

Spring 2024 Theology

Undergraduate Course

Descriptions

**Please check the Master Schedule for course day/times*

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (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 (Bolarte)

This foundational course offers students opportunities to explore the living traditions, beliefs, and practices in the Catholic Church and how they interact in our lives. Through theological reflection, the students will describe and interpret current realities in our culturally diverse society and world.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Cacchione)

What is theology? The word “theology” derives from two Greek words. The first, *theos*, means “god” or “God.” The other, *logos*, means “word,” “thought,” or “reason” in the sense of internal logic or order. At its root, then, theology refers to the reasoned, logical study of God. This study raises, probes, and treats as points of departure, some fundamental questions: Who or what is God? How can we human beings—mere mortals—come to know anything about God? What, if anything, can we actually know?

Without presuming any prior background in theology, our course aims to sketch high-level answers to these questions and to lay a firm foundation for further study in the form of your upper-level Theology course requirements. For two reasons, we proceed unapologetically from a stance grounded in the Christian tradition generally and characterized by a Roman Catholic perspective specifically. First, the Christian tradition, along with the Christian Church which has preserved it, has been a primary formative influence on our Western civilization for two millennia, and one simply cannot understand our civilization without appreciating its roots and its constitutive elements. Secondly and more deeply, we seek to eschew artificial delimitation of intellectual activity in a manner detrimental to the kind of personal human development which education ought to foster, *especially* at the *university* level. The Roman Catholic perspective in particular has long embraced—and continues vigorously to promote—the necessity of an integrated view of the human person as a physical, social, emotional, intellectual,

and spiritual being. Such a perspective regards education which would deny, dismiss, or denigrate any of these aspects of a person's being as imbalanced and stunted.

One can envision multiple approaches to our basic task. Our approach begins by briefly exploring the rationale for theology's inclusion in university-level liberal education, as well as the rational form of all academic disciplines. This orients our treatment of Natural Theology. Without referencing traditional sources of religious authority (such as the Bible or Church teaching), Natural Theology relies on observations of our universe and on the application of logical thinking to explore foundational questions regarding God's existence and attributes. It further prompts us to evaluate both the interplay of science and religion and the definitively and distinctively human features of human beings.

To transcend the boundaries of Natural Theology, one must turn to God's own self-disclosure in God's own "special" revelation. All Christians consider the Sacred Scriptures collected in the Bible to be divinely revealed, but Catholic theology also recognizes Sacred Tradition as divinely revealed. After examining the nature of Scripture and Tradition, we can probe the fundamental and distinctive dogmas of Christian faith in Revealed Theology as collected in the "Nicene" Creed. Finally, we cursorily introduce Practical Theology (broadly conceived) to offer a glimpse of how the theological ideas previously encountered in the course can inform the life and behavior of individual believers and the entire Church for the benefit of those individual believers, the broader communities which they inhabit, and, indeed, the world at large.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (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: Catholic Studies (Caponi)

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? This course examines the fundamentals of Christian belief and practice, with particular emphasis on the "fullness of faith" proclaimed by the Roman Catholic Church. Through the exploration of primary texts, central ideas, and the historical development of Catholic theology, students will be challenged to think deeply 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 contours of sacramental worship and prayer, along with the moral life which arises from them; and the relationship between faith and science. Spirited class discussion, the development of a common theological vocabulary, and disciplined reflection upon the relationship of Catholic 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 Catholic answers to the big questions.

THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (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 religions 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 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Bowers)

This course introduces undergraduate students in the biblical and historic sources, traditions, practices, and major patristic thinkers that have conceptualize Christianity's evolvement in history and shaped mankind's civilization, and trying to give answers to the fundamental human questions that underlie religion and contour human search for existence. During this course important issues will be discussed about the presence and function of religion in the modern society that has shaped our cultural heritage, the problems of religious epistemology, theodicy, the relationship of religious faith to the moral life, the relationships between religion and culture, and the validity of religious claims in the face of intractable religious diversity. Prof. Robert Louis Wilken in his book *The Spirit of the Christian Thought* says, "The Christian religion is inescapable ritualistic... uncompromisingly moral... and unapologetically intellectual. Like all the major religions of the world, Christianity is more than a set of devotional practices and a moral code: it is also a way of thinking about God, about human beings, about the world's history."

