

Fall 2025 Theology Undergraduate Course Descriptions

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

M/W/F 12:50-1:40pm CRN 29121

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.*"

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Wratee)

M/W 3:20-4:35pm CRN 29122

THL 1000: Faith, Reason and Culture (Walsh)

M/W/F 12:50-1:40pm CRN 29123

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces students to the rich living tradition of Christianity: the sources, traditions, practices, and major thinkers that have shaped Christianity's response to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning. With a particular focus on the Bible, students engage the major theological ideas in comparison with other world religions, such as Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism. Students will also engage the impact of theological ideas in history and culture.

THL 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Lang Hearlson)

T/Th 10:00-11:15am CRN 29124

This course introduces you to the questions and themes of theology and religious studies and helps you reflect on who you are, how you imagine the world and your place in it, how you encounter mystery, and how others before us have done these things. In it, we will explore the rich living tradition of Christianity. With a particular but not exclusive focus on Roman Catholicism, we will engage Christianity as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in many contexts.

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

M/W/F 8:30-9:20am CRN 29126

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: Global Religious Experience (Schrader Polczer)

M/W 1:55-3:10pm CRN 29127

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 “lived religion” in Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Native American, and Confucian traditions. Students will also learn how to recognize the complexity and diversity of global religious practices and beliefs, as well as to understand people whose ideas of the sacred differ from their own. By the end of the course, students will be able to critically analyze and respectfully engage with a diversity of lived religious traditions.

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

M/W/F 9:35-10:25am CRN 29128

M/W/F 10:40-11:30am CRN 29129

M/W/F 11:45-12:35pm CRN 29130

The geometric increase in African Christian population is making the continent the new center of Christianity. It would seem that global Christianity is in the phase of a new "Christendom" facilitated by Africans, in Africa, and as such, making African Christianities a phenomenon of religious and scholarly interest.

The concept, African Christianities, is not neutral. Its specific origin remains debatable among scholars. For some, it emerged around the 3rd- 4th century, when Christian scholarship was evolving and facilitated by some North African Church fathers like Tertullian, Cyprian, Lanctantius, Cyprian, and Augustine of Hippo. For others, African Christianities emerged around the 15th/16th century and coincided with or facilitated by European exploration and colonialism in Africa. Also, the concept accommodates a narrative that Christianity is culturally neutral. It contests the universality/relevance of those Christian cultural practices that have been practiced for over 1,500 years outside of Africa. It claims that the legitimacy of African Christianities depends on its distinctive/contextual nature and its attention to African cultural realities.

These narratives provoke some thoughtful questions: Does Christianity have a universal culture that transcends cultural contexts? Can a religion still be considered Christian if its practices are influenced by some pre-existing non-Christian rituals? Is a 'type' of Christianity African simply because it is practiced by Africans, even if its logic and ideas are foreign to the context, or is it African because its logic and ideas have been shaped by Africans and their cultural realities? As these questions challenge our understanding of the intersection of Christianity, culture, and identity, they invite us to delve into the complexities of African Christianities.

As such, this course will introduce students to the complexities and the cultural reasoning of African Christianities. It will discuss the debate on the emergence of Christianity in Africa and its coincidence or facilitation by colonialism. It will also discuss the distinctiveness of Christian religious context in Africa, the Christian religious practices, the various religious expressions particular to some of the dominant African Christian denominations, their reasoning and logic. This course will examine these areas through

the sociological framework of the pre-Christian African culture and reasoning, brought into conversation with some key pillars of Christianity, for example, the centrality of Jesus Christ and the meaning of salvation, as understood within the Western Christian reasoning and culture.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Caponi)

M/W/F 8:30-9:20am CRN 29131

M/W/F 9:35-10:25am CRN 29132

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 (Varela Rios)

M/W 1:55-3:10pm CRN 29133

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

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

T/TH 1:00-2:15pm CRN 29135

Christian theology is a rich tradition guided by beliefs, historical realities, and practices that continue to shape human flourishing. The idea of belief, which speaks to developing a firm dedication to a cause, affects human choices, influences value systems, and shapes people’s ideas of right and wrong. The role of belief can be both generative and costly, students will study Bible characters, medieval philosophers, and men and women mystics, and how their beliefs have shaped the culture of their time through courage, prayer, suffering, and pain. Students will examine textual and non-textual materials that highlight the intersection of trauma and Christian theology. Together, we will explore the concepts of the Christian faith, its impact on culture, and its ongoing influence on the modern world.

