THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEPARTMENT
SPRING 2027

Courses as of 9/23/26 – Please continue to check Master Schedule for latest updates.

<u>THEOLOGY THL 1000 COURSES</u>

THL 1000 FAITH, REASON, AND CULTURE (Edward Hastings)
MWF 8:30-9:20 AM
MWF 10:40-11:30 AM
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 Catholic Studies (Fr. Francis Caponi)
MWF 8:30-9:20 AM
MWF 9:35-10:25 AM
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 FAITH, REASON AND CULTURE (Lori Wagner)
MWF 8:30-9:20 AM
How does faith intertwine with culture? How do we form a solid and foundational faith within the barrage of messages competing for our attention within the world? How do we express our faith within our various cultural contexts? How does reason give our faith direction and purpose? These are all questions we will explore within the parameters of this course.

Engaging Texts in neuroscience, psychology, metaphor, technology, and the nature of creativity, we will explore the ways we see, reason, and understand our faith, develop our sense of place in the world, interact with God and others, and express our faith within culture as change agents, including in storytelling, art, music, multimodality, and architecture (theology of space and place). Discussing key questions raised by Catholic and secular thinkers about culture, faith, and reason in an age of technology, we will ponder how faith fosters the human spirit, establishes identity, truth, and meaning, and builds authentic community within a world of conflicting influences.

THL 1000 CATHOLIC STUDIES (John Cacchione)
MWF 11:45-12:35 PM
MWF 12:50-1:40 PM
This course seeks primarily to provide students with grounding in the rational foundations of the Catholic faith. After defining "theology" and exploring why and how theology properly rounds out a broad-based university education, the course will analyze the operation of human reason. This will serve to introduce an exposition of "natural theology." Natural theology seeks to rely solely on human reason to demonstrate God's existence and to probe God's divine attributes. Along the way, topics such as the relation of science and religion, the nature and functions of the human soul as the constitutive reality defining human existence, and the way believers can make sense of the existence of evil will enter into this investigation. Natural theology, however, has its limits. To learn more about God than what natural theology can elucidate, one must turn to God's own self-revelation. The Catholic faith recognizes Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition as the fonts of God's self-revelation. Following a brief examination of critical aspects of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, the course will turn to "revealed theology," with specific attention to the rational examination of the fundamental teachings of Christianity collected in the Nicene Creed. These include Trinitarian theology (the unique Christian understanding of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit); Christology (with a focus on the person of Jesus Christ and on the salvific action of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection from the dead); Eschatology (with an emphasis on the "four last things" of death, judgment, heaven, and hell); and Ecclesiology (the branch of theology related to how the Church understands its own nature, purpose, and mission in the world).

THL 1000 FAITH, REASON and CULTURE (Fr. Fidelis Olokunboro)
MWF 9:35-10:25AM
MWF 10:40-11:30AM
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 GLOBAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE (Stephanie Wong)
T/TH 1:00-2:15 PM
As an integral part of the Arts & 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. In this section focusing on "Global Religious Experience," we will be investigating a wide range of religious perspectives on the questions: What are we, and from where do we come? Why do we struggle, and what are we to do about it? For what should we aspire?

THL 1000 GLOBAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE (Yasemin Akis)
MWF 9:35-10:28 PM
MWF 10:40-11:30 PM
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 GLOBAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE (John Buck)
MW 8:00-9:15AM
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 FAITH, REASON AND CULTURE (Ethan Schwartz)
MW 1:55-3:10PM

THL 1000 Global Religious Experience (Ruth Bolarte)
MW 8:00-9:15 AM
MW 3:20-4:35 PM
This foundational course invites students to explore and interpret Christian traditions, beliefs, and practices, examining how they shape and influence contemporary life. Through guided theological reflection, students analyze current realities and their underlying theological frameworks, while also discerning a personal call to action. Collaborative dialogue and group work are integral components of the learning experience.

THL 1000 FAITH, REASON AND CULTURE (Tekoa Robinson)
T/TH 10:00-11:15 AM
T/TH 11:30-12:45 PM
THL 1000 is one of the five foundational courses of the Liberal Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum. This course invites you to "explore faith, reason, and culture in their many textured relationships" (TRS Mission Statement). It 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, and how your values and commitments have been informed by the various lived theologies and spiritualities at work in U.S. culture.

