

**THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEPARTMENT**  
**FALL 2026**

*Courses as of 2/20/26 – Please continue to check Master Schedule for latest updates.*

**THEOLOGY UPPER-LEVEL COURSES**

**THL 2490: WOMEN, GENDER & CHRISTIAN ORIGIN (Elizabeth Schrader Polczer)**  
**MW 1:55-3:10PM**

This course introduces undergraduates to the primary female characters described in the New Testament and early Christian extracanonical literature. Surveyed works will address the topic of gender in Early Christianity, as well as relevant secondary literature in modern scholarship.

*Attributes: Core Theology, Gender & Women Studies, Unitas 2*

**THL 2590: AFTER THE APOSTLES (John Cacchione)**  
**MWF 10:40-11:30AM**

“AFTER THE APOSTLES” deeply immerses students into the life of the first- and second-century Church mainly by means of critically reading primary-source texts, in most cases, in their entirety. These texts include writings by the “Apostolic Fathers,” Saint Justin Martyr, and Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. Works by the “Apostolic Fathers” comprise a fascinating and varied collection, and some of the earliest almost found their way into the New Testament. Among other items, we find an early “manual” on Christian spiritual life and praxis, a highly unique piece of allegorical literature by a layman, an epistle by an early pope to a local church in Greece, a series of letters written by a prominent Syrian bishop while chained to Roman soldiers transporting him to Rome for execution at the Colosseum, and an account of the martyrdom about a half-century later of a bishop from Asia Minor to whom one of these letters was personally addressed. In the second century, Christian writers began to compose “apologies”—reasoned defenses of the Christian faith—for an audience of educated pagans. Students will examine three examples, including two by the greatest apologist of the age, Saint Justin Martyr, who addressed one to a reigning Roman Emperor and one to the Roman Senate. Finally, the course will examine selections from the surviving works of Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, works whose content and character cause many to hail him as the first Christian theologian.

Reading these texts will elucidate the early Church’s challenges from Judaism, Graeco-Roman culture, the imperial Roman state, and alternative heretical teachings during the later first century and the second century and illustrate how the early Church refined its own teachings and self-understanding in response to these challenges. (This focus allows the course to be situated within the “Theology and Culture” track of upper-level Theology courses.) Additionally, consideration of where and how the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* cites and references these foundational post-scriptural texts will highlight the Catholic Church’s continued reliance on these ancient writings in connection with its practices and beliefs today. (This focus allows the course also to be situated within the “Catholic Studies” track of upper-level Theology courses.)

*Attributes: Core Theology*

**THL 2780: DEFENDING THE FAITH: THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS (Francis Caponi)**

**MW 4:45-6:00PM**

Jesus and his chief apostles set out the fundamental principles of Christian apologetics: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” (1 Peter 3:15), and “my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Faith arises from and is nurtured by the grace of the Holy Spirit and the persuasive witness of believers; an indispensable part of that witness is the rational explanation and defense of the Gospel; and so Christian theology must always proceed with an ear for false understandings and worthy objections, and a cautious eye for the cultural resources available for its response.

In this course, we will examine the history of Christian apologetics, beginning with the New Testament. Major figures in this history include St. Justin Martyr, Origen of Alexandria, and St. Augustine of Hippo; St. John of Damascus, Theodore Abu Qurrah, and St. Thomas Aquinas; Hugo Grotius, Blaise Pascal, and Friedrich Schleiermacher; St. John Henry Newman, G.K. Chesterton, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Major themes include the relationship of belief and evidence, prophecy, miracles, philosophical and scientific arguments for God’s existence, history and historiography, and the resources opened up by artistic and literary imagination. In addition to studying great apologetical texts, students (individually and in groups) will practice apologetics through written and oral engagement with a series of pastoral situations they are likely to encounter at Villanova and beyond.

*Attributes: Core Theology, Africana Studies, Arab & Islamic Studies, Gender & Women’s Studies*

**THL 3400: SACRAMENTS (Tim Brunk)**

**MWF 11:45-12:35PM**

This course is a treatment of the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. We will draw attention to the history of their understanding and practice, as well as to contemporary issues and questions about sacraments. Though this course will address all seven sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, reconciliation, anointing of the sick, matrimony, holy orders), we will investigate Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist in greater detail. Some of you may not be Catholic or even Christian. Some of you who may be Catholic may not be familiar with the aspects of Catholic worship this course will address. I will always try not to presume too much about what students already know. Everyone is welcome.

*Attributes: Core Theology*

**THL 3790: CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE (John Lozano)**

**T/TH 1:00-2:15PM**

The focus of this course is on the intersection of "Christianity" and "Marriage." What does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean to be "married"?