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

T/TH 10:00-11:15am CRN 29136

In this Faith, Reason and Culture Course, we will consider the link between theological doctrines and ethics. The course considers the classic theological doctrines and ritual practices of the Catholic tradition, while attending to their political, social, and economic implications. It examines contemporary formulations of theological questions, with exposure to historical perspectives. By underscoring the relationship between theological beliefs and their significance for personal and communal life, students will grasp the public relevance of the Christian tradition.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Murdoch)

T/TH 8:30-9:45am CRN 29137

This introductory course in Catholic theology is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the foundational elements of Christian faith. Through an exploration of key theological concepts and doctrines, students will develop theological literacy, enabling them to engage thoughtfully with the rich intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church. The course will cover the following essential topics: Revelation and reason, the proofs for the existence of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, creation and the human person, natural law and grace, Christology, the Church, and the "last things" (eschatology).

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Pagan)

M/W 3:20-4:35pm CRN 29138

According to the Judeo-Christian tradition, the act of creation, or the foundation for all Being, is a moment of communication. Of speech. There was nothing but God, and God reached within God's self to transform the nothing into something. The tradition which would follow is punctuated with moments of speech and the gift of exchanging words which signifies the order of the world or a change in that order: the first humans' relationship to each other and creation; the institution of the Law on Sinai; the Sermon on the Mount. The Church, in turn, speaks of its goal towards living out the gospels for the world (evangelization), or living into God's "good news," i.e., the performance of Godly speech. Even to theologize means to literally, "God-talk." Thus, language (how it is used, by whom, and for what purpose) is an essential concern for evaluating the Catholic tradition.

In this course, you will survey the Roman Catholic tradition, through a three-pronged approach: 1) *how am I reading?*, 2) *how did others read the tradition before me?*, and 3) *how does what I have read change how I perceive the tradition?* Or broadly, an intro to methods, the historical tradition, and contemporary thematic concerns. Through this approach on Catholic thought, you will be able to: describe the trajectory and change over time of the Catholic religious tradition; develop an understanding of the theological, sociocultural, and aesthetic influences which forge Catholic intellectual thought; and synthesize and defend a position on the continuing relevance of historical Catholic theological reflection.

THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Buck)

M/W 8:00-9:15am CRN 29139

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, Augustine). Students will investigate global religious practices, beliefs, spirituality, 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 will survey religiosity in general and global religions, including Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism, their commonalities, differences, and cultural expressions. The course introduces students to the sources and thought leaders have shaped responses to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning, as well as the influence of history, culture, economics and geopolitics on religion. Students engage religious truth claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Cacchione)

M/W/F 9:35-10:25am CRN 29140

M/W/F 10:40-11:30am CRN 29141

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.

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

M/W 3:20-4:35pm CRN 29142

“Christian” and “Christianity” are ancient and complex terms (cf. Acts 11:25-27). Questions such as “What does it mean to be a Christian?” will undoubtedly receive various responses depending upon to whom and in what context they are asked. As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational Theology course asks you to consider several important aspects of what it means to be a Christian (in terms of faith, reason, and faith-based action, i.e., ethics), even as it also asks you to consider several important ways in which Christians have influenced and have been influenced by the cultures in which they have lived. Likewise, this course asks you to analyze several important beliefs and practices that Christians have accepted, both as they have developed through the past twenty centuries and as they continue to develop in our day. This course will do these things via a selection of primary texts, contemporary social commentary (via various media), required communal “faith and culture”

events (which will take place during class time), and focused discussions, many of which will draw directly upon either select Christian thinkers or select critics of Christianity or both. Specifically, this course will look closely at some of Christianity's attempts to explain itself to itself as well as to both its cultural (i.e., its intellectual, social, and political) skeptics and its overt enemies. This course will also look at some attempts to construct ways of living which regard (traditional) Christianity as irrelevant, outdated, or (intellectually) exhausted. Along the way, this course will model some of the tools necessary for participating in cultural and intellectual debates that directly or indirectly intersect with Christianity's primary claims and/or values.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Graham)

T/TH 2:00-3:45pm CRN 29143

T/TH 4:00-5:15pm CRN 29144

This core course introduces students to the sources, traditions, practices, and thinkers that have shaped Catholic responses to God, and we will use resources within the field of Catholic theology to explore the broader thrust of Catholicism as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in a range of cultural contexts.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (O'Donnell)