This section of THL 1000 is part of the *Faith, Reason, and Culture* track. It is distinctive in that we will follow the theme of *love* in order to explore how our understandings of love are embodied in *how* we relate, *how* we see the world, and *how* we create culture. Love informs who we are, who we will become, how we make meaning and interact with culture, experience relationships (not just the romantic kind), and create and interpret suffering, joy, death, and hope. Life and culture could not exist without love as its well-spring, but what is love and what does it mean that love is the origin, critic, and redeemer of culture? What does it mean that Jesus Christ proclaimed, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)? How does the Christian understanding of love help us to understand faith in love as a particular *way of life, way of knowing, and of living*? How are love and diversity related? In order to engage with these questions, you will first be invited to reflect on your own understandings of love, where those understandings have come from, and how those understandings have informed the development and enactment of your values and commitments. We'll explore how understandings and responses to love inform the development of our own lived theologies/spiritualities, and those at work in various forms of culture. We will explore the ways that love and despair are revealed through concrete aspects of human culture, such as economics, politics, law, technology, religion, music, visual art, and film. This exploration will help us to see how various aspects of culture function as value-laden formational structures and processes that give rise to certain relational dynamics and ethical values, while obscuring others. Along the way, we will explore the complex and consequential lasting effects of these relational dynamics on the lives and well-being of individuals, families, and local and global communities.
Focusing on love allows us, then, to engage with various aspects of theology: scripture, history, doctrine, spirituality, and ethics. As love is the life-giving hidden stream flowing through our daily lives, so we will discover that theology is everywhere, and that theology can in turn help us respond to the major issues we face today. The course has three units: I. Love and How We Relate; II. Love and How We See the World; III. Love and How We Create Culture.

THL 1000 CATHOLIC STUDIES (Byron Wratee)
MW 1:55-3:10 PM
This course examines Black Catholicism in the New World, exploring the history, spirituality, theology, and liturgical life of Black Catholics in North America, South America, and the Caribbean. It also highlights the African roots and influences that have shaped these traditions. Students explore how Black Catholics have navigated faith, race, culture, and justice while developing distinctive forms of prayer, worship, theological reflection, and communal life. Through historical and theological sources, music, and liturgical practices, the course considers how Black Catholics across Africa and the African diaspora have shaped Catholic identity and contributed to the Roman Catholic Church's ongoing renewal.

THL 1000 FAITH, REASON, AND CULTURE (Carey Walsh)
MWF 11:45-12:35 PM

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 (Peter Spitaler)
M 6:15-8:55PM
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. 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 investigate 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.

THL 1000 FAITH, REASON AND CULTURE (Gregory Grimes)
T/TH 10:00-11:15 AM
Based upon the Christian notion that God became human in Jesus of Nazareth, who intimately interacted with the people of his own time, addressing their needs, this course begins by diagnosing characteristics of contemporary culture. In short, asking: what are the most urgent needs of our time? We will then explore how an understanding of God as Creator and our relationship to God as creatures in a created world provides an ultimate orientation for how we are to live in the world today. Here we will explore a thoroughly Augustinian understanding of the God/human relationship. Then this will be related to Pope Francis's encyclical, "Laudato Si'", which addresses quite concretely how this understanding of the God/human relationship is of the utmost importance for the ecological, economic, and social challenges we currently face as a society. From here we will delve more deeply into an understanding of Jesus: who he was, how he thought of himself in relationship to God, the central message of his ministry, and the importance of Christians carrying out that ministry today. Having examined more closely both God and Jesus, we will apply this more specifically to the question: how can Christianity improve our ways of thinking of and implementing more just economic systems that encourage sustainable, integral human development and combat the harmful effects of consumerism?

THL 1000 CATHOLIC STUDIES (Fr. Martin Laird)

10:00-11:15 AM
Those of us who were born into and raised within the Christian tradition often come away with the misguided notion that "faith" is something like a political platform we might adhere to. "I believe this. I don't believe that." While Catholic Christianity does adhere to certain beliefs, but by itself this simply will not do. It is misguided in the sense that it lacks *faith is first and foremost a relationship of trust* before it becomes something we give intellectual assent to. As Pope Benedict XVI said in his very first public talk, and repeated often throughout his years as Pope), "Faith is not a bundle of doctrines. Faith is a relationship with God." And at the end of his pontificate, he strikes the same note: "Faith is nothing other than the touch of God in the night of the world, and so—in silence—to hear the word, to see love." Like any living relationship, faith evolves as we move through the joys and sufferings, the loves and losses that we all meet as we move from childhood into adulthood. What are the dynamics intrinsic to the development of a maturing faith? This introductory, depth-encounter of the theological life is no mere high school religion class that some may bring with them to college. Often this has involved parroting back to the teacher what we were taught (*or what we think we were taught*) for years. Perhaps this sufficed as we moved through grade school, middle school, and high school. But is this adequate as we move from adolescence to the emerging adulthood of our years at university? This course will engage theological questions both ancient and modern.

