THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEPARTMENT
SPRING 2027

Courses as of 10/02/26 – Please continue to check Master Schedule for latest updates.

<u>THEOLOGY MASTER'S LEVEL COURSES</u>

THL 8004: FOUNDATIONS IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS
T 11:30-1:50 PM Gerald Beyer
This course will introduce major themes, thinkers, and texts in the field of Christian ethics. It will utilize both historical and contemporary sources in order to familiarize students with the broad terrain of Christian ethics. The course aims to provide exposure to historically "canonical" thinkers of Christian ethics. It also highlights scholars that have emerged from marginalized communities in more recent memory to take their place in the "canon," such as Womanist, feminist, and Latino/a Christian ethicists.
The course does not presume background in Christian ethics. Therefore, the first part will entail an overview of the broad terrain of Christian ethics. We will use several texts to introduce the various ethical methodologies, the sources, key concepts, modes, and schools of thought of Christian ethics. Having surveyed the broad terrain, we will delve deeper into the sources of Christian ethics: the Bible, theological tradition, human experience and philosophical reasoning, underscoring different approaches to using these sources in ethical deliberation. Next, we will examine some of the major figures of the tradition, starting with Augustine, whose legacy on Christian ethics is remarkable. We will also consider the thought of Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Menno Simmons, and the Anabaptists, as each of them played a key role in the development of the Christian ethical tradition.
The second part of the course will attend to areas such as sexual ethics, social ethics, the ethics of war and peacemaking, poverty, racism, environmental ethics, and evolutionary perspectives on morality. Although each of these areas could constitute an entire course, this course will provide a foundation from which students can build in any of the subcategories of Christian ethics.
In accordance with departmental goals of our graduate courses, this course aims to "investigate the resources of the Christian theological tradition in light of the questions raised by contemporary culture and the continuing challenges of human life." Our work together aims to aid us in "forming judgments about the implications of Christian moral principles for building a more just, sustainable and peaceful world."
Area: Christian Ethics

THL 8135: THM: SCRIPTURE AND CONTEMPLATION
T 7:00-9:20 PM Peter Spitaler
How might Scripture be studied with critical rigor while also being received as a text that forms prayer, attention, and the spiritual life? This course explores the relationship between biblical interpretation and contemplative practice, bringing careful study of

Scripture into conversation with Christian traditions of attentive reading, silence, prayer, and discernment.
Students will engage fundamental questions concerning the formation, interpretation, and theological use of the Bible while examining practices that have shaped Christian approaches to Scripture across the centuries. Particular attention will be given to *lectio divina*, spiritual exegesis, and meditative reading as distinctive modes of encountering the biblical text.
The seminar will also address some of the central challenges involved in reading Scripture today, including the historical and cultural distance between ancient texts and contemporary readers, the role of tradition in interpretation, and the intellectual, theological, and ethical responsibilities that accompany the reading of Scripture within communities of faith.
Throughout the course, students will be invited to read the Bible with both intellectual discipline and spiritual attentiveness, while becoming increasingly conscious of the assumptions, habits, and commitments they bring to the interpretive process. The course is intended for students interested in contemplative approaches to Scripture and, more broadly, in the productive relationship between critical inquiry and spiritual practice.
The course also fulfills the Foundation in Biblical Studies requirement for students seeking to satisfy that component of the program.
Area: Biblical Studies

THL 8135: THE VANISHING GOD OF THE BIBLE
M 9:00-11:20 AM Carey Walsh
Biblical theology employs ideas from all portions of the canon to address contemporary religious issues. This course in biblical theology examines the problem of knowing an invisible God. With the Modern Age, the apparent absence or indifference of God is accepted on a large scale, with secularism and atheism competing with faith. Religion has been variously understood to be an opiate, (Marx), a defense mechanism or crutch (Freud), or a disguise of weakness (Nietzsche). More recent "New Atheisms" blame faith for the violence in the world. Faith in God is no longer a given but is a choice among others in the modern context. Yet, in biblical times and for much of Western history, people did believe in God's invisible presence and drew strength from their beliefs. Invisibility did not mean absence: it allowed for presence and mystery and the supernatural. One thesis of the course is that the bias of scientific empiricism has discarded these spiritual aspects as mere superstition. Yet, the biblical people did not see God any more than we moderns do. Instead, they made room for the holy invisible and learned to relate to him.
God appears in a variety of manifestations in the Bible, in theophanies that make divine presence real, but unseen. When he is finally seen in the person of his Son, Jesus in the New Testament, still it is for a brief span of a few years. The rest of the New Testament is then also speaking of a presence that is not seen. It is the goal of the course to discover what the Bible can teach modernity about discerning the holy as part of reality, of seeing life as more than what is empirically evident. It honors the challenges of atheism and returns to the Book with those challenges in mind. It is therefore a course where students can feel free to ask honest, hard questions about faith and doubt without fear.

