

Spring 2024 Theology Undergraduate Course Descriptions

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

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.

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.

What is theology? The word "theology" derives from two Greek words. The first, , means "god" or "God." The other, , means "®"

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 oicular focus on

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, _____ as a conversation between Augustine and God in the third week, while we will consider the relation between Clarice Lispector and _____ in the _____ week.

. 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

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

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

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

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

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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)

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 Liv

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

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 competitiv

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 and Spirituality (Lang Heartson)

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 dev

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