Christian beliefs, such as the Incarnation, profoundly affect our understanding of the world, the human body, sexuality, and spirituality within married life. Belief forms our understanding of marriage; at the same time, the lived experience of marriage forms our understanding of faith.

Additionally, we will explore this interplay within the most fundamental daily experiences of marriage, such as communication, finances, sexuality, and spirituality. These daily human experiences also shape our belief: how we believe affects how we live, and how we live affects how we believe. Our focus will be an honest and open examination of the relationship between faith and the human experience of marriage.

*Attributes: Core Theology*

### **THL 3790: MARY AND THE SAINTS (Jessica Murdoch)**

**T/TH 1:00-2:15PM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology*

### **THL 4490: STEWARDSHIP AND BIBLE (Dan Griffin)**

**T/TH 8:30-9:45AM**

**T/TH 10:00-11:15AM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology*

### **THL 4490: THEOLOGY AND BLACK POWER (Timmy Lucky)**

**MW 4:45-6:00PM**

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).

*Attributes: Core Theology*

### **THL 4490: CHRISTIAN ETHICS (Vincent Lloyd)**

**T/TH 11:30-12:45PM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology, Africana Studies, Peace & Justice*

### **THL 4550: THE CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION (Fr. Martin Laird)**

**T/TH 10:00-11:15PM**

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*.

*Attributes: Core Theology*

**THL 4990: STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION (Fr. Art Purcaro)**

**T/TH 8:30-9:45AM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology, Geography and the Environment, Humanities, Latin American Studies, Peace & Justice, Social Science, Sustainability-Humanities, Stem*

**THL 4990: SPORTS AND SPIRITUALITY (Edward Hastings)**

**T/TH 8:30-9:45AM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology*

**THL 4990: HOW TO DO NOTHING (Rachel Smith)**

**T/TH 4:00-5:15PM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology*

**THL 4990: GOD IN SPANGLISH (Hector Varela Rios)**

**T/TH 2:30-3:45PM**

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

*Attributes: Core Theology*

### **THL 5000: RELIGION AND INCARCERATION (Rebecca Makas)**

**MW 1:55-3:10PM**

With 2.3 million Americans incarcerated, examining the intersection of religion and incarceration is a vital part of understanding religion in America. One of the most diverse populations in terms of race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status, the prison environment magnifies and illuminates foundational questions regarding power, privilege, and the practice of religion in America. For example, the question “what counts as religion?” is particularly consequential in prison, as it illustrates who is free to practice their religion and which religious rights are protected. Similarly, “How does race affect religion or religious freedom?” is highlighted by anxieties of prison officials regarding traditionally black forms of Islam. Addressing these and other questions in depth, this course explores the religious lives of men and women who are incarcerated and the theology and practices of prison ministry groups. Through reading memoirs and other primary source documents, we will analyze how prison affects one’s religious practice, understanding of religion, and desire for spiritual care, both while incarcerated and after release. In addition to reading texts by formerly incarcerated people, students will explore our two course foci through texts by spiritual leaders and examining the wide array of spiritual programming available in prison.

*Attributes: Core Theology*

### **THL 5001: PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF GOD (Gregory Grimes)**

**T/TH 11:30-12:45PM**

This course will explore the essential questions of God. Particularly, the focus will be on God’s knowability and unknowability, presence and elusivity. We will examine questions of modern atheism/agnosticism and secularization, and how theology has handled these ongoing challenges. We will then embark upon fundamental questions of who or what God is and is not, how God can and cannot be known, attributes of God, the God/human relationship, and an understanding of God as Trinity. We will also ask fundamental questions concerning God, such as the ‘problem of evil’ and why God allows suffering, and mysteries of how God reveals and conceals Godself. We will also examine what Christianity claims about God’s promise of eternal life and the consummation of Creation (eschatology). We will end by exploring traditions of Christian spirituality, mysticism, and contemplation that offer ways of entering more deeply into the life of God, and how this can be transformational for daily life.