M/W/F 9:35-10:25am CRN 29145

M/W/F 10:40-11:30am15 CRN 29159

From the singular word "Catholicism" emerge countless definitions, approaches, and expectations. A system of faith, a community of believers, a hierarchical institution, a historical tradition, or a set of moral codes might come to mind. Pinning down just what we mean by the term Catholicism remains an unwieldy task. Our section of this course offers a path into this topic through considering the marks of the Roman Catholic Church: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, as professed in its creed. Through an exploration of the meanings of, manifestations of, and challenges to these descriptors, we will examine some layers of this ancient, global tradition. Most of our sources for such consideration will emerge out the United States to unpack how Catholicism might be understood and experienced in the context in which we find ourselves studying it. Our readings and discussions will help us to explore Catholicism and its rich mix of beauty, challenge, and grace.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Faggioli)

M/W 1:55-3:10pm CRN 29146

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 (Tumanan)

M/W/F 10:40-11:30am CRN 29147

What comes to mind when we hear words related to faith or religion, such as prayer, faith, sin, church, mission, mosque, sanctuary, temple, synagogue, hijab, priest, imam, rabbi, or guru? Do these words evoke feelings of belonging, or do they trigger fear and suspicion? Do they feel close to our hearts, or do they create a sense of alienation? Or perhaps we regard them as relics of ancient and obsolete rituals, disconnected from today's modern, technologically advanced world. This course will challenge these assumptions, exploring the idea that religion is far more than just holy sites, rites, liturgies, or holidays. Through this course, we will seek to understand why religion and faith evoke such diverse perceptions, emotions, and reactions. At the core of this inquiry is the reality that religion and faith are inseparable from culture—a powerful force that shapes our intellect, emotions, and actions. Faith and religion, for instance, influence areas often considered unrelated to them, such as science, art, politics, the environment, and even economics and business. Together, we will explore how faith and religion contribute to constructing—or deconstructing—these fields.

Religion and faith are also central to defining what it means to be human and how we define our identities and build our communities and societies. They shape our understanding of boundaries, influencing assumptions and emotions related to attachment and detachment, as well as determining who is considered a friend or an enemy. In this sense, religion and faith have long been forces that both foster peace and fuel conflict, violence, and even death. Through the framework of peace and justice studies, this course will investigate how religion defines spaces and boundaries and how ongoing struggles are sought to redefine them. By critically examining these dynamics, we will gain deeper insights into the complex roles that faith and religion play in shaping our world and its cultures.

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

T/TH 1:00-2:15pm CRN 29148

THL1000: Faith, Reason and Culture (Bolarte)

M/W 8:00-9:15am CRN 29149

M/W 1:55-3:10pm CRN 29150

This foundational course offers students opportunities to describe and interpret the living traditions, beliefs, and practices of the Catholic Church and how they interact in our lives. Students are guided through theological reflection on the diagnosis of current realities and their theological and philosophical underpinnings, as well as the call for personal action.

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

M/W 4:45-6:00pm CRN 29151

In this course, students will: 1. Explore & synthesize foundational Judeo-Christian concepts, doctrines, and discourses; 2. Distinguish & apply major ethical frameworks and their influence on theology and culture, and 3. Identify & illustrate the relationship between faith and culture. Students will be encouraged to critically evaluate the ideas, doctrines, frameworks, and philosophies presented through

affirmation, challenging, or offering alternatives. Additionally, students will be asked to construct logical and coherent arguments for their cultural and religious positions, recognizing the influence of various theological and secular sources explored throughout the semester. The course readings and assignments will foster creative exploration and experimentation with opinions and perspectives on current social issues. There is not prerequisite knowledge of Christianity required, nor is any faith commitment necessary. This course is suitable for those seeking a general introduction to the various branches of Christian and ethical thought, as well as for those considering future specialization in these fields.

THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Knauss)

T/TH 2:30-3:45pm CRN 29152

T/TH 4:00-5:15pm CRN 29153

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. Our attention is both on the global diversity of religious traditions we might be familiar with (e.g. Christianity in South Africa), and how “the global” shapes the local in terms of the religious plurality shaping our society (e.g. Buddhism in the west). In this course, we think about religion as something that people do, and that we therefore have to study in relation to culture. Whether you have a commitment to a particular religious community or not, understanding the religious traditions, practices and beliefs we encounter in our particular context or through our global entanglements with others, is an essential element in our capacity to understand the world, our own place in it, and our relationship with others. Through the course of this term, we will discuss fundamental dimensions of what religions are about (power, gender, beliefs, rituals, texts) and discuss them in conversation with the religious experiences of people and cultures across the globe as they are expressed in films. 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 1000: Faith, Reason, and Culture (Thomas)