THL 1000 CATHOLIC STUDIES (Jessica Murdoch)
T/TH 11:30-12:45 PM
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 GLOBAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE (Stefanie Knauss)
T/TH 2:30-3:45 PM
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 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 will 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 which surveys religiosity in general, and global religions, including Christianity, in particular, as well as their commonalities, differences, and cultural expressions. Our attention will focus on the global diversity of religious practice in traditions we might be familiar with (e.g. Christianity in South Africa), and on how "the global" shapes the local in terms of the religious plurality visible in our US-American context (e.g. Islam 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 understood as human meaning-making. 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. Over the course of this term, we will learn about central aspects of religion such as cultural practice (power, gender, beliefs, rituals), 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 discussion-based, and careful preparation of films and readings before class is expected to ensure substantial conversations during the class sessions.

THL 1000 CATHOLIC STUDIES (Brandon Ambrosino)
MW 3:20-4:35 PM
4:45-6:00 PM
THL 1000 (Catholic Studies) studies Christianity with a particular focus on Roman Catholicism. Animated by Augustine's concern to relate Christian faith to human culture, this course will help students think through some of life's most pressing questions, like *What do I believe?, How can I experience God?,* and *How can I be a disciple of Jesus?* Christianity claims that Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14). If this is true, then we should expect God to be a willing conversation partner with the "fleshy" stuff of our everyday lives. What this means, then, is that there's no theological reason why we have to think about God separately from popular culture — so we're not going to do that. Instead, what we're going to do in this class is to construct and deconstruct various Catholic theologies while overthinking the "fleshy" stuff that makes up our world: Disney movies, social media, musical theatre, drag bars, antique stores, fashion, collectible toys, and of course … sex robots.

THL 1000: FAITH REASON AND CULTURE (Connor Ritchie)
MW 3:20-4:35 PM
This course explores Christianity through the tradition's own self-understanding as faith seeking understanding—philosophical inquiry that welcomes difficult questions. Taking cues from St. Augustine's restless search, we will explore how faith, reason, and culture interact. Students will encounter major Christian sources and the questions that animate them, including how God can be known and encountered amid the limits of human language. We will examine how theological claims about God and the human person take shape in history and culture, with attention to classic voices and contemporary debates. At

stake are not only philosophical and theological convictions but also how such convictions inform moral life and public questions about community, justice, suffering, and responsibility.

THL 1000: CATHOLIC STUDIES (Perdian Tumanan)
MWF 12:50-1:40 PM

Catholic history cannot therefore be reduced to either a triumphant story of holiness and progress or a narrative concerned only with institutional failure. It is a complex history marked by ongoing tensions between faith and power, continuity and change, institutional authority and prophetic criticism, human failure and spiritual renewal.

This course introduces Catholicism in its historical, theological, cultural, and global wholeness. The word "catholic" conveys the ideas of wholeness and universality. Inspired by that vision, we will approach Catholicism as a tradition that must be studied in its fullness—including its uncomfortable realities and difficult histories. We will examine both the gifts Catholicism has offered the world and its struggles with violence, colonialism, corruption, scandal, and abuse. We will also consider how Catholic communities have responded to these failures through reform, renewal, resistance, and reconciliation.

Students do not need to be Catholic—or religious—to participate meaningfully in this course. Instead, everyone will be invited to approach Catholicism with intellectual curiosity, critical honesty, humility, and openness"

THL 1000: FAITH, REASON, AND CULTURE (Kevin Hughes)
MW 1:55-3:10 PM

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<u>THEOLOGY UPPER-LEVEL COURSES</u>

THL 2490: EMPIRE IN BIBLICAL HISTORY (Ethan Schwartz)
T/TH 10:00-11:15 AM
Owing to the cultural influence of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament and the New Testament, many people today imagine ancient Israel, Judah, and Judea as powerful, central political entities. However, the historical reality is that they were minor, often peripheral players on a geopolitical stage dominated by vastly larger empires. Taking this recognition as a starting point, this course introduces biblical history with a focus on the series of great empires that shaped it. By expanding our lens beyond the limited purview of the biblical accounts themselves, we will uncover a gripping, complex international drama in which these empires vied for control of the known world. At the same time, we will gain a new appreciation of how this international drama left a lasting mark on the Bible—including in ways that reverberate in Christianity and Judaism down to today.
Attribute: Core Theology