Specifically, the THL-1000 Faith, Reason and Culture course in addition will:

1. Help students to understand and articulate the different ways in which mankind have historically and in the contemporary moment negotiated the relationship between religion, faith, and reason, including religious and atheistic fundamentalisms, rationalism and secularism, and faith informed by critical reason.
2. Introduce students to the forms of theological discourse, key beliefs, and history of the Judeo-Christian tradition, equipping them with language for further theological study.
3. Analyze patristic thoughts relating to the presence of the Triune God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, and work of the Holy Spirit conceptualizing the divine institution of the Church in the history of the Christianity.
4. Critically evaluate Christian faith with respect to the Triune God, and examine theological issues as found in classical and contemporary patristic Christian sources relating to Triune God, Christology and humanity.
5. Identify and assess the intellectual history of Christianity, including the emergence of significant doctrines and movements.
6. Provide points of comparison between the Christian tradition and the other great religious traditions of the world and examine the possibilities of both interreligious dialogue and interreligious conflict.
7. And, instill students the interest to reflect further on the questions of theology, faith, and religion, both in formal academic settings and throughout their lives.

Furthermore, and from the academic standpoint of view, the THL-1000 is intended to equip undergraduate students with the appropriate scope of academic theological learning and skills needed in order to be involved in further theological academic studies of the highest order and research. Each of these course objectives will be supported by a few measurable outcome-based competency: Exhibit and demonstrate competence in the use of methodological approaches to the disciplines of biblical studies, history of Christianity, Theology, and Christian Ethics.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Faggioli)

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 Catholicism, through the exploration of classic texts (Bible, theology, and Church teaching) and modern scholarship. We will examine key ideas of the Jewish Scriptures, the practice of critical reflection on the person and work of Jesus Christ, the contours of Christian faith and morality, and the relationship between the Church and the world. In the course we 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 and identitarian 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 truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges in light of knowledge and personal experience.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Varela Rios)

Introduction to the course: Welcome to Theology Matters! St. Augustine affirmed that both understanding (i.e., using reason) and belief (i.e., being faith-full) are essential to Christianity, and that faith is not exclusively a rational exercise and must be grounded in culture (i.e., total way of life). Many Christians, both in the academy and the church, have articulated ‘faith seeking understanding’ (i.e., *theology*) as a cultural action that *matters* in and for the world – it is both experienced and has an impact. In this course, we will think about religion (i.e., *theologize*) materially (that is, as it *matters*) in order to ascertain its relevance (how/why it *matters*) in and for culture.

THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Schrader Polczer)

This course is an introduction to global religions (including Christianity), which will survey these religions’ commonalities, differences, and cultural expressions. Students will gain familiarity with beliefs and practices considered “religious” in Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Native American, and indigenous African traditions, in both ancient and modern contexts. Students will also learn how to recognize the complexity and diversity of global religious practices and beliefs, as well as to understand people whose values and senses of the sacred differ from their own. By the end of the course, students will be able to critically read, analyze, and interpret diverse texts and material cultures from various religious traditions, present and past.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Posillico)

"What can a letter be? This Introduction to Religion Course moves through Western European Christian history with a special attention to those writings often overlooked in the Christian canon. Specifically, it centers letters and other ‘minor’ writings of second person address. As a class, our strategy will be to locate each text-- and its author within a historical moment and part of a specific conversation and then read short excerpts of the texts carefully. How does one care for something without claiming it as one’s own? Attempting to resist our desires to comprehend (from *comprehendere*, meaning “to snatch,” “to seize,” or “to capture,”) the texts we read, we will move through short readings slowly, paying attention to rhythm, syntax, pattern, and the ways in which certain combinations of words stage an affective space and in turn makes us feel things as we read. Because assigned texts are short, students will be expected to come to class prepared with formulated responses to the readings.

