of Christian ethics, and particularly that of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Through on-campus lectures, in-class lectures and films, and small group collaboration, this course will provide an opportunity to open windows for understanding ourselves in relationship to others, especially those whose economic, political, cultural and theological worldviews may differ from ours. In other words, theological and religious literacy is an indispensable resource helping us to empathize with one another and contribute to shaping a more just, compassionate, and peaceful global society. Our task, then, will be to come to an understanding of the relationship between faith and culture, and challenge the intelligibility and relevance of faith for ourselves and our communities, at home and around the globe.

Faith, Reason and Culture
THL 1000-101
THL 1000-102

Faith and reason have often been positioned as opposites, or, as Tertullian famously, and polemically, asked: “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”, i.e. what does rational philosophical inquiry have to do with Christian faith? This course will show that, on the contrary, Christian faith and reason are interrelated, and that Christian theology is, from its origins, an attempt at understanding with decisive influence on the establishment of modern sciences. It will introduce students to theology as the reasonable and methodical reflection on God and on what Christians believe. Through the study of key texts and key thinkers in the theological tradition, students will learn how central beliefs of Christianity (God, Christ, Sin and Redemption, Church and Sacraments) have developed, shaped by and shaping their respective intellectual and cultural contexts, and how theology reacts to the challenges posed by contemporary culture (postcolonialism, sciences and technology, and religious pluralism). Students will acquire basic knowledge of the Christian tradition throughout history, of the main sources and methods of Christian theology, and they will develop a “religious literacy” that enables them to engage in a responsible fashion in a society shaped by cultural and religious pluralism.

Genesis to Judges
THL 2100-001

The purpose of this course is to provide the student with a general introduction to the geographical and historical background of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) and the early history of Israel and Judah, as given in the biblical books of Joshua and Judges, as well as in the light of recent archaeological discoveries and extra-biblical sources which relate relevant ancient Near Eastern beliefs and customs. Topics that will be discussed include Creation, Flood, Patriarchs and Matriarchs such as Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and his 13 children with four different women, Moses, Exodus and the 10 plagues, Covenant, Joshua and the conquest of Canaan, the judge Deborah, Samson and Delilah, etc. Ever wonder why it seems that there are two different creation accounts in Genesis, what is the origin of the plagues, why Samson had super strength, or questions such as these? Then this course is for you.
The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to various narratives about women in the biblical text, and to examine the different portrayals of women which emerge from these texts. In recent years, new systems of analysis have emerged in the field of biblical study, which complement “traditional” interpretations with new interpretations from various perspectives. Feminist scholars in particular are re-examining the biblical stories concerning women in an effort to come to a new understanding of the place of women in ancient society, as well as to discover new ways in which these texts can be relevant to today’s women and men of faith. Increasingly more and more texts are being read in such a way as to listen for a feminine voice within the text, or to allow the women in the narratives to speak with their own voices. Often this voice may be heard through its absence. For example, what can the silence and non-involvement of Sarah tell us in Genesis 22 when her husband Abraham nearly sacrifices her only son?

This course starts with the historical background leading up to the Holocaust and the ideology of its perpetrators. We will then examine the basic events of the Holocaust and contemporaneous Jewish reactions. We will also look at post-War theological reactions to the Holocaust in Judaism and Christianity and the contemporary impact of the Holocaust in the United States and the world. Students will read memoirs and primary source materials as well as view documentaries.

The Christian understanding of human existence with focus on the classical themes of Creation, Original Sin, and Grace and with special attention to contemporary issues such as person and community, feminism, ecology, etc.

The central goal of this course is the acquisition of living knowledge of the fundamentals of Christian belief and practice, with particular emphasis on the Roman Catholic tradition. Such knowledge is acquired, explored, and deepened through careful reading of primary texts, development of a common theological vocabulary, sustained discussion, and disciplined reflection upon the relationship of Christian belief and behavior as it impacts “Identity, Faith and Calling” with the issues of the day, and the students’ personal experience. The course will focus on the role of faith in shaping one’s “calling” in life. It will be framed around the following questions:

- Who am I? Why am I here?
- What are my core values and commitments?
- What am I to do with my life?
- What is God’s call for my life, and how do I discern that call?
- What are my particular talents, gifts, and strengths
- How can I use these strengths and gifts after I graduate?