THL 2590: AFTER THE APPOSTLES (John Cacchione)
MWF 10:40-11:30 AM
"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 uniquepiece 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 consider Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, who produced 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, short topical catecheses based on where and how the Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes, 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.)
Attribute: Core Theology

THL 2760: AUGUSTINE'S INFLUENCE & LEGACY (Jonathan Yates)
T/TH 1:00-2:15 PM
By now you have probably encountered Villanova's self-description as "one of two Catholic, Augustinian institutions of higher learning in the United States." For many Villanovans, this legacy is a very good thing that they are happy to perpetuate. But what does it mean exactly? How closely related to the lifestyle and thought of either Augustine or the Order of Saint Augustine (O.S.A.) does an institution or individual need to be to qualify as "Augustinian"? More specifically, how "Augustinian" are you now, and how "Augustinian" do you aspire to be? By reading and discussing Augustine in his own words, as well as some of what both his admirers and detractors have written in the 1600 years since his death, this course will give you the opportunity to answer these and other questions.
Following a review of the details of Augustine's life in its Late Antique context, this course will dive into some of Augustine's ideas to help you develop an understanding how Augustine saw himself, how others (both friends and enemies) have seen Augustine, and what he wanted others to believe and to experience as a result of his work as a Christian bishop and theologian.
Like (almost) everyone else's, Augustine's thinking about God, human nature, and the life of faith changed over time. And where he ended up on all counts proved to be almost as controversial as they were influential. Thus, a major focus for this course will be his thinking and writing from the years 411 to 430 CE, his so-called "Anti-Pelagian" Period. Although the disagreement began over the denial of Original (or inherited) Sin, it rather quickly escalated into an intense and wide-ranging debate over issues such as God's attributes, Christ's role in salvation, the inherent or natural capacities of the human being, the definition and role of theological grace, the working of the human will, and the nature of human sexuality.
Many historians and students of Christian theology still classify these debates as unresolved. But all agree that the implications of the positions that Augustine assumed and defended in these decades remain central for a proper understanding of (Western) social and intellectual history as well as for how Westerners think and believe today.
Attribute: Core Theology

THL 2900: THEMES IN US CATHOLICISM: CATHOLICS AS POLITICAL INSIDERS (Massimo Faggioli)
M/W 8:00-09:15 AM
This course will examine the growth of the Catholic Church in the history of the United States. The social and political views and behavior of US Catholics will be the primary focus.

After a brief introduction on the diversity of roots in American Catholicism, the course will focus on the history of this community from the minority, immigrant Church of the 19th century to the Catholic Church in the USA as the single, largest Church in the country today. In the semester during the final weeks of the 2024 presidential campaign and election and with close attention to current developments, the course will help students develop an understanding of the historical developments of the role of Catholicism in the changing social landscape of United States, with a particular emphasis on the social and political engagement of Catholics in the period from the Civil War to today. This periodization includes the election of the second Catholic president of the USA, Joe Biden, in 2020, and of the relations between the USA and the Vatican during the pontificate of the first pope from the USA, Leo XIV.
Attribute: Core Theology, Peace & Justice

THL 3450 PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK (Tim Brunk)
T/TH 4:00-5:15 PM
In its mission statement, Villanova University commits itself to "concern for the common good" and a "vigorous and respectful pursuit of truth and wisdom in every area of humanity." The mission statement further emphasizes the importance of "service experiences" and "compassion for the suffering." The Department of Theology and Religious Studies in turn commits itself to the pursuit of "a distinctively Augustinian way of knowing and loving God and neighbor that is holistic, integrative, and transformational." "Pastoral Care of the Sick" is a course being offered in response to these ideals. The course will begin with a treatment of the theological understanding of the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, including reading of primary texts on pastoral care from the Roman Catholic Church. The course will continue with a pastoral-theological exploration of the entire range of care provided to the ill and dying. The course will conclude with an examination of the spirituality of caregivers, specifically Christian nurses and other Christian medical professionals. The course thus seeks not only to ground students in the Catholic pastoral / theological tradition of care for those who are ill but also seeks in a special way to prepare pre-med and nursing students at Villanova for the gifts and challenges that await them in their chosen careers.
Materials for this course will include readings and at least one video. The course may also feature guest speakers such as chaplains at area hospitals.
Attribute: Core Theology, Health, Humanities, Medical Arts, Peace & Justice