Most of the texts on the syllabus proceed in pairings consisting of a conversation between two key persons. The pairings pay as little regard to genre and periodization as they do to confining categories of kingdom, order or species. That is, this class presumes that Relation happens across differences of animate and inanimate objects, visible and invisible forces, temporalities of 'now' and 'then,' the air, the water, fire, plants, animals, and humans. We will consider, for example, *The Confessions* as a conversation between Augustine and God in the third week, while we will consider the relation between Clarice Lispector's "you" and her interlocutor (us) in the penultimate class. The course will be discussion based. Students will be encouraged to write creative responses in the form of letters addressing our authors throughout the term. The final assignment is an end of term research paper based on one of the conversation pairs we will read.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Linder)

What is Catholicism? Who are Catholics? Like any group, Catholicism and those who practice it are no monolith. Catholics, and those adjacent to it, are formed through their history and social context, while being informed by a tradition that sets a set of beliefs before its participants. This class will consider multiple accounts of "being Catholic" through reading accounts of Black Catholic nuns, Catholic anti-nuclear activists, pro-choice Catholics, queer Catholics, among others, who strain, bend, and possibly break ideas that might be tethered to the Catholic Church. What do these groups of Catholics do to our understanding of Catholicism? This course employs group discussion, weekly reading journals, a current events presentation, and final project for its assessments.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (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: Global Religious Experience (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 to 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 various expressions of Christianity.

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 more generally.

THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Inati)

This course examines the nature, history, and development of Islam, including beliefs, rituals, sects, intellectual movements, and political powers, as well as economic conditions and social structures that distinguished, especially in early Islam, the poor and slaves who turned to the religion and away from the aristocrats who persecuted them and strongly opposed the new religion. The commonly misinterpreted Islamic concepts of war and peace will be clarified and the cultural roles, such as those of women will also be discussed.

The course will close with exploring Islam and globalization, a comparison between Islam and Christianity, the impact of Islam on world cultures and the impact of world cultures on Muslims individually and at large. Videos, visits to mosques, and discussions of current events related to the Arab/Islamic world and cultures are included.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Laird)

Those of us who were born into and raised within the Christian tradition often come away with the misguided notion that “faith” is something like a political platform we might adhere to. “I believe this. I don’t believe that.” While Catholic Christianity does adhere to certain beliefs, but by itself this simply will not do. It is misguided in the sense that it lacks *faith is first and foremost a relationship of trust* before it becomes something we give intellectual assent to. As Pope Benedict XVI said in his very first public talk, and repeated often throughout his years as Pope), “Faith is not a bundle of doctrines. Faith is a relationship with God.” And at the end of his pontificate, he strikes the same note: “Faith is nothing other than the touch of God in the night of the world, and so—in silence—to hear the word, to see love.” Like any living relationship, faith evolves as we move through the joys and sufferings, the loves and losses that we all meet as we move from childhood into adulthood. What are the dynamics intrinsic to the development of a maturing faith?

This introductory, depth-encounter of the theological life is no mere high school religion class that some may bring with them to college. Often this has involved parroting back to the teacher what we were taught (*or what we think we were taught*) for years. Perhaps this sufficed as we moved through grade school, middle school, and high school. But is this adequate as we move from adolescence to the emerging adulthood of our years at university? This course will engage theological questions both ancient and modern such as:

1. The dynamics, stages, and characteristics of maturing faith.
2. Spirituality: The Practice of Contemplation
3. Is God just one more thing (just bigger) among the innumerable list things in the universe. Such a list might include such things as your laptop, a mobile phone, your family, gravity, dark matter, dark energy. Each of these are among those things that exist in the universe. Does God exist like these things do? Manifestly NOT. As one of the most revered Catholic theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas, “God is not in the order of existing things.” St. Thomas is clearly not intending to say, “There is no God.” Then how has Roman Catholicism understood the manner and mystery of the reality of God?

4. In Christ death died. How do we distinguish “resurrection” (moving through death) from “resuscitation?” (some dead guy who gets up and starts walking around (Lazarus))
5. How does the Church understand its own identity-in-mission in the rest of the world? Does the Church stand over and against the rest of the world or is it spread like leaven throughout the world excluding no one?
6. How does the Church understand the dignity and wisdom of non-Christian religions and people of no faith?
7. Religion and Science. Faith is always embedded in and in dialogue with culture. As a case in point we shall look at the deeply misguided notion that there is an essential conflict between religion and science.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Jackson)