Our hearts are restless, Augustine said so long ago until they find their rest in God. We choose an occupation and accumulate worldly recognition and material goods, but the nagging question surfaces: is this all there is? This course is an invitation to reflect in a systematic way on the “big questions” about finding meaning and purpose in life in conversation with some of the best writings and practices in the history and our contemporary world. Through dialogue and conversation, students will have an opportunity to reflect on life as a journey and “work” as a calling, not just a way to make a living.

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<th>Faith, Identity and Calling</th>
<th>Dr. Fayette Veverka</th>
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Writing enriched

Our hearts are restless, Augustine said so long ago, until they find their rest in God. We accumulate worldly recognition and material goods, but the nagging question surfaces: is this all there is? The stories of our lives come to seem pointless if they are not part of some larger story. Who am I and why am I here? What are my core values and commitments? What am I going to do with my life? This course is an invitation to reflect in a systematic way on the “big questions” about finding meaning and purpose in life in conversation with some of the best writings in the Western traditions from ancient Greek poetry to Christian wisdom to contemporary fiction and memoirs. Through dialogue and conversation students will have an opportunity to reflect on life as a journey and “work” as a calling, not just a way to make a living. Requires of students a willingness to share personal experiences, not just analysis and to reflect and share personal experiences of faith—or its absence and doubt.

Readings will included selected texts from authors representing diverse vocational choices—from poets to politicians, scientists to social activists, novelists to philosophers, social activists to lawyers reflecting on how to lead a life that matters including William James, Albert Schweitzer, Homer, Dorothy Day, C.S. Lewis, Jane Addams, Malcolm X, Leo Tolstoy, Feodor Dostoevsky, Thomas Merton, Annie Dillard, Simone Weil, John Steinbeck, Abraham Heschel, and many others.

Organization
The course is organized around seven basic questions:
1. Are some lives more significant than others?
2. Must my job be the primary source of my identity?
3. Is a balanced life possible and preferable to a life focused primarily on work?
4. Should I follow my talents as I decided what to do to earn a living?
5. To whom should I listen?
6. Can I control what I shall do and become?
7. How shall I tell the story of my life?

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<th>Spirit: God’s Presence in the World</th>
<th>Fr. Edmund Dobbin, O.S.A.</th>
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The history of the “spirit” imagery in the Old Testament and later Judaism, followed by an investigation of its pervasive and intensified presence in the New Testament writings. A general assessment of post NT pneumatology (theology of the Spirit) and Trinitarian theology. A sketch of
The historical, theological and biblical foundations of Christian ministry will be the focus of this course. You will explore the meaning of “call” or “vocation” as you develop your emerging theology of ministry through theological reflection. Emphasis will be placed on the documents “Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord” and “Called and Gifted for the Third millennium” as platforms for theological exploration of ministry in the Catholic context. A practicum component will enhance the academic study of ministry.

This course develops various strands of Catholic ethics, especially post-Vatican II Catholic ethics. Part of this course will focus on staple “Catholic” topics: contraception, economic justice, natural law theory, and the Magisterium’s teaching authority. Another part of this course focuses on topics that are largely ignored or marginalized in discussions of Catholic ethics, yet which are highly relevant to our everyday life: the ethics of Jesus, environmentalism, technology, and agriculture.

Course requirements: Two examinations, two short papers, weekly quizzes, regular participation, and approximately 30 pages of reading per class period.

Course Description and Objectives: Students will examine contemporary medical-moral issues, especially as they impact on both the student's life and on 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 suicide), organ transplants, genetic engineering/reproductive technologies, and human experimentation. 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, written examinations (2), paper(s), guest lecturers and a film viewing.