M/W 1:55- 3:10pm CRN 29154

This course will examine the relationship between faith, reason, and culture in Christianity. This course will be centered on the four topics of scripture, tradition, sacraments, and Christian life. Students will gain an understanding of role of scripture in Christianity, diverse approaches to scripture, as well as scholarly approaches to the historical and literary issues regarding scripture. Students will gain a cursory understanding of the major doctrines and the historical contexts in which they were formulated. They

will also learn the major milestones in the history of Christianity with a special goal to understand Christian diversity in our present context. Students will also gain an understanding of the major Christian practices. Finally, students will examine various approaches to ethical questions with a special focus on Catholic Social Teaching.

THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Akis)

M/W/F 8:30-9:20am CRN 29156

M/W/F 9:35-10:25am CRN 29155

The study of religion is the study of a rich and fascinating dimensions of human experience that includes but goes well beyond beliefs and ritual practices. In this dynamic course, students will engage with compelling case studies that illuminate the internal diversity within religious traditions, tracing their evolution across time and space. From ancient civilizations to contemporary societies, we investigate how religions intricately interweave with every facet of human life. With a focus on both Christian and non-Christian traditions, participants will immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of religious practices, beliefs, and cultural phenomena.

THL 1000: Catholic Studies (Brunk)

M/W/F 12:50-1:40pm CRN 29157

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.

As the Vatican put it in 2013:

"It must be pointed out that teaching the Catholic religion in schools has its own aims, different from those of catechesis. In fact, while catechesis promotes personal adherence to Christ and maturing of the Christian life, school teaching gives the students knowledge about Christianity's identity and the Christian life. Thus, one aims to enlarge the area of our rationality, to reopen it to the larger questions of the truth and the good, to link theology, philosophy and science between them in full respect for the methods proper to them and for their reciprocal autonomy, but also in the awareness of the intrinsic unity that holds them together."

This course is intended to be an introduction to theology. Whatever your beliefs, you are welcome. This is not a course in catechism or Sunday school. It is a critical examination of the theological claims and devotional practices of the Christian tradition. No questions are off the table.

With a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, students engage Christianity as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in local and global cultural and religious contexts and that, loyal to the living God to which they point, are ready to be transformed again. Students engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. In this course, students are equipped to appreciate the ongoing quest of Christian faith seeking understanding as it enters into conversation with all human knowledge and experience, including other faith / religious traditions.

We read in the Mission Statement of Villanova University: "Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the University is grounded in the wisdom of the Catholic intellectual tradition and advances a deeper understanding of the relationship between faith and reason." From this mission, "Faith, Reason, and Culture" acquires its unique significance in the curriculum of the University. Through the exploration

of classic texts, central ideas, and the historical development of Christian theology, students are equipped for the practice of critical reflection on the person and work of Jesus Christ, the revelation of the Triune God, the nature and interpretation of Scripture, and the contours of Christian faith and morality. Throughout the course we will address the role of faith and reason in cultures ranging from biblical times to modern times.

THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Yaman)

TH 6:15-8:55pm CRN 29162

Religion has shaped human societies for millennia, influencing architecture, social structures, and daily life. This course explores the material remains of religious practices and rituals across different cultures and historical periods, from prehistoric burial rites to grand temple complexes. Through case studies spanning ancient Mesopotamia, the Mediterranean, and Asia, we will examine how archaeology reconstructs sacred spaces, divine iconography, and ritual performances. Key topics include the role of pilgrimage, sacred landscapes, funerary customs, and the interaction between religion and politics. By analyzing archaeological evidence like temples, altars, votive offerings, inscriptions, and sacred texts, students will gain insights into how past peoples experienced the divine and structured their spiritual worlds.

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

M/W 2:45-4:00pm CRN 29158

This course is structured around active and engaged discourse between students and professor. This means that while there will be some lecture, for the vast majority of class time, students will be expected to be actively engaged in discussion either in small groups or in the larger class discussion formats. Each week students will read, analyze, and critically reflect on a diverse range of sources and come to class ready to engage with their peers in meaningful and in-depth conversations and academic discourse. Topics range from “What is Religion?” and “The Nature of Existence” to the need for diverse voices both within the tradition as well as in our larger cultural narrative. Ultimately, this course invites students to examine their own beliefs/ideology and ask themselves, “Why do I believe, what I believe?”