Area: Biblical Interpretation

THL 8290: SCIENCE OF FAITH
T 2:00-4:20 PM Jessica Murdoch
This graduate seminar examines the historical, philosophical, and theological relationship between the natural sciences and the Christian faith, with particular attention to the Catholic intellectual tradition. Beginning with ancient and medieval approaches to nature, the course explores the contributions of thinkers such as Augustine, Robert Grosseteste, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Gregor Mendel to the Christian understanding of the natural world. Special attention will be given to the development of modern science and to significant episodes in the history of science and religion, including the Galileo Affair and the emergence of evolutionary theory and modern cosmology.
Students will examine contemporary scientific topics including evolution, genetics, cosmology, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence at a level accessible to those without specialized scientific training. Throughout the course, Thomas Aquinas provides an important philosophical and theological framework for considering creation, causality, divine providence, the human person, and the relationship between primary and secondary causes. The course will also consider philosophical challenges raised by scientific naturalism, reductionism, and scientism. Drawing upon Scripture, classical and medieval sources, modern scientific texts, magisterial teaching, and contemporary scholarship, students will develop the conceptual tools necessary to distinguish scientific, philosophical, and theological modes of explanation. The course ultimately asks how scientific inquiry can be understood as a genuine pursuit of truth within a Catholic vision of creation while preserving the proper integrity of both scientific and theological knowledge.
Area:

THL 8330: ETHICS OF LIFE AND DEATH
M 2:00-4:20 PM Kathryn Getek Soltis
The Christian ethical tradition is built around a core commitment to the value and dignity of life. Scripture suggests we are meant to have life and have it abundantly. How does this tradition interpret and confront matters of life and death as they emerge in circumstances both ordinary and extraordinary? This course will include a range of applied issues – from assisted reproduction to assisted suicide, from hospice care for infants to life sentences for the incarcerated. We will consider what it means to be a steward of life, to die a good death, and to grieve ethically. And how might these concerns intersect with racial and economic injustices? We will explore moral analysis from the Christian tradition while also considering the experiences of those who wrestle with these matters in the course of their lives and their ministries.
Area: Ethics

THL 8440: MODERN CHRISTIANITY IN HISTORY
M 4:30-6:50 PM Massimo Faggioli
Good theological work, whether academic theological work in systematics, spirituality, ethics, or Bible, or practical work in ministry, teaching, and service, must be historically

conscious. This course explores major themes and events in the history of Christianity from the age of the Reformations and European expansion in the late 15th century to the 20thcentury, without avoiding addressing issues in contemporary history (in German, *Zeitgeschichte*; in French, *histoire du temps présent*) such as the abuse crisis in the Church.
We will begin our discussion asking what we mean by studying history for theologians and scholars of Christianity, and we will see that this can be a rather charged question, both historically and theologically. Questions we will explore include mission, colonialism, and inculturation, reform movements and the Reformation(s), ecclesial pluralism, religion and violence, Christianity in the Enlightenment, the challenge of modern atheism, secularization, the relationship with modernity, and the "global" or "world Christianity."
We aim to gain some facility with modern Christian texts of a variety of kinds, such that we become acquainted with the multiple dimensions of modern Christianity as a phenomenon. We will treat theology as well as institutional and cultural history. We will read critical secondary source material and selective portions of primary sources, from Martin Luther to Marie-Dominique Chenu.
Diarmaid MacCulloch's massive volume, *Christianity: The First Three-Thousand Years,* has been agreed upon by the historical faculty as a useful skeleton or frame for our conversations.
Area: History

THL 8550: MEDIEVAL SPIRITUALITY
W 2:00-4:20 PM Rachel Smith
The formulation of theology from many early Christian thinkers (Evagrius, Origen, Pseudo-Dionysius) is one that sees it as a spiritual practice, a mode of writing, reading, and articulation that arises from, communicates, and facilitates a relationship with the divine. Taking these assumptions about the living nature of theology as our starting point, this course will consider "medieval spirituality" by way of the practices of reading, prayer, devotion, and communal life from the fifth through the fourteenth centuries. In concert with this attention to practices, we will consider the theologies that found and are enabled by certain kinds of practices and forms of life. These will include theologies of friendship, of sanctity, and anthropological questions about the nature and relation of body and soul. Along the way, we will note the particular places where these practices and theologies flourished: the wilderness, the anchorhold, the monastery, the street, the home, and the beguinage.
Area: Spirituality