Required reading:
In 2000, 189 nations signed the U.N. Millennium Declaration, pledging to cut extreme poverty in half by 2015 and end it by 2025. Eight interrelated goals were identified. The eighth goal, “to develop a global partnership for development,” will be the focus of this course.

We will approach our study of global poverty from a Christian theological ethical perspective employing the methodology of the Latin American Liberation Theologians. They have long argued that serious theological ethical reflection on poverty and liberation must draw on the sciences such as economics, political science, sociology, history and others to understand better the nature of the problems, the challenges that must be addressed, and the action required. Our course, therefore, will draw on the work of leading journalists, economists, and political theorists, and others who are addressing the root causes of, and solutions to, global poverty. To clarify the moral responsibility before the community of faith and what is required of nations, institutions, collectives and individuals, we will draw on relevant material from the Catholic Social Tradition and contemporary theologians and ethicists. And finally, to determine the opportunities to act, students will be introduced to agencies and organizations working for global justice and peace.

Do market economies promote or stifle human welfare, freedom, and the common good? What does Christian discipleship require in the marketplace? This course will consider these questions by utilizing sources in Christian ethics, Catholic social thought, economics, and other disciplines. In addition to these broader issues, we will explore specific topics such as globalization, consumerism, the nature and kinds of capitalism, socialist critiques of the market economy, poverty and its relationship to race and gender, worker justice, economic rights and the impact of the economy on the environment.

This is a course in Christian environmental ethics. Part of the course is spent addressing foundational philosophical and theological issues in environmental ethics. Substantial segments are devoted to agriculture, environmental toxins, and the moral standing of animals. Weekly discussions focus on practical, contemporary environmental issues such as hunting, nuclear power, global warming, fast food, genetic engineering of animals, pollution, automobile use, and the preservation of coral reefs, to mention but a few.

Course requirements: regular attendance; regular class participation; mid-term and final exams; unannounced in-class quizzes; and one in-class presentation.
When Karl Rahner claimed that “the devout Christian of the future will either be a ‘mystic’, one who has ‘experienced’ something, or will cease to be anything at all,” he designates, among other things, the future importance of a very ancient tradition: the mystical or contemplative tradition. The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to the basic themes and concerns of this tradition as evinced in key authors in the early and mediaeval period. After considering those New Testament themes, chiefly in Paul and John, which have been of particular historical importance in the shaping of this tradition, we shall look at how such writers as Evagrius, Hesychius, Climacus, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and Meister Eckhart addressed the possibility of encountering the God “in whom we live and move and have our being” and yet who at the same time is beyond all manner of comprehension. Other themes highlighted will be the contemplative arts or disciplines of cultivating interior silence, self-knowledge leading to knowledge of God, confronting the chaotic mind that generates addictions of one sort or another as well as the perception of God’s absence.

This course is intended to provide an introductory survey of medieval Christian women mystics by means of a close reading of primary sources. Authors to be studied include Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Hadewijch of Antwerp (early 13th century), Mechthild of Magdeburg (c. 1210-1282/1294), Beatrice of Nazareth (1200-1268), Marguerite Porete (d. 1310), Julian of Norwich (ca. 1343-1416), and Teresa of Avila (1515-1582). Our investigation will include two primary components. First, we will examine the historical contexts in which each writer worked, including consideration of the political, social, and ecclesiastical features of their respective contexts. We will pay special attention to the relationship of these women to male clerical authority. Second, we will undertake a close study of each author’s theological claims and the rhetorical means by which she makes them. Themes in our theological study that will be important include desire, humility, authority, the nature of union with God, and the role of physicality, the senses, and suffering in the spiritual life.

This course will examine and explore several significant authors in contemporary Christian spirituality. The writings of Thomas Merton, Evelyn Underhill, Richard Rohr and Mary Oliver will be considered. We will allow their works and wisdom to guide us in our spiritual journey.
Practicing Contemplation within an Active Life

THL 4990-100

Wednesday 6:10 – 8:50 pm

“Contemplation is the highest expression of man’s intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being.”