THL 1000: Global Religious Experience (Green)

T/TH 2:30-3:45pm CRN 29160

T/TH 4:00-5:15pm CRN 29161

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 and justice. Be prepared to introspect on deep issues of faith and justice; topics which maybe uncomfortable which we are now affected by globally. Group collaboration is a key ingredient to successful conversations in this class for presentations.

With a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, students engage Christianity as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in local and global cultural and religious contexts and that, loyal to the living God to which they point, are ready to be trans-formed again. Students investigate religious (faith) truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as re-sources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. In this course, students are equipped to appreciate the

ongoing quest of Christian (religious) faith seeking understanding as it enters into conversation with all human knowledge and experience, including other faith/religious traditions.

In this particular section of the course, you will use historical, religious, theological, and social science approaches to studying the relationship between theology and popular culture. You will also examine contemporary North American culture with the goal of developing ways to discern images of God, human nature, good and evil, salvation, and life beyond death that often operate below the surface of the common cultural life in North America.

THL 2300: Introduction to the New Testament (Schrader Polczer)

M/W 3:20-4:35pm CRN 29167

This course surveys the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, as well as their ancient Jewish, Hellenistic and Roman context. Students will be introduced to multiple scholarly approaches to these texts, including historical criticism, textual criticism, feminist criticism, and postcolononial criticism.

THL 2490: THM: Bible in History and Theology (Walsh)

M/W/F 11:45-12:35pm CRN 29168

The course is a survey of the major themes and characters of the Bible and their impact on human history and Christian theology. It examines the archaeology and culture of biblical times, and the role the Bible has played in the Reformation, the founding of America, and in contemporary, popular culture.

THL 3790: THM: Mary and the Saints: A course on Grace (Caponi)

4:45-6:00pm CRN 29169

How does someone become a saint? Did Mary 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 Scripture, we will explore the theology and cult of Mary and the saints. Special attention is given to the traditions and teachings 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.

THL 3790: Mary and the Saints (Murdoch)

11:30-12:45pm CRN 29170

In this course, we will explore the profound theological and spiritual significance of Mary, the Mother of God, and the saints within the Catholic tradition. Through an in-depth examination of scriptural titles for Mary, we will delve into her many roles which offer a unique perspective on her place in salvation history. The course will investigate several major Marian apparitions, including Our Lady of Fatima, Lourdes, Champion (Wisconsin), Guadalupe, and Kibeho, to understand their messages and impact on the Church. We will engage with contemporary reflections on pilgrimage through Martin Sheen's movie "The Way," considering how the themes of journey and spiritual quest are embodied in both Marian devotion and the lives of the saints. Additionally, the course will cover the lives of several saints,

including St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Padre Pio, and Blessed Carlo Acutis among others, offering insights into their contributions to the Church and their enduring influence on Catholic spirituality.

THL 4490: THM: Stewardship and the Bible (Griffin)

T/TH 10:00-11:15am CRN 29171

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 4490: THM: Christian Ethics (Lloyd)

T/TH 4:00-5:15pm CRN 29172

The 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 issues such as the climate crisis to histories of racism, from parenthood to poverty, the course samples leading scholarship being written on Christian ethics today.

THL 4550: The Contemplative Tradition (Laird)

T/TH 11:30-12:45pm CRN 29173

How do we search for God who is already, as St. Augustine says, “closer to me than I am to myself”? This course is a sustained exploration of this very question. By examining ancient Christian texts on the cultivation of inner peace, in the face of whatever life brings our way, we will come to a deeper understanding of the roots of our own of anxieties, self-doubt, self-loathing, depression, among other inner afflictions. But more than just this, we will learn that there is something practical to do about this suffering: the ancient art of the practice of contemplation.

Like Buddhism and Hinduism, Christianity likewise has a sophisticated tradition of cultivating interior stillness and peace by *drawing to stillness the inner noise that creates and sustains not only much of the suffering and anxiety within each of us but also maintains the sense that God is far away* (or doesn’t exist at all). This interior stillness facilitates the deepening of personal identity and ultimately the overcoming of the sense of separation from God and others. Union with God is not something we acquire but gradually come we realize *as always been the case*.

THL4990: THM: Stewardship of Creation (Purcaro)

T/TH 8:30-9:45am CRN 29174

This course presents Catholic Social Teaching on the environment, centering on Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si*, "On Care for our Common Home" and enhanced by *Laudate Deum*, Praise God. The course follows the methodology employed in the Encyclical: See-Judge-Act; and encourages involvement in sustainability activity by students. We will treat the Sustainable Development Goals identified by the community of nations and how achieving them depends highly on an ethos of sustainable living. The SDG's will be presented in relationship to the seven goals promoted by the *Laudato Si* Action Plan of the Dicastery for Integral Development of the Vatican. We will consider the particularly Augustinian contribution to this topic.