Who am I? Why am I here? Where do I come from? Where am I going? The journey of this course invites you to explore and examine your own deep beliefs about yourself, the world, and the sacred in conversation with the rich matrix of ways in which the Christian tradition has engaged with these perennial life questions. In what, and in whom, do we place our greatest faith, and why? How do we reflect upon and understand our faith experiences and their meaning on personal, social, civic and cosmic levels of life in the world? Through a focus on Roman Catholic thought and practice, this course will enable you to: develop a critical understanding of the Christian tradition and the theological reflections that shape it, demonstrate the influence of Catholic faith in history, and synthesize and defend a position regarding the mission of Catholic theological reflection and life in the world today.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Murdoch)

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.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Grimes)

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.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Joseph)

What do we mean by freedom? Freedom 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 how “God hears the cries of the poor,” otherwise known as God’s preferential option for 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 Hebrew people 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, Indigenous 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: Catholic Studies (Walsh)

This is an introductory course in theology and is thematic in approach. It engages students in a process of integration of primary theological concepts through scripture, tradition, and contemporary culture. The primary themes examined in scripture and the world are: 1) the Nature of God; 2) Creation; 3) Sin; and 4) Redemption. These four concepts provide the focal points for study of biblical stories and historical theological developments in the Christian tradition. Attention will then turn to analysis of how theological ideas permeate contemporary culture and experience. Students will come to understand that these concepts are not abstractions relevant only to theology or to the church, but are evident in a variety of situations and experiences.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Loya)

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). 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. Specific instructor-intended course outcomes include the following:

Students will be able to -

- Describe central convictions of the Christian understanding of God, human existence and the world, plus discern the relevance of Christian theology for one’s own life, values and worldviews; these in comparison with non-Christians convictions, whenever possible and appropriate.
- Identify and critically discuss key persons, themes, and events in the Bible and Christianity in history.
- Know the origins of Christianity within Judaism.

- Provide an informed account of the development and meaning of central Christian beliefs and ritualized worship forms.
- Understand the origins, issues and consequences pertaining to the development of three prime Christian Traditions – Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Reformation Protestantism.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (McDonald Kennedy)

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.

This course introduces students to methods and approaches in theology that facilitate what Pope Francis calls a "culture of encounter" with the lived experiences of people of faith. We will read, watch, and listen to different perspectives on faith and use fieldwork methods to observe and engage various faith practices. In addition to considering fundamental topics in Christian theology and ethics, we'll explore particular contexts in which faith communities live out Christian commitments related to justice and liberation with a focus on four topics: contemplation, protest, ecology, and challenging consumerism.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Spitaler)

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 version of the 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: Catholic Studies (Ambrosino)

THL 1000 (Catholic Studies) 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 *How can I be a disciple of Jesus?* 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, fashion, collectible toys, and of course ... sex robots.

THL 1000: Global Religious Studies (Knauss)

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 section is situated in the Global Religious Experience track. We will encounter and analyze the religious experiences of people and cultures across the globe as they are expressed in films, and use these films as starting points for a broader discussion of the respective religious traditions, their historical developments, contemporary forms, and interactions with other traditions. The course will be seminar-style, and careful preparation of films and readings before class is expected to ensure substantial discussions during the class sessions.

THL 2300: THM: Gospel of Johannine Literature (Schrader Polczer)

This course is a discussion of the Gospel and Letters of John, examined through frameworks that are both traditional (e.g. historical-critical) and diverse (e.g. feminist, post-colonial). Topics covered will include questions of authorship, date, sources, textual analysis, and the Fourth Gospel's relationship to other early Christian literature. Through close readings of both primary and secondary sources, students will be introduced to various historical, text-critical, and ethical concerns raised by the Johannine literature. By the end of the course students will be able to understand Johannine literature in its early Jewish-Christian context, and responsibly interpret its continuing relevance for today.

THL 3200: Understanding Jesus (Murdoch)

THL 3790: THM: Mary and the Saints (Caponi)

How does someone become a saint? Did Mary truly appear at Guadalupe, Lourdes, and Fatima? Does St. Anthony really help people find lost items?

