

Fall 2024 Theology Graduate Course Descriptions

**Please check the Master Schedule to confirm course day/times*

MASTER'S LEVEL SEMINARS:

THL 8000: Foundations in Systematic and Constructive Theology (Wong)

Tuesdays 2-4:20pm (Multimodal 50% online)

In light of this self-understanding of the area, this course will introduce you to the “foundations” of Christian systematic and constructive theology, its historical development and contemporary shape, important thinkers and approaches, the sources of systematic/constructive theology, methods to engage them, and central concepts. Beginning with an orientation to theology more broadly, and systematic, constructive and foundational theologies as particular disciplines within theology, we will reflect on what it means to do theology in mutual interaction with cultural contexts and their questions in the Augustinian tradition. As you encounter important thinkers and their theological practices, both historical and contemporary, you will develop a working understanding of the language, methods, central ideas and enduring questions of Christian systematic and constructive theology, with an emphasis on the Roman Catholic perspective. Through our readings and discussions, you will engage diverse theological perspectives across historical periods and cultural contexts, examine the relation between theological reflections and cultural practices, enter into interdisciplinary conversations, and critically and constructively evaluate the tasks and challenges of Christian theological reflection today. The course format is seminar-style, with emphasis on discussion and shared learning in our classroom community. This requires you to be conscientious about preparing the reading material assigned for each class so that you are able to participate in our discussions.

Area: Systematics

THL 8001: Foundations in Bible (Schrader Polczer)

Tuesdays 4:30-6:50pm

This course is an introduction to both major parts of the Christian Bible (i.e., the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament and the New Testament) as they are studied within the academic field of biblical studies. Key topics include the structure of the overall biblical narratives, the diversity

of genres reflected in the Bible, the interaction between the Bible and its ancient cultural contexts, and the relationship between traditional and critical approaches to the Bible. Students who complete this course will gain the foundational knowledge in the Bible that is necessary for more advanced electives in biblical studies.

Area: Biblical Interpretation

THL 8003: Foundations in Spirituality (Barnett)

Wednesdays 7-9:20pm (Online - Synchronous)

This course can be thought of as two courses in one. For the first several weeks, it will serve as an introduction to methodological issues in the study of “lived religion” or, in popular parlance, spirituality. Each of these class meetings will center on a particular question, supplemented by important and timely scholarly readings. Next, it will survey a number of major figures in the history of Christian Spirituality, considering their strengths as well as their limitations. All told, then, this course will establish an interchange between foundational academic issues in spirituality and foundational contributors to the field — a combination of method and encounter.

Area: Spirituality

THL 8004: Foundations in Christian Ethics (Couenhoven)

Mondays 2-4:20pm

This course introduces students to basic issues and debates in the academic study of Christian ethics. By engaging with contemporary trends and scholarly works as well as classic texts, students will explore a variety of approaches and issues to Christian ethics. Ranging from the climate crisis to histories of racism, and including such topics as sexual and economic ethics, the course samples leading scholarship being written on Christian ethics today.

Area: Christian Ethics

THL 8101: THM: New Testament Ethics (Spitaler)

Mondays 7-9:20pm (Multimodal - Simulcast)

How did the first generations of Christ-believers experience justice? And what were their views on social, cultural, political, and economic responsibilities? In this course, students explore the New Testament roots of some of the major themes of Christian ethics: the nature of the human person; the institutions of family and marriage; the concept of human labor; socio-economic equity; politics; issues of life and death; common good; disparities in poverty and

wealth; gender issues; racial and ethnic discord; conflict and pacifism; environmental stewardship; and matters of sexuality. Given that engagement in the fabric of societal life—be it local or global, public or economic—is fundamentally a moral endeavor, grasping the New Testament's perspectives offers a significant tool for comprehending modern advocacy efforts and for promoting justice dimensions that are both informed by and critical of biblical tenets in fostering responsible citizenship. We will critically examine selected New Testament texts, including from the Gospels, Letters, Acts, and Revelation, employing historical, literary, theological, socio-scientific, and various other analytical lenses to discern the import of biblical logic and to contemplate its bearings on Christian belief and practice. Special emphasis will be placed on hermeneutical queries regarding the application of New Testament worldviews to present-day challenges.

Area: Biblical Interpretation/Christian Ethics

THL 8145: THM: Jewish Law (Saiman)

Mondays 6-8:00pm

This course introduces the substance and process of Jewish law and examines basic jurisprudential and theological questions from the perspective of the Jewish tradition. By delving into another system of law, students will be able to place current debates within American law and political theory with wider philosophical, religious, and historical context. The readings, bring together primary and secondary sources from the Jewish, Christian, and American traditions and do not require a casebook. Prior course work in history, jurisprudence or religious studies is helpful but not required. This course is cross listed in the law school and theology department and will offer an opportunity to learn from and interact with students in other fields. Student assessment will be based on several response papers throughout the semester.