THL 4990: THM: Sports and Spirituality (Hastings)

T/TH 8:30-9:45am CRN 29175

This course will explore the many ways sports can help us become more whole persons and link us more closely with God. By reflecting, reading and discussing students will discover the connections between mind, body and spirit that are inherent in sports. The class will use movies, videos, and guest speakers to help us explore these themes and topics.

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

Monday 6:15-8:55pm CRN 29177

Creativity and contemplative practices, both growing phenomena in theological and religious studies, have particular potential to infuse our daily lives with a palpable sense of the Spirit's presence. In this intensive seminar, we explore their profound impact on our awareness and every aspect of our daily lives. This seminar is designed to deepen your attention to your heart's ways of knowing and seamlessly integrate contemplative and creative practices into your academic pursuits and the world beyond, both during and after your studies here at Villanova. Throughout this seminar, we will study the roots of contemplative practices and how they inspire every facet of our existence, inviting us to breathe in the essence of the Divine. We will learn and practice reflective and *lectio divina* styles of reading, writing, gazing, and listening, allowing us to cultivate a more profound understanding of our world—and all its inhabitant's—underlying beauty. At the culmination of your journey, you will embark on a unique expressive arts project, sharing your creative insights with your fellow participants at the semester's end.

THL 4990: THM: How to do Nothing (Smith)

T/TH 2:30-5:35pm CRN 29176

Time is a spiritual problem. For many of us, our relationship to time is one of panicked counting and accounting. Some of us might imagine time as a container we must fill with "stuff" in order to prove our worth. Contemplative traditions have taught how to practice stillness, how to hone attention so we can see what is before our eyes, remain present in the moment. They have taught the high art of doing 'nothing.'

This course is an experiment. Not only are we going to study contemplative texts and practices from cross-cultural contexts, religious and philosophical, we are going collaborate on an art and politics of contemplation. Our resources include poetry, music, and visual art.

THL 5001: THM Presence/Absence of God (O'Donnell)

M/W/F 8:30-9:20am CRN 29178

In this course, we will explore meanings, perceptions and experiences of God through a close look at literary writing. Who is God? How do human beings seek and encounter God? Where might God be found and in what contexts might it feel impossible to locate God? Using a variety of genres, but with a focus on poetry, short stories, and essays, students will investigate these questions through a study of human relationships, death and grief, joy, mystical experience, nature, and other aspects of human life.

THL 5003: THM: Hispanics in the US Catholic Church (Bolarte)

M/W 3:20-4:35pm CRN 29179

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: Thomas Merton (Hastings)

T/TH 11:30-12:45pm CRN 29180

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: Catholic Social Thought (Beyer)

T/TH 1:00-2:15pm CRN 29181

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: Catholic Ethics (Graham)

Tuesday/Thursday 1:00-2:15pm CRN 29182

Catholic ethics underwent something of a revolution during the 20th century. From the late 1800s to the eve of the Second Vatican Council, the neo-Thomist manualists dominated the field of Catholic ethics and coupled with the official ecclesiastical approval granted the manuals they achieved a theological unification and homogenization probably unprecedented in the Catholic Church's history. By the early 1960s, however, the neo-Thomist manuals fell into disrepute and the remarkable synthesis the

manualists had achieved was dead. What emerged afterward was a robust pluralism that continues to this day. Part of this course is designed to introduce students to this pluralism and the many theological avenues taken by Catholic ethicists recently.

The main thrust of this course is a critical assessment of certain strands of contemporary Catholic ethics, which is ultimately geared toward determining whether, or to what degree, these versions of Catholic ethics are relevant, cogent, and persuasive today. So, the bulk of our attention will be on contemporary ethicists and Catholic religious figures who have attained prominence in the field of Catholic ethics.

THL 5004: THM: Black Theology and Black Power (Lucky)

M/W 4:45-6:00pm CRN 21184

Even as a Christian Nation, The United States engages in a long-standing practice of the production and consumption of “Racist Ideas.” In this course, we will explore the implications of “Racist Ideas” historically imbedded within the American legal system and government policies. We will juxtapose those ideas and practices against the backdrop of American/African-American History. We will examine how Christianity and the United States Justice System have been used as a means to justify slavery and the recurring discriminatory practices that are still seen today. As we study together, we will engage the Bible, historical literature, visual art and films to explore key topics from a Theological perspective (to include: racism, antiracism and humanity).