If you have ever wondered about these and other questions touching on Mary and the saints, this course has the answers. Beginning with Sculpture, we will explore the theology and cult of Mary and

the saints. Special attention is given to the traditions and teaching of the Roman Catholic Church; for example, the process of canonization, veneration of relics, and Marian apparitions. Orthodox and Protestant perspectives will also be examined, along with the understanding of Mary in Islam. Through in-class presentations and trips to local shrines, we will explore the place of Mary and the saints in the architecture and art of different cultures. Some of the outcomes of the course will be the students' ability to

- discuss the historical stages of the development of key Marian doctrines
- assess the meaning of Marian apparitions
- explore the interconnections among the religious, artistic, geographical, and economic dimensions of devotion to the saints, e.g., the importance of pilgrimage
- interpret the artistic symbolism of Mary and the saints
- evaluate important historical controversies, such as iconoclasm and the "stripping of the Altars"

THL 4480: Introduction Biomedical Ethics (Wilmot)

This course develops tools for critical analysis of biomedical ethical issues from a Catholic theological perspective. No matter what field of work or vocation in which we find ourselves, we will have to reflect on ethical issues in our society and personal lives. From the conception of life to the end of life we are faced with new technologies and a stunning array of choices that affect us, our loved ones, and our fellow human beings. We will be focusing on a distinctively Catholic Christian approach to these matters, and we will be considering a range of topics that affect patients, care providers, and the broader society in which Christians and non-Christians seek to live good lives with moral integrity. The vision of the human person and the ideal of human flourishing from a Catholic perspective will be given special consideration in answering questions of medical ethics. At times, we will contrast a distinctively Catholic approach with secular, philosophical alternatives, but the ultimate aim of this course is to come away with a richer understanding of what is distinctive about a Catholic approach to bioethics. 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 this question from a Catholic perspective in the context of contemporary bioethical debates.

THL 4500: Augustinian Spirituality (DePrinzio)

What is spirituality? What does it mean to have a spirituality in our day? This course will examine these questions using Augustine of Hippo as our guide. Augustine's "restless heart" will be the image we will use to unpack a rich spiritual tradition that bears his name and which offers a timeless relevance and great meaning for the 21st century.

THL 4550: The Contemplative Tradition (Laird)

Feelings of loneliness, anger, anxiety, fear, self-loathing, among other afflictive thoughts and feelings, prevent our discovery of what already lies deep within each of us: an expansive inner peace that grounds the indwelling presence of God. The Christian contemplative tradition is concerned with developing those interior skills (the practice of contemplation) that gradually calm the inner noise and confusion in our heads and lead us to the discovery of interior silence, clarity, and the indwelling presence of the mystery we call God.

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, toxic shame, among others. 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: THM: Spirituality and Friendship (Jackson)

From popular culture to rigorous interdisciplinary scholarship, contemporary life and thought have been truly enriched by retrievals of ancient and medieval understandings of friendship, as well as by revisionings of friendship in our commitments to peace, justice and meaning in our world today. In this course, we will examine friendship as the basis for a profoundly relational spirituality integrating questions of the self, the environment, communities, and the divine. Beginning with a study of its philosophical and theological foundations expanding across pedagogical, moral/ethical, social/civic, creative/aesthetic, and religious/spiritual boundaries, we will consider whether friendship may be understood as a *way of life*, a spirituality that informs every aspect of existence.

THL 4990: THM Contemplate, Create, Repeat (Mell)

The course includes content & process elements that give attention to individual and group spirituality. Successful completion of course requires 1) attendance at every class meeting, whether in-person or online; 2) attendance at planned field trip(s) that will be arranged with day/time agreement from all class participants; and, 3) excellent quality completion of all course-required assignments, including one pre-class paper that is due via Email attachment sent to the instructor by 12:00 noon on Monday, the first day of class. **NOTE:** The pre-course paper does not require advanced reading or research. Students will receive important pre-course information via VU email approximately one week before the first class meeting.

THL 5000: Do Black Lives Matter to God? A Theological Exploration of Suffering, Race, & Resistance (Washington Leapheart)

Has God sanctioned #BlackLivesMatter? Would Jesus protest the killings of George Floyd, Sandra Bland, Emmett Till, Rekia Boyd, or Aiyana Stanley-Jones? How should people of Christian faith respond to Black protest? In this course, we will attempt to construct a Divine argument for resistance to racialized violence and oppression. To do this, we will engage the biblical text and the texts of historical narrative, literature, poetry, music, visual art, and film to explore key theological topics, including sin,

suffering, and salvation. As we center the perspectives of Black, womanist, mujerista, queer, and Native theologians, scholars, organizers, artists, and activists, we will seek to discover a theological framework for the contemporary Movement for Black Lives. Ultimately, we will seek to be empowered by this framework, integrating it with our own faith and practice in order to live into the prophetic call to do justice.