Area: Elective

THL 8210: THM: Church & Lay Ministry after Vatican II (Joseph)

Thursdays 4:30-6:50 pm (Online - Synchronous)

Before the opening of the Synod on Synodality in October 2021, Pope Francis stated that “the theme of synodality is not just a chapter in a treatise on ecclesiology; even less is it a passing fashion, a slogan, or a new term to be used and exploited in our meetings. No! Synodality expresses the nature of the Church, its form, its style, and its mission...I am following what we may consider the first and most important manual of ecclesiology, the book of the Acts of the Apostles”

As part of Pope Francis’ fresh reception of the Second Vatican Council, synodality calls the global Catholic church to both structural reforms and deeper interior conversion. The first half of the class is dedicated to Pope Francis’ application of the see-judge-act method to the Covid-19 pandemic in his book *Let us Dream* and how this method informs the communal

discernment and co-responsibility of laity at the heart of his call for synodality. The second half of the class will then focus on different wounds that have been expressed in the synod documents and be guided by the question – what does it mean to minister in the context of this wound? Wounds include racial divisions in the Church, ministry among the differently abled, ministry among LGBTQ+ persons, and ministry amidst ecological crisis.

Area: Systematic and Constructive Theology; MMT

THL 8290: THM: Queer Religions (Knauss)

Thursdays 9-11:20am

Queer identities and relationships represent a particular challenge to many religious traditions. Heterosexuality provides the normative basis not just for their ethics of sexuality and family, but represents the matrix in which beliefs are formulated, taught and practiced. In addition, heteronormativity contributes to the establishment and consolidation of power structures in religions and societies. Yet in spite of their marginalization, queer believers are a part of religious communities, and contribute through their presence to the development of traditions that may become more inclusive of diversity.

In this class, we will focus on attitudes towards queer identities and relationships in Judaism, Christianity and Islam in a global perspective. We will analyze traditional teachings in response to queer issues, as well as innovative theological developments. We will investigate how religious discourses on sexual and gender diversity support religious and social power structures through the exclusion of queer persons, and how queer persons speak back from the margins. We will also investigate the ways in which queer individuals negotiate what is often considered a contradiction: their sexual and religious identities. In doing so, we will explore sacred texts, theological discussions, sociological studies and cultural resources relating to these three religions' traditions in their global diversity. Our goal is to better understand and evaluate the variety of religious attitudes towards queer identities and relationships and the relevance of religious traditions for individual and communal living.

The specific focus and emphasis of the course among these general trajectories will be decided based on the interests of the students enrolling in the course.

Area: Systematic and Constructive Theology; Religion

THL 8560: THM: Early Modern Spirituality (Grainger)

Tuesdays 9-11:20am

This seminar offers advanced study of the “lived” devotional worlds of early modern Christians, Roman Catholic and Protestant, as they responded to a sequence of dramatic transformations in social, cultural, and political life. The division of western Christianity, the devastation of warfare in Europe and the rise of religious toleration, the discovery of the Americas, the birth of global missions, and the global slave trade, the scientific revolution, the emergence of the modern nation state—all had significance consequences for the everyday religious worlds of Christians.

As we will see, the 16th to 19th centuries were also an age of immense religious creativity. As old forms were discarded or destroyed, new forms emerged to take their place. We will attend to many of the central movements, practices, figures, themes, and tensions that characterized this fractured, fertile period, with special attention paid to developments in mysticism, including those emphasizing affective forms of devotion (the so-called “religion of the heart”). Beginning with the Age of Reformations, our journey ends at the cusp of the revolutionary age, with a look beyond at the complex legacies of the “long reformation” for modernity.

Area: Christian Ethics, MMT

THL 8701: Theological Pedagogy (Hanchin)

Thursdays 2-4:20pm

This seminar initiates the Heart of Teaching program for PhD students and Master’s students in the Education Track. It is designed to help students identify theological and philosophical sources for teaching theology and religious studies, analyze educational approaches, and imagine and communicate their approach to teaching. The seminar emphasizes Villanova’s Christian mission and Augustinian charism in conversation with contemporary learning theory and seeks to build a mutually supportive learning community.