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

T/TH 1:00-2:15pm CRN 29183

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 attentive practices. The course has five units: (I) Attention and Spirituality; (II) Attention to the World; (III) Attention to Self; (IV) Attention to Others, and (V) Attention to God/the Holy.

THL 5004: THM: Race, Gender and Christian Bioethics (McDonald Kennedy)

W 6:15-8:55pm CRN 29186

This course engages the intersection of Christian bioethics and Christian social ethics with a focus on structural injustices related to racial and gender discrimination in healthcare. From disparities in access to the physical toll of racism and sexism, the course will delve into the array of ways that inequalities persist in healthcare domestically and globally. The course will reflect on historical horrors of racial and gender discrimination in medicine, including the eugenics movement, forced sterilizations, and the Tuskegee syphilis study. In exploring contemporary biotechnologies, including gene editing and algorithmic medicine, we will consider what Christian commitments related to justice, human dignity and embodiment can contribute to public discourse on medicine, healthcare, and the common good.

THL 5004: THM: Theology Capital and Injustice (Grimes)

T/TH 11:30-12:45pm CRN 29185

In the present course, we will explore what theology has to offer by way of a critique of capitalism, as manifested historically and in the present, with a focus on recognizing, understanding, and undoing the structural injustices endemic to its logic and systems. Christianity's 'preferential option for the poor' and vision of the 'reign of God', based upon Jesus of Nazareth's life and ministry, as well as Catholicism's holistic worldview, offer a fundamental reproach to the flawed anthropological assumptions of capitalism, as a political and economic system; while offering alternative ordering principles, orientation, and living witness to a truly just vision of society, marked by love of God, neighbour, and all of Creation. We will engage thinkers who offer fundamental insights as to the violence, exploitation, and systemic abuse of power, essential to capitalism, particularly in its Neoliberal form; linking these insights to real-world examples of how this affects all people, but especially the oppressed and marginalized; while envisioning and experimenting with socially just models and understandings that can bring about authentic societal transformation. These models are based upon a combination of virtue ethics, new economic approaches, the thought of Thomas Aquinas, Catholic Social Teaching, and an understanding of Jesus's vision of the reign of God.

THL 5005: African Political Theology (Olokunboro)

M/W/F 12:50-1:40pm CRN 29187

There has been a sustained intellectual discourse on the political agency of Christianity, the politics of Christianity, and the theology of political power in Africa. The intellectual consciousness about these distinct areas of intersection of politics and theology in African public space has informed the three major trajectories of Political Theology in Africa. These areas of intersection either lend themselves toward a tension between political theory and theology or an overlap or cooperation between both. This course is interested in those trajectories, their methods, and their outcomes.

To properly delineate these trajectories, the various forms of intersection between politics and theology, to arrive at/reclaim the true meaning of political theology in Africa against its ambivalent description, this course will tease out the landscape of African Political Theology. By so doing, it will explore areas such as 'secular political theology in Africa,' which focuses on non-theological works that engage the partisanship and political power acquisitive tactics of Christianity in Africa. This course will also examine the scheme of 'divinized politics in Africa,' which deals with the 'theology' of political power, particularly the use of Christian framework to authenticate political power's leviathan disposition and absoluteness of political power. It will also examine the intersection of politics and theology that deals with the social transformative force of Christianity in Africa. This area of intersection, which has three strata is the primary focus of this course. In discussing this area, with its guiding question: "how is the massively Christian continent of Africa, in many ways, a distressed continent?" this course will engage theological works that deal with the difference Christianity should make or makes in the African political landscape. In other words, it will subject the various socio-political stressors in Africa, for example, violence and poverty, and the stories behind them to the critical lens of theology that speaks about God. It will engage theologically the cause of African continent being a mixture of the joy of the gospel, Christian flourishing, and the acute presence of violence and human deprivation.

THL 5005: THM: The Bible and Literature (Anolik)

Tuesday 6:15-8:55pm CRN 29192

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 (human) text, embarking upon the approach outlined in Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, and applying this 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; 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 5005: THM: Early Chinese Politics and Religion Thought (Wong)

T/TH 10:00-11:15am CRN 29188

This course introduces students to the diversity of views found in Chinese religio-ethical traditions and political philosophies, including the distinctive virtue ethical views of classical Confucians, the conceptions of a "state of nature" offered in the texts of the *Mozi* and the *Xunzi*, Daoist accounts of the inherent goodness of human nature and its implications for medicine and education, and Legalist strategies for governmental control. We will examine the profound ways in which early Chinese traditions influenced each other and were shaped by the critiques of competing schools of thought. We will also evaluate the degree of influence that traditional Chinese philosophy has had on contemporary East Asian cultures, and the ways that Chinese religious and political thought is debated today in proposals for alternative approaches to global economic relations, spiritual and moral formation amid value pluralism, and autocratic or democratic governance.