THL 5003: Thomas Merton as a Spiritual Guide (Hastings)

Thomas Merton was a Trappist monk and also a leader in the spiritual revival of the Christian, Catholic church. This seminar will consider his significant contributions and teachings in the rich history of spirituality. It will also help participants reflect upon what Merton considered key ingredients of a meaningful, purposeful life.

Some of the topics we will focus upon will be prayer, contemplation, silence, suffering, self-knowledge, vulnerability, wonder and social justice. Through the guidance and writings of Merton we will allow him to guide us in our spiritual journey. If allowed, his story will act as a map and move us toward deeper transformation. Meditation, journaling, reflection, focusing/attention and “nature bathing” will help us to travel well along this way.

THL 5003: THM: Contemporary US Catholics (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. In 2022, the United States Supreme Court reversed the ruling of *Roe v. Wade*, eliminating the constitutional right to an abortion and leaving laws pertaining to abortion up to the states. Discussion and polls among Catholics revealed a wide range of responses to this judicial action. While the Church offers its official teaching without question or debate, Catholics in the U.S. do not all seem to agree. These particular developments, to which we will pay some attention, raise a larger question: who is a U.S. Catholic today? Across a wide spectrum of race, ethnicity, sexual identity and orientation, theological understanding, religious upbringing and ideological position, people in the United States 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 Catholic Church (Bolarte)

This course examines a theology that takes as its starting point the everyday, communal, and liberating experience of faith of the Hispanic people of God in the United States. Hispanic theology has prided itself on basing its reflection close to the pastoral reality of the church. Through theological reflection, the students explore the integration of culture and faith. The course incorporates the role of church documents that provide direction for effective ministry among culturally diverse communities.

THL 5003: THM: Catholic Social Thought (Beyer)

Is the use of force ever 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: Saints, Witches, Mystics (Smith)

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 Late Antique, Medieval, and Early Modern Christian communities. 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.

Beginning with a study of ancient philosophical assumptions undergirding medieval understandings of sex and gender, we will then turn to medieval religious texts by and about women, including texts by female visionaries revealing divine messages, stories of saints who become one with Christ, as well as saints described as demoniacs and others who are suspected by clerics of being possessed by evil spirits. Tracing the rise of the witch hunts in Western Europe in the early modern period, the course will track the changing fortunes of women through a long arc of history.

THL 5003: Pope Francis' Vision of the Church (Lydon)

Pope Francis has left a mark on the pastoral and ecclesiological vision of the Church in its service to humanity. This course will explore seven main themes in the pope's writings:

1. A poor Church for the poor
2. The Church and the Cry of the Earth
3. A Synodal Church of Dialogue
4. A Missionary Church
5. A Church of Inculturation
6. A Church of Mercy
7. A Church of Prayer and Action

Understanding his theological perspective, born in the crucible of Church life and the difficult days of political upheaval in Argentina in the 1980s, and then his special role in the Conference of Latin American bishops, we find the foundations upon which these seven themes are interconnected and become the basis for a rich ecclesiology that guides the Church today and that represents a new paradigm of the relation of the Church to the world.

THL 5003: Libertarian Theology (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.

THL 5004-DL1: THM: Popular Spirituality (Mell)

This course provides an opportunity to explore the role spirituality plays in North American popular expressions such as music, television, film, art, sports, entertainment, or fashion. We will place spirituality into dialogue with popular culture in an effort to understand the complex relationship between them. The course asks to what extent contemporary practices of Christian spirituality might better engage popular culture and to what extent these practices already reflect the values, patterns, and practices of popular culture. Thus, we will attempt to study spirituality and popular culture not as polar opposites but as complementary and/or competing sources from which people shape their senses of identity, belief, and meaning and through which they construe and configure their spiritual quest. During the course of our study, we will engage diverse Contemplative Practices as a further means of learning about our personal spirituality's subjective elements.