Thomas Merton

“To contemplate is to look at reality and to begin to see it as it is.”

James W. Douglass

“My working definition of mindfulness is the awareness that arises through paying attention on purpose in the present moment—non-judgmentally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

This course seeks to invite the class on a journey of discovery guided by the timeless questions of existence: Who am I/We? Where did I/We come from? Where am I/We going? What is my/our true vocation? What is this planet demanding from me/us? Do I have to journey alone/together? Is there a deeper Source of energy, intelligence and love graciously available to support and inspire this journey? What role can religion and spirituality play in this great quest?

The emphasis will be on the experiential practices of contemplation amidst the stressful demands of our post-modern world supported by the current insights of cosmology, quantum physics, analytical psychology and neuroscience along with the spiritual practices of the great religious traditions—East and West. The complementary roles of the mystic and the prophet will be addressed.

The course requirements include: a deep level of curiosity and flexibility, a willingness to participate in personal and group exercises rooted in the cultivation of mindfulness through the meditative arts, a commitment to do the readings and reflect upon the experiences through a journal. Mid-term and final evaluations will be opportunities for the consolidation and articulation of the learning that has taken place. Class attendance is essential for the development of a learning community.

Texts:
Stahl, Bob & Goldstein, Elisha. A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook.

Religion in Latin America

THL 5000-001

Latin American Studies; Diversity 2; Cultural Studies

Dr. Gustavo Benavides

TR 8:30 – 9:45 am

The course seeks to convey the dynamic character of religion in Latin American history, from the prehispanic period (that is, before there was a Latin America) to the present. To this end, we will focus on situations involving contact and change; we will pay attention to conquest, conversion, accommodation, syncretism, millennialism and rebellion. These developments will be studied as much in the sixteenth century—when the confrontations involved indigenous religious and the Catholicism brought by the Spanish and Portuguese conquerors—as in the twentieth and
twenty-first centuries – when the confrontation involves mainly Catholic and non-Catholic forms of Christianity. Rather than being concerned exclusively with belief systems and with orthodox forms of Christianity, the course emphasizes the ritual, practical and popular aspects of religion. The course will involve both lectures and discussion of texts.

**Law and Religion**

Prof. Brian Murray, J.D.

THL 5000-100

Tuesday 6:10 – 8:50 pm

What is the meaning of Jefferson’s infamous “wall of separation” between church and state? Does the First Amendment protect prayer in public schools and crèches in public holiday displays? Does the Free Exercise Clause protect conscientious objection to the draft or using otherwise unlawful substances for sacraments? Does the word “God” in the Pledge of Allegiance or financial aid to Catholic schools amount to an unconstitutional Establishment of religion?

The intersection of law and religion in the American constitutional experience continues to present interesting and complex questions for scholars, lawyers, government officials, and students. This course will introduce students to the theories underlying America’s constant debates about the limits of free exercise and what amounts to an impermissible relationship between the state and organized religion.

We will read the writings of the Founding Fathers and American political figures like Madison, Jefferson, Adams, and Lincoln, judges and Supreme Court justices, and the work of religious freedom scholars. The class will reflect on theories of religious freedom, the history of the First Amendment religion clauses, current Supreme Court doctrine regarding the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses, and compare the American experience of religious freedom to other democratic systems. Finally, the course will engage the Catholic Church’s unique relationship to religious freedom in American society. Students from all colleges and majors are welcome to register for the course.

**Islam: History, Thought and Culture**

Dr. Shams Inati

THL 5150-001

TR 10:00 – 11:15 am

THL 5150-002

TR 11:30 – 12:45 pm

_Africana, Arab and Islamic Studies, Diversity 3_

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

**Islamic Political Thought**

Dr. Shams Inati

THL 5180-001

TR 2:30 – 3:45 pm

_Arab and Islamic Studies, Diversity 3_

Explains the origin and development of Islamic political thought, thus, delineating the religious and intellectual forces behind some important current events in the world. Integrates religion, political science, philosophy and history. The state in pre-Islamic Arabia, the Qur’anic concept of the state (theocracy and democracy, order and obedience, law as necessary for justice, ash-shūra, war and tolerance, objectives of the state, the role of moral values in the state, the role of the individual, the role of faith, the need to learn from history, freedom in the state), the crisis of
succession (the birth of sects and religio-political factions, emergence of further sects and subsects), Muslim theorists, revival and reform.