THL 3790: BLACK MORAL IMAGINATION: LITERATURE, THEOLOGY, AND PUBLIC LIFE (Naomi Washington Leaphart)
T 6:15-8:55 PM
This course examines how Black literary and theological traditions cultivate moral imagination under conditions of social and political constraint. Through sustained engagement with writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Octavia Butler, and Toni Morrison, students will explore how narrative, memory, critique, longing, and speculative thought shape ethical vision and public life. Attending to themes

of freedom, faith, power, and communal responsibility, the course invites students to consider how moral worlds are *formed*, and how they might be *transformed*.
Attributes: Core Theology

THL 3790: THM: THEOLOGY & SCIENCE (TBD)
MWF 8:30-9:20 AM
Attributes: Core Theology

THL 4330: CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS (Mark Graham)
T/TH 2:30-3:45 PM
This is a course in Christian environmental ethics. Part of the course is spent addressing foundational theological issues and figures in environmental ethics. Substantial segments are devoted to practical moral issues such as agriculture, synthetic chemicals, and the moral standing of animals. Regular class discussions focus on contemporary environmental issues such as the ethics of hunting, nuclear power, global warming, genetic engineering of animals, pollution, and automobile use, to mention but a few.
Attributes: Core Theology, Peace & Justice

THL 4480: INTRODUCTION TO BIOMEDICAL ETHICS (Brett Wilmot)
MW 1:55-3:10 PM
The purpose of this course is to develop tools for critical analysis of biomedical ethical issues from a Catholic theological perspective. From the conception of life to the end of life we are faced with new technologies and a stunning array of choices that affect us, our loved ones, and our fellow human beings. We will be focusing on a distinctively Catholic Christian approach to these matters, and we will be considering a range of topics that affect patients, care providers, and the broader society in which Christians and non-Christians seek to live good lives with moral integrity. The vision of the human person and the ideal of human flourishing from a Catholic perspective will provide our framework for exploring these topics. At times, we will contrast a distinctively Catholic approach with secular, philosophical alternatives, but the ultimate aim of this course is to come away with a richer understanding of what is distinctive about a Catholic approach to bioethics. Students will become familiar with theories, principles, terminology, values, and resources that are used in evaluating bioethical questions in a manner that is theologically informed. Unique vocabularies and the historical development of biomedical issues will be examined. Critical analysis of emerging biomedical challenges will be encouraged. Many clinical examples found in the daily practice of medicine will be discussed in class.
Attributes: Core Theology, Health, Humanities, Medical Arts
Prerequisites: ETH 2050 -or- PHI 2115

THL 4490: BLACK 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, UNITAS Division I, Peace & Justice

THL 4490: THM: CHRISTIAN PEACEBUILDING (Ken Fleischer)
T/TH 8:30-9:45 AM
This course will explore, from a theological perspective, the Christian tradition's struggle with the question of war and peace. After a review of the integral role of Catholic social teaching within Christian ethics, our academic journey begins with an examination of the historical development of the two distinct moral choices to the question of state-sanctioned violence – nonviolence or just war. From this platform and with a deliberate focus on peace, we will engage Lisa Sowle Cahill's moral criticism of these two traditional alternatives and evaluate her proposal that "Christian peacebuilding best represents the Christian commitment both to nonviolence and to political responsibility." (*Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Pacifism, Just War, and Peacebuilding*, ix) Our academic journey culminates in an investigation of Theodora Hawksley's effort of "re-presenting the tradition of Catholic social teaching on peace and making the case that the 'ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:18) entrusted to us is a key dimension of our Christian vocation." (*Peacebuilding and Catholic Social Teaching*, 3) Our academic inquiries will begin with a survey of sacred texts, followed by both traditional and contemporary theological reflection.
Attributes: Core Theology, Peace & Justice

THL 4490: STEWARDSHIP AND BIBLE (Dan Griffin)
T/TH 8:30-9:45 AM
T/TH 10:00-11:15 AM
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, Sustainability