THL 5004: THM: Saint Francis of Assisi and Integral Ecology (Delio)

In 2015 Pope Francis issued a landmark encyclical entitled, "Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home." It was a unique document in its breadth and vision because it focused on the environmental crisis as a crisis of humanity. Writing on the problems of competitive individualism, the pursuit of wealth, disregard for the poor and the unbridled technocratic paradigm, the Pope issued a clarion call: We must change the way we think if we are to change the way we act. The encyclical takes its inspiration from the charism of Saint Francis of Assisi, a medieval figure who was such an ardent follower of the Gospel, that he was known as a second Christ. Pope Francis said of Saint Francis: "I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically." He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace." This inseparable bond refers to the need today for integral ecology. This course will explore the spirituality of Francis of Assisi as a basis for personal conversion and the development of an ecological consciousness.

THL 5004: THM: Religion & Incarceration (Makas)

With 2.3 million Americans incarcerated, examining the intersection of religion and incarceration is a vital part of understanding religion in America. One of the most diverse populations in terms of race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status, the prison environment magnifies and illuminates foundational questions regarding power, privilege, and the practice of religion in America. For example, the question "what counts as religion?" is particularly consequential in prison, as it illustrates who is free to practice their religion and which religious rights are protected. Similarly, "How does race affect religion or religious freedom?" is highlighted by anxieties of prison officials regarding traditionally black forms of Islam. Addressing these and other questions in depth, this course explores the religious lives of men and women who are incarcerated and the theology and practices of prison ministry groups. Through reading memoirs and other primary source documents, we will analyze how prison affects one's

religious practice, understanding of religion, and desire for spiritual care, both while incarcerated and after release. In addition to reading texts by formerly incarcerated people, students will explore our two course foci through texts by spiritual leaders and examining the wide array of spiritual programming available in prison.

THL 5004: THM: Attention are Spirituality (Lang Hearlson)

Contemporary spiritual writers often claim that if we pay attention to our lives and to the people and world around us, we may become people of spiritual depth. But what exactly is attention? How can we cultivate an attentive spirit amid a busy life and a distracting world? In this course, students will explore the role of attention in spiritual life by learning from scientific, Christian, and indigenous perspectives on attention, and by trying out a variety of attentive experiments and practices. The course has five units: (I) Attending to Attention; (II) Attention to the World; (III) Attention to Self; (IV) Attention to Others, and (V) Attention to God/the Holy.

THL 5005: THM: Religious Traditions of the Middle East (Akis)

Understanding the modern Middle East is almost impossible without first developing an appreciation for the importance of its diverse religious traditions, and the role that religion has played in the development of the region since antiquity. This course examines the many ways that religion has functioned in Middle Eastern societies, beginning with ancient, pre-Islamic practices, such as the Zoroastrian religion of the Persian Empire, the development of Judaism among the ancient Israelites, and the spread of Christianity in the eastern Roman Empire. Of special interest will be the rise of Islam in the seventh century, and the development of unique and localized Islamic traditions in the rapidly expanding Arab empires of the medieval period. The class will focus on such themes as the differences between Sunni and Shia Islam, the position of non-Muslim minorities in Islamic history. The class will conclude by looking closely at the many ways religion is practiced in the Middle East today, from the official secularism of states like Turkey, to the post-revolutionary religious politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

THL 5005: Wisdom of Sufism (Akis)

This course is an introduction to the spiritual and mystical teachings of Sufism, a mystical school of Islam that focuses on developing a direct personal relationship with God. The course will explore the fundamental beliefs, practices, and traditions of Sufism, and how they can be applied to personal spiritual development. Students will study the historical development of Islam and Sufism, the basic tenets of Sufi theology, the role of the Sufi master or sheikh, and the importance of spiritual practices such as prayer, Sama (Ceremony of Whirling dervishes), meditation, and dhikr (remembrance of God). The course will also cover key Sufi concepts such as love, peace, unity, and surrender, and how they are expressed through Sufi poetry and music. Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to engage in personal spiritual reflection and practice, using Sufi teachings as a guide. They will also be introduced to Anatolian Sufi orders and their teachings, as well as the ways in which Sufism has been adapted to different cultural and religious contexts. The course will be taught through a combination of lectures, readings, discussions, and videos of religious ceremonies, and will require regular reading and reflection outside of class. Students will be evaluated through a combination of written assignments, group presentations, and class participation. No prior knowledge of Sufism or Islam is required for this course.