THL 8610: MULTI-RELIGIOUS LITERACY FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN A PLURALIST SOCIETY
TH 11:30-1:50 PM Kerry San Chirico
Area:

THL 8702: TEACHING APPRENTICESHIP
By Arrangement TBD

The graduate student assists a faculty member in the TRS department in teaching a THL 1000 section. This apprenticeship is an independent study (THL 8702) with the student's Faculty Mentor. The expectations for the students serving as Assistant Teachers and their Faculty Mentors are included below. In addition, the Director of the Heart of Teaching convenes two THL 8702 cohort gatherings for communal reflection and THL 1000 syllabus development.

THL 8804: INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES
Keva Nice-Webb
Meets alternating Thursdays, 4:30-6:50 PM
1/14, 1/28, 2/11, 2/25, 3/18, 4/1, and 4/15
This course seeks to equip students to carry out ministry with sensitivity and effectiveness in the current multi-cultural context of American society. Utilizing a theological approach rooted in mutual respect and collaborative learning, and drawing on the methodology of intergroup dialogue, the course focuses on developing cultural competencies for pastoral care, worship, service, advocacy, and community life in diverse settings. Students will deepen their personal awareness of the intersectionality of identities together with their understanding of systemic injustice and interlocking social oppressions. They will develop skills for dialogue and engagement across lines of identity difference in order to more fully embody ministries of compassion and justice.
Area: MMT

THL 8882: MINISTRY FIELD EDUCATION 2
Fr. Joseph Calderone
Supervision, theological reflection, and evaluation are necessary components of an effective pastoral program. Although theological reflection can help the development of pastoral skills, its primary purpose is to interpret pastoral experience or activity in light of Scripture, tradition, personal faith, and pastoral practices. Reflection of this kind should become a lifelong habit in ministry.
Theological reflection is a conscious reflection on life experience in ministry, accomplished in the light of one's faith and theological tradition, and respectful of the thoughts and emotions evoked by the event both in the minister in those to whom they minister. The purpose of the reflection/supervision experience is to assist the student minister in integrating and interiorizing these elements of the experience of ministry.
Area: MMT (First-year students should register for this section)

THL 8884: MINISTRY FIELD EDUCATION 4
Joanne Campbell
Field Education is a central component of the Master of Ministry (MMT) program. It provides students with an opportunity to deepen vocational discernment and prepare for professional ministry within Christian, interfaith, and secular contexts.
The Ministry Field Education Supervision course supports students as they engage in supervised ministry placements that foster formation, self-awareness, and skill

development. Through structured reflection, students explore their understanding of ministry, vocation, and professional identity while integrating academic learning with lived experience.
Students reflect on the meaning and practice of ministry in relation to:

- Academic coursework
- Personal and communal formation
- Spiritual growth
- Discernment of vocation

Area: MMT (Second year students should register for this section)

THL 8999: CAPSTONE
Lori Wagner

THL 8940: INTEGRATIVE PORTFOLIO
Lori Wagner

THEOLOGY DOCTORAL LEVEL COURSES

THL 9115: AUGUSTINE AS INTERPRETER OF PAUL
W 7:00-9:20 PM Jonathan Yates
Most scholars of religion have an opinion about the Apostle Paul. This is because Paul's impact on the history of religion generally and the history of Christianity in particular—both as a theologian and as a writer—are beyond question. That Augustine of Hippo, who (re-) converted to Christianity some 320 years after Paul's death, was the most influential post-apostolic theologian and writer in (Western) Christian history is also beyond question.
At the same time, the specifics of Paul's impact on Augustine are frequently glossed: most assume that Paul must have been a significant source for Augustine, but the crucial details that help us answer questions such as why? to what degree? and in what contexts? are often bypassed. Likewise, questions about the degree to which Augustine "got" Paul—not to mention the difficulties inherent in evaluating such questions—are often treated as if they were straightforward. Suffice it to note that today, more than 1900 years after the death of Paul and nearly 1600 years after the death of Augustine, both the meaning and significance of the extant works of both of these men continue to challenge and, in some cases, bewilder their readers.
This course, via close reading and analysis of a handful of generically diverse works selected from Augustine's corpus—not to mention from Paul's letters, will pursue these and related questions even as it endeavors to illustrate the complexities inherent in reading either Paul or Augustine (much less the two of them together!) in the 21st century. We will read Augustine to better understand how Augustine read Paul and, by extension, how Paul impacted Augustine's thinking about Scripture, exegesis, doctrine, and what it means to live as a Christian in this world. By focusing on Paul's impact on Augustine, this course will seek provisional answers to two admittedly complex questions: (1) To what degree have traditional (Western) readings of Paul been (un-) intentionally shaped by Augustine? (2) To

what degree might contemporary readings of Paul, including our own, continue to be (un-) intentionally "Augustinian"?
Area: History