THL 4490: SOLIDARITY AND PEACEBUILDING IN EASTERN EUROPE (Gerald Beyer)
T/TH 2:30-3:45 PM
Throughout the twentieth century, "Eastern European" connoted "second class" or "uncivilized territory," as historian Timothy Garton Ash has written. This course will focus attention on two countries in the region that have suffered tremendously in the twentieth century, Poland and Bosnia and Herzegovina. We will explore Poland under Communism, the rise of *Solidarność*, its demise after 1989, Poland's transformation to capitalism and democracy and its recent illiberal turn. We will also examine the case of the Bosnian war and why ethnic and religious groups, especially Bosnian Muslims, were demonized and targeted during the war. We will discuss the ongoing challenges to building peace and solidarity in this historically marginalized and misunderstood part of Europe, "the Balkans," highlighting the vital contribution of women to the peacebuilding process and considering what forms of solidarity from other nations might be beneficial. During the spring 2025 semester, we will also consider the ongoing war in Ukraine, examining its causes, ethical evaluations of the war and prospects for peace.
Attributes: Core Theology, UNITAS Division 3, Peace & Justice

THL 4490: THM: ETHICS IN THE STYLE OF JESUS (Brandon Ambrosino)
1:55-3:10 PM
6:15-8:55 PM
What are we doing when we are reflecting on and performing Christian ethics? For Allen Verhey, Christian ethics is about remembering Jesus, while for William Spohn, it's about rhyming with him. Stanley Hauerwas sees Christian ethics as a matter of ecclesial narrativity, while Samuel Wells sees it primarily as a work of improvisation. What cuts across all these approaches is the conviction that Jesus Christ makes a difference to Christian ethics. But what is the difference that Jesus makes? In this class, we will keep that question front and center. We will pay careful attention to Jesus's way of being in the world, to that very *him* quality that makes him who he is. In other words, we will focus on his style — not simply what he says, but how he says it; not simply the word he speaks, but the Word that he is, the Word made flesh, the Word who laughs, who plays, who winks, who loves his way through a world that has forgotten how to love. This class will bring together both Catholic and Protestant thinkers, and we will pay special attention to several papal encyclicals.
Attributes: Core Theology

THL 4550: THE CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION (Fr. Martin Laird)
T/TH 11:30-12:45 PM
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: SPORTS AND SPIRITUALITY (Edward Hastings)
T/TH 8:30-9:45 AM
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: THM: SACRED BLACK WORLDS (Byron Wratee)
MW 4:45-6:00 PM
This course explores how Black people across time and place have experienced the sacred and made meaning in their lives through religion and spirituality. Through music, worship, prayer, ritual, literature, art, and everyday practices, students encounter diverse religious traditions throughout the African diaspora. In conversation with Black and womanist religious thought, students explore questions of God, human dignity, suffering, freedom, community, and hope. The course asks how people experience the sacred, interpret its meaning, discern what is true and valuable, and translate these insights into action. Students conclude by imagining how Black religious and spiritual traditions might inspire new ways of living, worshiping, and building community. No prior background in theology or Black Studies is required.
Attributes: Core Theology, Africana Studies

THL 5000: THM: BODY IN RELIGION (Stefanie Knauss)
T/TH 1:00-2:15 PM
Folding hands in prayer, preparing special foods for festivals, or observing rules of bodily purity as part of one's spiritual practice – bodies are an important element in religious traditions, carrying different meanings and functions. Since we all are embodied beings, our bodily experience can serve as a common ground when encountering the religious body practices of others, and there will be times in this course when we will recognize

these experiences in our own bodies. However, we will also see that the significance and meaning given to these bodily experiences, or the practices through which they are elicited, vary widely and can appear strange. While all humans are bodies, those bodies are made to signify and to be experienced in different ways across contexts and times.
This course will explore the diverse roles of bodies in religion, how cultural influences have shaped the various and changing understandings of embodiment in different religious and spiritual traditions, and how religions have impacted cultural attitudes towards bodies. We will consider that bodies are fundamental to religious rituals, such as those related to food or healing, and thus – in their earthy materiality – for the relationship with the transcendent. We will also analyze how bodies are regulated and disciplined through the norms and practices that have developed in religious traditions, especially those related to gender and sexuality, and how these are still formative in secular contexts. But religions do not only limit bodily experiences, they also include moments of honoring the body, for example in the rituals and theologies around death and the afterlife. As we discuss religious body practices and beliefs about bodies, we will also attend to how these practices or beliefs surface in or are challenged by contemporary issues related to embodiment, such as AI, controversies over trans identities or the problem of cultural appropriation of Indigenous medicine.
We will encounter the practices, beliefs, and traditions of a range of different cultures and religions, from Christianity to Hinduism and Native American traditions as well as others, both past and present. In order to gain a better understanding of the various roles and meanings that bodies take on in religious traditions and how these have interacted with other cultural influences on embodiment, we will draw on sociology, gender studies, philosophy, and history, in addition to theology and religious studies, in an interdisciplinary conversation.
In this course, we will study religion as something that is done by humans and thus inherently presupposes a relationship to the body, embodied practices, and beliefs about embodied human existence. As human practice, religion is also a part of its cultural context, and thus its expressions, practices and beliefs are shaped by and shape culture. This also means that religious ideas about bodies may impact mundane cultural practices such as food preparation, and that cultural norms or practices influence the role of the body in the religious context. Focusing on the body as a site of religious and cultural meaning making shows that the boundaries between the two are porous and blurry.
Note that this course is seminar-style and discussion based, with lectures limited to a minimum. This means that your contributions, questions and insights are just as important as the questions or comments I might provide related to our readings and other material.
Attributes: Core Theology, Gender and Women's Studies