Area: Heart of Teaching

THL 8803: Intro to Counseling Skills (Havlik)

Mondays 11-1:50pm

This course presents a general orientation to Counseling and Helping Skills, as way of assisting others to cope more effectively with personal, spiritual, and non-pathological concerns. This course is designed to support students in the Master of Arts in Ministry and Theology degree program in their skill development to prepare for aspects of their careers where they will help and support others. Students will be introduced to the basics of effective and ethically responsible counseling and helping skills to help others explore presenting issues and concerns, gain deeper interpersonal insight, and make changes in their lives. Opportunities will be provided for students to enhance their interpersonal communication and self-awareness, and gain knowledge and skills in helping and counseling that can be applied widely to work related to pastoral counseling and ministry, as well as other helping positions.

Area: MMT

THL 8840: THM: Human Growth & Faith Development (Collura)

Wednesdays 2-4:20pm (Multimodal – 50% online)

Every stage of human life, from womb to grave, has its own psycho-spiritual themes and challenges. This course will be organized as a journey through the stages of human

development, from pre-natal growth to infancy to childhood to adolescence to adulthood to old age to the dying process. We will explore the psychological, sociological, and spiritual background that may lie behind each stage of life with a mind to refining our pastoral care interventions and to seeing and respecting people as pilgrims on a great human journey. Our texts will include spiritual writings; classic developmental theories (Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg, Fowler, etc.); postmodern, feminist, and other contemporary challenges to the linear life stages as traditionally construed; and research into neuroscience and attachment.

Area: Spirituality; Systematic and Constructive Theology; MMT

THL 8883: Ministry Field Education (Mell)

Field Education is a central piece of the learning experience in the MMT program. It offers an opportunity for students to deepen their discernment about God's call toward a vocation of professional ministry and prepares students for ministerial roles in Christian and other faith or secular communities. The Ministry Field Education Supervision course ensures that students engage in Field Education placements that provide formational experience, honing their ministerial skills and their awareness of their place and service within ministerial relationships and presence. It offers a space for the development of and reflection on the skills needed for their ministry. Students reflect on the role and meaning of ministry and how their learning in Field Education relates to the rest of their academic studies, personal and communal development, spiritual growth, and vocation.

Area: MMT

THL 8883: Ministry Field Education (Calderone)

Supervision, theological reflection, and evaluation are necessary components of an effective pastoral program. Although theological reflection can help the development of pastoral skills, its primary purpose is to interpret pastoral experience or activity in light of Scripture, tradition, personal faith, and pastoral practices. Reflection of this kind should become a lifelong habit in ministry.

Theological reflection is a conscious reflection on life experience in ministry, accomplished in the light of one's faith and theological tradition, and respectful of the thoughts and emotions evoked by the event both in the minister in those to whom they minister. The purpose of the reflection/supervision experience is to assist the student minister in integrating and interiorizing these elements of the experience of ministry.

Area: MMT

THL 8940: Integrative Portfolio (Jackson/Knauss)

Area: Core Curriculum

THL 8999: MA Capstone (Jackson)

Wednesdays 9:00-11:20am

The Fall Capstone course has been designed for students in the MA in Theology who have completed at least half of their required coursework and are approaching their spring portfolio requirement. The course provides students with the culminating research, reflection and other professional skills that will equip them for the next steps along their vocational pathways. Students will craft their own intellectual autobiography as a culminating narrative for their degree program. Based on this narrative, they will identify a central or significant question or problem that they wish to explore critically with regard to their future pathway or vocational plans. Throughout the course, students will engage in peer review collaboration, a resume workshop, interview and presentation training, relevant institutional networks, preparation of applications, papers or projects for publication or conferences (if applicable), and further resources that will empower them in their future work and/or study.

Area: Core Curriculum

DOCTORAL LEVEL SEMINARS:

THL 9050: Theories & Methods of Culture (Lloyd)

Mondays 9:00-11:20am

If we want to study faith engaging culture, we must first ask, what is culture? How do we understand the dynamics of culture? What is the relationship between culture and religious beliefs, practices, narratives, and affects? And how can theological reflection position itself in the context of theories of culture, draw on their concepts, and reflect on itself as situated within a network of cultural processes? This course will introduce you to some of the main theories, concepts and methods of the study of culture, focusing on central thinkers and texts in the sociology of culture, cultural anthropology, critical theory and cultural studies, including postcolonial critiques of “culture.” We will also explore how theories of culture have informed scholarship in theology and religious studies, and the directions of future scholarship in this field.