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

M/W/F 11:45-12:35pm CRN 29189

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 offers a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted ways in which religion has functioned within Middle Eastern societies, spanning from ancient, pre-Islamic practices to contemporary dynamics. We begin our journey by unraveling the rich tapestry of religious heritage, including the Zoroastrianism of the Persian Empire, the evolution of Judaism among the ancient Israelites, and the spread of Christianity within the eastern Roman Empire. Throughout the semester, our

exploration aims to cultivate a deeper awareness and understanding of the myriad factors contributing to the vast diversity of experiences among the peoples of the Middle East. Through the lens of religion, we dissect the intricate interplay of historical, cultural, and socio-political forces that have shaped the region. From religion's instrumental role in conquests, kingdom formations, and empire building to its enduring influence as a cultural force transcending religious boundaries, we analyze the pervasive impact of religion on the fabric of Middle Eastern societies. This course invites students to critically engage with the complexities of religious heritage and contemporary dynamics, gaining insights into the profound significance of religion as a powerful force shaping the identity and destiny of the Middle East.

THL 5005: THM: Orientalism and Religion (Akis)

M/W/F 12:50-1:40pm CRN 29190

The concept of Orientalism, as articulated by the influential literary scholar Edward Said in his seminal work "Orientalism" (1978), encapsulates a Western framework for exerting dominance, restructuring, and asserting authority over the Orient. Said defines it as "the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." Grounded in a meticulous examination of Said's foundational text, this course critically engages with the manifold ways in which Orientalism has profoundly influenced perceptions of religion in the Middle East. From interrogating the nexus between Orientalism and religion to scrutinizing critiques of Said's thesis, this course endeavors to illuminate overlooked dimensions of inquiry within his discourse. Moreover, we will explore the contemporary Western conceptions of Orientalism and how they continue to shape attitudes towards the Middle East and its religious traditions. To unravel misconceptions perpetuated by Orientalist frameworks, we will employ a diverse range of mediums, including Western movies, art, and music. By analyzing portrayals of the Middle East in popular culture, we aim to deconstruct stereotypes and challenge preconceived notions, fostering a more nuanced understanding of the region and its religious dynamics.

THL 5100: THM: Jewish Myst/Kabbalah (Hecker)

M/W 4:45-6:00pm CRN 29193

Does God care? Does He (sic) listen to our prayers? God is all-powerful; really? God is delicious! Divinity is luminescence. Sexual bliss is true knowledge of God. Contemplation is the highest form of worship. God is unknowable. Uncover the mystery! Heal God's fragments!

This survey course aims to introduce students to the primary modes of Jewish mystical literature. We will investigate the issues that animate the thinkers behind the texts (as well as their audiences); the extent to which context vs. continuity supports innovations; the ways in which Biblical and Rabbinic metaphors, imagery, and values get transmuted in the medieval and then Early Modern Periods. Beginning with the theophanies of Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, through opaque rabbinic and early medieval "Palace Mysticism," we will spend much of our time studying the kabbalah of the *Zohar*, central and canonical text of Jewish mysticism. Moving forward through the Baroque structures of 16th century Safed and then concluding with the Mysticism of Eastern Europe in which eating gets highlighted as a form of integration with Divinity.

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

T/TH 11:30-12:45pm CRN 29194

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 5170: Islamic Philosophy and Theology (Inati)

T/TH 2:30-3:45pm CRN 29195

This course is an overview of the history of Islamic philosophy and theology, tracing their development and concentrating particularly on the conflict and heated debates between the two. Their impact on Christian and Jewish thought as well as later Islamic thought will be pointed out. The reason(s) for the decline of Islamic philosophy in modern times will also be discussed.

Videos, visits to mosques, and discussions of current events related to the course are included.

THL 5180: Islamic Political Thought (Inati)

T/TH 10:00-11:15am CRN 29196

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: THM Power Dynamics in The New Testament (Cacchione)

M/W/F 8:30-9:20am CRN 29197

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 believers 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 from secondary sources will introduce these various topics, and 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: THM: Bible and Sustainability (Abubakar)

M/W/F 9:35-10:25am CRN 29198

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.