THL 5000: THM: RELIGION AND FILM: RELIGION AND FILM OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT (Kerry San Chirico)
T/TH 2:30-3:45 PM
This course surveys religion in the Indian subcontinent through cinema and its child, television. Given the widespread popularity of film in India, Pakistan, Bengal, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, we are given a unique vantage to encounter different ways of being in the world

through the filmic medium. At the same time, because this is an inherently cross-cultural exercise, we cannot but help to see themes with which we are familiar: the challenges of contemporary life, accounting for the past, the nature of suffering, poverty, desire, hope, and devotion. No prior knowledge of South Asian cinema or religion is required.
Attributes: Core Theology, UNITAS Division 2

THL 5003: THM: ANGELS AND DEMONS (Fr. Francis Caponi)
MW 4:45-6:00 PM
Until the modern era, the real existence of angels and demons was widely taken for granted. They were regarded neither as symbolic expressions of the human psyche nor as literary devices, but as personal subjects who routinely acted in human history. In our own time, things are not so straightforward. True, angels are invoked at Mass and explored in theology; but they are also featured in movies and on television – often in ways that bear little resemblance to their Biblical and traditional portraits. In the pages of Scripture they rise up, fierce and fearsome, the sound of their wings beating "like the voice of God Almighty speaking" (Ezekiel 10:5). Yet, in religious art, they appear as tame, baby-faced cherubs. Demons, too, are found in revelation, where they are rebuked, silenced, and exorcized by Jesus Christ and his disciples; but in literature and entertainment, they have morphed into brooding, misunderstood misfits and humorous, likeable rogues.
With an emphasis on Scripture, the Magisterium of the Church, and the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, this course will follow the historical unfolding of Christian thought on angels and demons: their places in creation, their roles in salvation history, and their unique nature as purely spiritual intellects. Among our key questions are: What influence have other cultures had on Jewish and Christian thinking? What connections are there between angelology and demonology and Catholic reflection on grace, sin, revelation, the sacraments, and the final things? Can modern people raised with the scientific method, philosophical materialism, and a historical-critical approach to Scripture believe in angels and demons?
Attributes: Core Theology

THL 5003: THM: HISPANICS IN THE US CATHOLIC CHURCH (Ruth Bolarte)
MW 1:55-3:10 PM
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: THM: LIBERATION THEOLOGY (Fr. Art Purcaro)
T/TH 8:30-9:45 AM
This course will introduce students to Latin American Liberation Theology, one of the most profound contemporary theological movements in the Church. Liberation Theology

emerged out of the concrete struggle in Peru to overcome poverty, oppression and repression. We will examine the biblical and ecclesial roots of liberation theology, its "unconventional" theological methodology, the powerful insights of Gustavo Gutierrez and some other of its theologians and religious leaders, its relationship with Augustinian spirituality and charism, its impact, the price paid for prophetic witness, the controversy that surrounds it, and its ongoing challenge to theology today, to the Church and its institutions, and to a global society plagued by growing inequality.
Attributes: Core Theology, Latin American Studies, Peace & Justice

THL 5003: THOMAS MERTON (Edward Hastings)
T/TH 11:30-12:45 PM
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 5004: THM: STORYTELLING AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE (Tekoa Robinson)
T/TH 1:00-2:15 PM
What's your story? How does the writing, reflecting on, and sharing of our stories help us to better understand our lived theologies/spiritualities? How are these lived theologies/spiritualities 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.
Attributes: Core Theology