Religion in China and Japan

Dr. Gustavo Benavides

THL 5280-001

Diversity 3, Asian Studies

The course will be devoted to the examination of the main religious traditions of East Asia. We will study doctrinal developments, mystical practices, mythology, ritual activity, as well as popular religiosity. Particular attention will be paid to the interaction between religious traditions such as Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and Shinto and their changing social contexts; we will also consider the extent to which these traditions have become merged in the cultures of East Asia. The course will end with an examination of the role played by religion in contemporary East Asian societies.

Religion, Art and Science

Dr. Michael McElwee

THL 5450-001

MWF 11:30 – 2:20pm

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

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

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

Religion and Literature

Fr. Martin Laird, O.S.A.

THL 5800-001

TR 11:30 – 12:45 pm

Writing enriched

The purpose of this course is to examine ways in which modern literature explores, develops, confirms and challenges concerns central to Christianity. The standard approach to the study of Christianity is to present its doctrines. The advantage of approaching religion through literature is that the focus remains firmly grounded in life experience. This makes it easier to see the power, wisdom, and relevance of Christian perspective on such themes as (1) the role of doubt and struggle in the development of one’s relationship with God. (2) The psychological roots of bigotry, the lust for power, and prestige. (3) Beauty and desire. (4) Freedom. (5) Forgiveness. (6) Awakening to the divine presence within us and among us. These and other questions are explored through such authors as Leo Tolstoy, Shusaku Endo, Ursula K. Leguin, Annie Dillard, Flannery O’Connor, and Anne Tyler. Requirements: Class discussion features largely; keeping up with the reading that is assigned in manageable doses; short essays on manageable topics; midterm and final.
Human Slavery and Trafficking
THL 6200-001
Theology Service Learning Practicum
1 Pass/Fail Theology/Religious Studies credit
Peace and Justice

NOTE: This course is open to Villanova CRS Ambassadors only.
Registration is “by permission of instructor only.”

Description:
This one-credit, pass/fail course is designed for CRS Ambassadors who are interested in deepening their knowledge of Human Slavery and Human Trafficking and learning about what Catholic Relief Services, other International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs) and other organizations are doing to address them. The course will draw on the short, targeted, on-line readings and powerful You-Tube videos on the CRS’ Global Solidarity Network site for Spring 2014.

Course Requirements:
❖ Actively participate in the two 2-week GSN sessions for Spring 2014 by:
  ▪ reading the assigned on-line readings and viewing the videos
  ▪ posting responses on the GSN discussion board (guidelines will be given)
  ▪ meeting as a group with Dr. Toton a total of 8 times (each meeting: 1 ½ hrs.) over the course of the two GSN sessions (the meeting dates and times will be determined soon)
  ▪ deciding and planning one campus "action" related to human slavery and trafficking and enlisting the assistance of other ambassadors to pull it off

If you’d like to be part of this course or for questions, email Dr. Toton suzanne.toton@villanova.edu asap with the following information:

- the name you use when you register for courses
- your student ID #

Research Seminar
THL 6300-001
Open to Majors only

Dr. Peter Spitaler
Tuesday 6:10 – 8:50 pm

The seminar focuses on individual or group research projects that participants design with the help of a faculty facilitator. It emphasizes your active role in the learning process, which implies limited reliance on lectures and extra weight given to you using the methods of THL/RST disciplines to explore fields and topics of interest to you on your own. Rather than repeating others’ work, you will independently (individually or in groups) wrestle with the unknown, discover knowledge, develop expertise in confined fields of research, and present your research progress and product to your peers.