Area: Cultue

THL 9105: THM: Prophets in Hebrew Bible (Schwartz)

Tuesdays 2-4:20pm

The biblical prophets are most popularly associated with their sprawling oracular poetry. This material certainly has a great deal to teach us about biblical conceptions of prophecy. However, the Hebrew Bible also contains numerous narratives about prophets—e.g., Moses’s commissioning at the burning bush, Balak’s hiring of Balaam, Isaiah’s healing of Hezekiah, Josiah’s consultation with Huldah, and Amos’s confrontation with Amaziah. These tend to focus less on what the prophets said than on where, when, how, why, and to whom they said it. Although these narratives are perhaps not as eye-catching as the oracular poetry, they too give us valuable insight into biblical conceptions of prophecy. This course is an in-depth study of these portraits of prophets. Engaging classic and contemporary historical-critical scholarship, we will explore these passages both in terms of the literary world that they depict and the historical world in which they were produced. In so doing, we will gain new insights into how the biblical authors and redactors theorized what prophecy is.

Area: Biblical Interpretation

THL 9200: Liturgy and Culture (Brunk)

Mondays 11:30-1:50pm

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states in no. 1149: “The great religions of mankind witness, often impressively, to this cosmic and symbolic meaning of religious rites. The liturgy of the Church presupposes, integrates and sanctifies elements from creation and human culture, conferring on them the dignity of signs of grace, of the new creation in Jesus Christ.”

Looking at the sweep of liturgical development over two millennia and then in-depth at issues related to China, Black Catholics in the USA, and Hispanic Catholics in the USA, this course will address the relationship between liturgy and culture. How did very early Christian liturgy relate to the Jewish socio-cultural world? How did Christian liturgy navigate the switch from persecuted minority in the Roman Empire to state religion? How did Christian liturgy find a home in Central Europe? How did eucharistic controversies affect liturgy? What was the impact of the Reformation and of Trent? How did the Enlightenment and Romanticism affect liturgy? What was the impact of the twentieth-century liturgical movement?

Area: Systematic and Constructive Theology

THL 9300: Racism and Christian Ethics (Lloyd)

Wednesdays 4:30-6:50pm

In this course we will explore problems of racial injustice with a particular focus on the US context, and we will explore resources within the Christian tradition to advance racial justice. The course will begin with attention to core issues in Black liberation theology. Then we will examine ways in which Christianity and racism are entwined historically. Finally, we will examine new directions in scholarship on race and Christian ethics, including work from South

Asian, Latinx, and African perspectives. The course aims to equip students to think about racial justice in their future scholarship, whether that scholarship is historical, ethnographic, systematic, or ethical.

Area: Christian Ethics

THL 9305: Major Voices in Christian Ethics (Graham)

Tuesdays 7-9:20pm

Every discipline has its towering thinkers whose insights set the trajectory of a discipline and whose works are studied for decades if not centuries. Christian ethics is no different, and in each era certain figures have risen to the top as intellectual leaders. We will be studying the thought of a half dozen of these seminal Christian ethicists who still do, or ought to, enjoy a great deal of prominence. These ethicists are quite varied in their thought, from the issues they regard as important, to the different theological foundations underlying their practical ethics, to diverse types of moral reasoning, and sometimes to different conceptions of God and the human response to divine activity. Each of these authors has written volumes and it is only possible to scratch the surface of each one in a semester long class, but hopefully this introduction to major thinkers in Christian ethics will impress upon you the rich diversity of thought within this field and the ways in which the specific contours and concerns of Christian ethics have been sculpted by these voices.

Area: Christian Ethics

THL 9425: Ancient and Medieval Theology (Laird)

Wednesdays 2-4:20pm

Area: History

THL 9520: THM: Inventing the Holy (Smith)

Thursdays 11:30-1:50pm

In Latin “inventio” combines inventing with finding. The word suggests an intimacy between discovery and construction—or what we might call, in our less cynical moods, a fiction. This course takes up invention in order to explore the imaginative life of medieval mysticism. We will be attending especially to works that belong to the genre that the medievalist Barbara Newman has called “imaginative theology.” This takes in saints’ lives, vision narratives, auto-hagiographies, and epistolary writings. The questions that drive our inquiry gather around the theme of fictionality: how make-believe becomes make-belief, how the lives of saints are offered as possible lives for readers, what cosmological itineraries are experientially available, and whether self-annihilation has an afterlife.

Area: Spirituality

- THL 9900: Dissertation Writing (Knauss)**
- THL 9910: Synthesis Portfolio (Knauss)**
- THL 9911: Evaluation Portfolio (Knauss)**
- THL 9920: Proposal Colloquium (Knauss)**
- THL 9930: Dissertation Colloquium (Knauss)**