THL 5005: THM: RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST (Yasemin Akis)
MWF 12:50-1:40 PM
Understanding the modern Middle East requires an appreciation of its diverse religious traditions and the central role religion has played in shaping the region from antiquity to today. This course examines religion as both a historical and contemporary force in Middle Eastern societies, beginning with pre-Islamic traditions such as Zoroastrianism, and moving through the development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Students will analyze how religion has influenced conquests, kingdom-building, and empire formation, while also functioning as a cultural and social force that transcends faith boundaries. The course emphasizes religion as a key marker of identity and a factor in inter-communal contact and conflict, exploring themes such as Sunni–Shia divisions, the role of non-Muslim minorities, the rise of Sufi traditions in Anatolia, and the impact of religious practices on daily life. Contemporary issues—including secularism in Turkey, religious politics in Iran, and the challenges faced by Christian and other minority communities—are also considered.
By engaging with sacred texts, historical scholarship, media sources, and case studies, students will develop a nuanced perspective on the complexities of Middle Eastern religious life. Assignments, discussions, and presentations will encourage critical reflection on themes such as Orientalism, stereotypes, and the intersection of religion with ethnicity, politics, and culture.
Attributes: Core Theology, UNITAS Division 1, UNITAS Division 3

THL 5005: ORIENTALISM AND RELIGION (Yasemin Akis)
MWF 11:45-12:35 PM
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 Division 1, Unitas Division 3

THL 5005: AFRICAN POLITICAL THEOLOGY (Fidelis Olokunboro)
MWF 11:45-12:45 PM
MWF 12:50-1:40 PM
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 Division 3

THL 6000: THM: BIBLE AND SUSTAINABILITY (Fr. John Abubakar)
T/TH 8:30-9:45 AM
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, Sustainability

THL 6000: SOUND, MUSIC, AND SPIRITUALITY (Brett Grainger)
T/TH 1:00-2:15 PM

From the calming drone of a Tibetan singing bowl to the pulsing rhythm of a hand drum, from gospel and blues to jazz, country, and New Age music, sound has long provided a powerful means of expressing and experiencing the sacred. Americans encounter these sounds not only in churches, temples, and concert halls but in schools, workplaces, medical centers, stores, and digital environments. While many Americans have trouble defining spirituality, most would say they know it when they hear it.

What makes music sound "religious" or "spiritual" to our ears? How do musicians use melody, rhythm, harmony, improvisation, and silence to communicate religious ideas and experiences? How do listeners learn to distinguish "sacred" sounds from "secular" ones? And how have particular musical forms come to signify religious, racial, and cultural identities—Black and white, eastern and western, traditional and modern?

This course approaches music and sound as forms of artistic expression through which individuals and communities imagine, encounter, and communicate religious experience. Drawing on examples from a range of religious traditions and musical genres—including gospel, blues, jazz, country, rock, New Age music, and others—we will develop skills for attentive listening and interpretation. Rather than treating music simply as an illustration of religious beliefs, we will ask how the formal and aesthetic qualities of sound themselves create meaning, evoke emotion, shape experience, and make claims about the sacred.

We will also explore how technologies of musical production and consumption have transformed the experience of religious sound. Recording, amplification, electronic instruments such as the synthesizer, and the movement from vinyl records to digital streaming have altered not only how music circulates but what artists and listeners understand music to be. A recurrent theme will be the idea of sound as both a technology for altering consciousness or accessing "spirit" and a possible manifestation of spirit itself.

Throughout, students will listen closely to musical performances and recordings, interpret them in their historical and cultural contexts, and consider how aesthetic choices give form to religious ideas and experiences. No prior background in music or musicology is required. Just bring your ears.

Attributes: Core Theology

THL 6001: THM: WHAT, THEN, IS RELIGION? (Hector Varela Rios)
T/TH 11:30-12:45 PM

Abstract: This course is an introduction to classical and contemporary theories of religion. Religion is an equivocal term, with a rich if conflicting history in the Western academy; indeed, scholars do not agree what the word 'religion' even means! In this undergraduate course, we will discuss classical theories of early religious scholars such as Hume, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Freud, Marx, Tylor, Frazer, Durkheim, Weber, Otto, and James, paired with contemporary theorists such as Stark, Lincoln, Tweed, Boyer, Strenski, De León, Doniger, Armstrong, Daly, and Jones. For evidence, we will explore and evaluate religions both 'recognized,' such as Christianity, Yoruba/Santería, and/or Agnostic, and 'debatable' such as Jediism, Pastafarianism, and the NFL and FIFA, using the

concepts/systems arising from the theorists discussed (for example, belief, experience, myth, magic, secular, science, power, society, borderland, and ritual).
Attributes: Core Theology