*Attributes: Core Theology, Unitas 1, Peace and Justice*

**THL 5003: THM: HISPANICS IN THE US CATHOLIC CHURCH (Ruth Bolarte)**

**MW 8:00-9:15AM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology, Latin American Studies*

**THL 5003: THE VISION OF CHURCH OF POPES FRANCIS AND LEO (John Lydon)**

**MW 8:00-9:15AM**

How does the Catholic Church respond to the reality of our present world? What is the specific mission of proclaiming the Good News of Christ to our current context? Pope Francis challenged the Church to look at our world and work for greater participation in both society and in the church's life. Pope Leo has indicated a continuation of this vision with a different style. There is much controversy in some sectors of Church and society about the vision of these two popes. But what does each pope actually say? How do the calls of Popes Francis and Leo challenge our own thinking? This course will explore some of the main themes in both pope's writings and the influences that have led them to their respective visions. This will help us understand why this is considered by many as a paradigm shift for the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

*Attributes: Core Theology*

**THL 5003: THOMAS MERTON (Edward Hastings)**

**T/TH 11:30-12:45PM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology*

**THL 5003: CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT (Gerald Beyer)**

**MW 1:55-3:10PM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology, Peace and Justice*

#### **THL 5004: JESUS THE HEALER: NARRATIVE BIOETHICS AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**

**(Brandon Ambrosino)**

**M 6:00-8:55PM**

Many of the gospel healing narratives read like modern medical charts. The symptoms are introduced, the interventions are described, and the recovering patient is sent their way, sometimes even with home-care instructions. Readers aren't given many details. The stories, nevertheless, invite us to thicken them up, to fill them in. This requires what the physician-scholar Rita Charon calls narrative competence, "the ability to acknowledge, absorb, interpret, and act on the stories and plights of others." In this course, we will work at developing narrative competence, which is both a clinical and theological skill. Each week, we will analyze one healing narrative from the New Testament and set it in conversation with a contemporary clinical bioethics issue. Our semester-long goal will be to construct a Christian bioethics that is formed by our narrative and theological imaginations.

*Attributes: Core Theology*

#### **THL 5004: STORYTELLING AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE (Tekoa Robinson)**

**T/TH 1:00-2:15PM**

What's your story? How does the writing, telling, and performance of our stories help us to better understand our lived theologies? How are these lived theologies related to our professed theologies and how might they be in tension with our professed theologies? This interdisciplinary course will help us to explore how our various lived theologies are reflected through the stories we tell ourselves and others, and how we interpret and respond to the stories that are being told to us by individuals, institutions, artists, and algorithms, etc. We will engage in creative writing, oral storytelling, theological reflection, and cultural analysis as we develop the spiritual practice of self-reflexive reflection in order to gain deeper self-knowledge in relation to the divine, others, and the wider culture and grow our awareness of the pervasive role that human spirituality plays in the ongoing development of culture in the United States.

*Meets TRS and Fine Arts Core Curriculum requirement*

#### **THL 5004: RACE, GENDER AND CHRISTIAN BIOETHICS (Emma McDonald Kennedy)**

**W 6:15-8:55PM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology, Africana Studies, Deaf Studies Track, Unitas 1, Unitas 2, Disabilities Track, Gender & Women Studies, Health Humanities, Medical Arts*

### **THL 5005: THE BIBLE AND LITERATURE (Ruth Anolik)**

**T 6:15-8:55PM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology, JWST*

### **THL 5005: AFRICAN POLITICAL THEOLOGY (Fidelis Olokunboro)**

**MWF 12:50-1:40PM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology, Africana Studies, Unitas 2*

### **THL 5005: WISDOM OF SUFISM (Yasemin Akis)**

**MWF 11:45-12:35PM**

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

*Attributes: Core Theology, Unitas 1, Unitas 3*

**THL 5005: ORIENTALISM AND RELIGION (Yasemin Akis)****MWF 12:50-1:40PM**

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.

*Attributes: Core Theology, Unitas 1, Unitas 3*

**THL: 5100: INTRO TO JUDAISM (Ethan Schwartz)****T/TH 9:00-11:20AM**

This course is an introduction to Judaism. Although we will consider certain aspects of its historical development, our primary goal will be to understand Judaism as a living, dynamic phenomenon. The course is roughly divided into four sections. First, we will establish a framework of potential definitions of "Judaism," the basic arc of Jewish history from the biblical period until today, and an overview of Jewish demographics. Second, we will look at how Jewish religious life is structured on the levels of both daily life and the liturgical calendar. Third, we will take a chronological tour of the Jewish religious library, from the Hebrew Bible to modern Jewish thought. Finally, we will undertake a variety of case studies on important Jewish ideas, cultural issues, and modern political/historical events.

*Attributes: Core Theology, JWST*

**THL: 5150: ISLAM: HISTORY, THOUGHT AND CULTURE (Shams Inati)****T/TH 2:30-3:45PM**

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.

*Attributes: Arab and Islamic Studies, Africana Studies, and Gender and Women's Studies*