THL 5005: Interreligious Literacy & Cooper (San Chirico)

The United States has never been more religiously diverse than it is today, but religious literacy is sorely, dangerously lacking. The aims of this course are multiple: to impart 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 the Philadelphia region. While adherence to a particular religious tradition is not required, a commitment to speaking from core commitments for the purpose of engagement is critical. This semester we will explore the following traditions, albeit briefly and therefore inadequately, mindful that no tradition can be adequately encapsulated in a course. This semester we will be exploring the following traditions: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

THL 5005: THM: Latinx Theology (Varela Rios)

Abstract:

'Latinx' and 'Theology' have complex conceptual and material entanglements, individually and together, that simultaneously reveal and obscure their meanings for their intended audiences and beyond. In this no-prior-knowledge-needed in-person course, we will read, discuss, and write about Latinx Theology, its relevant terms and methods, and its challenges to (and from) Latinx life in the United States and to humanity in general. Along the way, we will gain skills in reading, speaking, and writing as scholars ever-in-training.

Description:

'Latinx' encompasses a wide variety of ways of being and living that transcends time, identity, and geography. For one, latinx is not only tied to gender dynamics but also to the tragic history of U.S. colonialism/empire—what latinx means quickly becomes deeply contestable in their intersection. Adding 'Theology' complicates the questions further, since theology is also a contextualized concept due to its varying focuses, locations, and provisional nature. In fact, both terms have deep histories which tend to obscure their purpose and intended audience even more when combined as an academic area of study.

Latinx theologians, in the academy and otherwise, negotiate this complexity in distinct yet similarly productive ways. This course will explore some examples of Latinxs and allies doing theology *latinamente* in academic settings (that is, in institutions of higher education) and beyond (for instance, in the Church and in other cultural spheres). Some of these authors are more systematic, others more constructive, yet others interdisciplinary. The variety will reveal the multiple ways of distilling theologies that 'Latinx' engages and reveals. No prior knowledge on the subject is needed. All course materials will be in English.

THL 5005: THM: Archeology of Ritual and Religion (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: The Bible as Literature (Anolik)

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 biblical stories of the first human family: Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel, and then read Mark Twain's whimsical *Diaries of Adam and Eve*, which develops the questions of gender roles raised by Gen 1-4. 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 responses to the story of the Hebrews' escape from Egypt: The Gospel song, "Go Down Moses" and 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 and political approach to this narrative. Turning to the Christian Bible we will read the story of Susannah (Apocrypha; Catholic Bible – Daniel 13), a surprising modern tale about gender and power. Next, we will consider Jesus's parables as a set of complex short stories, following the argument of Levine's *Short Stories by Jesus*. Finally, we will read sections of the Gospels and consider literary approaches to the story of Jesus: Oscar Wilde's *Salome*; T.S. Eliot's poem, "Journey of the Magi"; A.S. Byatt's short story "Christ in the House of Martha and Mary." As we read the diverse group of literary texts throughout the semester, we will consider how they rework, challenge, and illuminate the literature of the original biblical narratives. Most biblical readings will be accompanied by the writings of scholars, most notably Robert Alter, Richard Friedman, and Harold Bloom.

THL 5150: Islam: History, Thought, Culture (Inati)

This course examines the nature, history, and development of Islam, including beliefs, rituals, sects, intellectual movements, and political powers, as well as economic conditions and social structures that distinguished, especially in early Islam the poor and slaves who turned to the religion from the aristocrats who strongly opposed it and persecuted the former groups. The commonly misinterpreted Islamic concepts of war and peace will be clarified and the cultural roles, such as those of women will also be touched upon where appropriate. Videos, virtual visits to mosques, and discussions of current events related to the Arab/Islamic world are included. Fulfills requirement for Africana Studies, major and minor in Arab/Islamic Studies, and Core Theology.

THL 6000: Power Dynamics in the New Testament (Cacchione)

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: Bible and Sustainability (Abubaker)

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 will focus on what the Bible teaches us on sustainability in relation to the created world especially the place and role of humans. Another part of this course will examine practical environment

issues around sustainability, such as the human root of the ecological crisis, actors in global environmental governance, and environmental governance ideas.

THL 6000: THM: Theology for Military Service (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 initially on its traditional theological expression (Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas) and then entering into dialogue with 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