THL 9270: CONTEMPORARY TRAJECTORIES IN CATHOLIC ECCLESIOLOGY
TH 2:00-4:20 PM Jaisy Joseph
The twentieth century was called 'the century of the Church,' with the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) regarded as its greatest ecclesiological event. This course begins by looking at how Henri de Lubac and Yves Congar, two major figures of the *nouvelle théologie* movement, helped to lay the foundation for the ecclesiological shifts that culminated in the Council's rediscovery of the Church as *communio*. This ecclesial self-understanding can be summarized by the first lines of *Lumen Gentium*, which argues that the "Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (LG,1).
Having examined this culminating synthesis of the last century, the seminar then re-examines the traditional four marks of the Church (One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic) through a contemporary lens, questioning how they are lived out amidst modern challenges. Finally, this course will examine ecclesiologies from the global south through the lived experiences, communal structures, and liberation frameworks that shape local contexts and contribute to the wider catholicity of the church.
Area: Systematics

THL 9300: THEMES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS: LIBERATION
M 11:30-1:50 PM Vincent Lloyd
We will explore the theme of liberation from a variety of directions, asking: What does "liberation" mean in liberation theology? In what historical contexts do discourses of liberation emerge? How do secular theories of liberation deploy theological concepts of liberation? How do questions of liberation connect with questions of economy, identity, and colonialism? How does the concept of liberation travel between the Global North and the Global South, and across the Global South? How is liberation coopted by non-liberatory projects? We will be broadly interested in ways that refining our understanding of liberation can deepen the research questions of seminar participants.
Area: Ethics

THL 9500: ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION ON PLANET EARTH
W 9:00-11:20 AM Christy Lang Hearlson
Human activity has altered the planet, and today we face raging fires, freshwater scarcity, floods, soil contamination, rising temperatures, and more. In the face of such overlapping crises, ecological theologians have called for a widespread "ecological conversion" (*Laudato Si'*). In this Spirituality course, we will consider the following: Why "conversion"? What do we mean by "conversion"? What are the theological and scriptural bases for this call to *ecological* conversion? How do people and societies change, and what might theories of conversion and transformation tell us about the content and process of ecological conversion? How might ecological conversion be supported and enacted today?

Area: Spirituality

THL 9505: THEMES & METHODS STUDY OF SPIRITUALITY
T 9:00-11:20 AM Brett Grainger
Bernard McGinn writes, “The study of spirituality requires a desire to try to appreciate how religious people actually live their beliefs.” The study of "lived religion” concerns more than the study of “sacred texts” and “beliefs.” It involves learning to pay attention to what people are doing in everyday places where religion happens as a matter of practice.
This course offers a methodological introduction to the study of spirituality. We begin by addressing some big-picture questions (What is religion? What is spirituality? How do scholars study it?), followed by a multidimensional and interdisciplinary exploration of religious practice through six themes: embodiment, materiality, emotion, aesthetics, moral judgment, and narrative. In contrast with the tendency to define religion primarily as a medium for explaining, understanding, and modeling reality, we will approach religion as a “nexus of presence” and a “network of relationships between heaven and earth,” with all the attendant complexity and messiness of relationships between humans.
Through close engagement with a series of ethnographic case studies (including Roman Catholic, non-Catholic Christian, and non-Christian traditions), we will train skills in comparison and gauge the strengths and limitations of the study of spirituality as “lived religion”—an approach that begins not with creeds, scriptures, or institutions but with “thick descriptions” of human beings as they forge identity, seek solidarity, encounter beauty, create conflict, and make sense of suffering, pain, and loss in everyday life.
Area: Spirituality

THL 9610: THEOLOGIES OF RELGIOUS MULTIPLICITY
TH 9:00-11:20 AM Stephanie Wong
Area: Systematics

THL 9900: DISSERTATION WRITING
Rachel Smith

THL 9910: SYNTHESIS PORTFOLIO
Rachel Smith

THL 9911: EVALUATION PORTFOLIO
Rachel Smith

THL 9920: PROPOSAL COLLOQUIUM
Rachel Smith

THL 9930: DISSERTATION COLLOQUIUM
Rachel Smith