

Department of Theology and Religious Studies
Graduate Doctoral Courses
Fall 2020

Please be aware that dates and times listed below may change.

Foundation in Systematic Theology
LAW 7116-1
(capped at 15)

Prof. Chaim Saiman
R 3:10 – 5:10 pm

One of the central features of the Jewish tradition is the degree to which questions that other cultures treat as philosophy, ethics, politics, and theology take on a distinctly legal form. In Judaism, “law” or *halakhah* (roughly Jewish law), is thus a far broader concept than “things that happen in court” or “rules imposed by the state.” The goal of this course is to explore the “idea of halakhah,” by showing how the rabbis used regulatory concepts to do the work other societies assign to a host of other disciplines. Given the irreducibly legal nature of halakhah, however, several questions emerge: What happens to law when it is also a foundation for social and theological thought? What does it mean for speculative thinking to be carried out in legal categories? How are legal texts transformed when recited as prayers or read for religious inspiration? And conversely how are aspirational and aphoristic teachings transformed when encoded into law? What happens when a legal system that may be more interested in education than adjudication, or when the study of law takes precedence over its practice? What does it mean for the study of law to connect Man to God? And how does this law-centric discourse fill its broader religious and social roles? And finally, does this form of law have any place in the context of a modern state? This is devoted to thinking through these questions.

Foundations in Systematic Theology
THL 8000-002
Restricted to Ph. D. students.
(capped at 7)

Dr. Anthony Godzieba
W 2:00-4:20 pm

This course deals with the basic elements that guide theological reflection on Christian belief and practice. It investigates a number of specific issues which introduce the student not only to theology’s subject matter but also to the process of “doing theology.” Part I of the course offers analyses of a variety of theological methods, along with their contexts and presuppositions. Part II explores the areas which are acknowledged to be fundamental to the task of Christian theology: the possibility and reality of divine revelation; the nature of faith and its relationship to revelation and to human reason; the roles played by the Scriptures, continuing Christian tradition, and contemporary experience in communicating God’s revelation in Christ. Also examined are several issues in “theological epistemology,” such as the nature of dogma and the functions of the magisterium, theologians, and the *sensus fidelium*.

Foundations in Bible**THL 8001-001***Restricted to Ph. D. students.
(capped at 7)***Dr. Carey Walsh****T 4:30 – 6:50 pm**

This is a graduate-level theology course in biblical studies, with a focus on the theological and historical significance of the Bible. The course introduces students to research skills that will allow them to participate in the discourse of biblical studies. It is designed to deepen the student's overall understanding of the biblical literature ("biblical literacy"), including the background literature of early Israel, biblical and post-biblical Judaism, and early Christianity. To this end, study in this course provides an orientation to 1. biblical studies as a discipline; 2. the contexts (literary, cultural, social, political, historical, archaeological, comparative, etc.) of Jewish and Christian canonical scriptures; 3. the methods of modern critical study of the bible with a particular focus on those that isolate cultural data; 4. the living tradition of the reception of biblical themes/texts; and 5. faith/culture and heart/mind dialogues as they advance biblical theology.

Foundations in History**THL 8002-001***Restricted to Ph. D. students.
(capped at 7)***Dr. Kevin Hughes****W 9:00 – 11:20 am**

This course will address some key texts for the approach to Church history, historical theology, and the history of Christianity, more generally. As such, it will serve as an introduction to the history of the discipline and to its methods and practices.

Education Seminar 2**THL 8702-001***(capped at 7)***Dr. Timothy Hanchin****T 7:00 – 9:20 pm**

This is the second course in the two-seminar sequence of the Heart of Teaching program for all PhD students and MTS students in the Theological Education Track. While Theological Pedagogy (THL 8701) focuses on philosophies and accompanying theories of instruction animating theological education, Contextual Education (THL 8702) offers intentional reflection on the student's concurrent Classroom Apprenticeship Practicum. The main content, then, is the student's Assistant Teaching experience augmented by pedagogical resources that best prepare the student for supervised and independent teaching.

Theories & Methods of Culture
THL 9050-001
(capped at 7)

Dr. Stefanie Knauss
Block Seminar
August 17th 9:00 – 4:00 pm
August 18th 9:00 – 4:00 pm
August 19th 9:00 – 4:00 pm
August 20th 9:00 – 4:00 pm
September 18th 1:00 – 4:30 pm
October 2nd 1:00 – 4:30 pm

If we want to study faith engaging culture, we must ask, what is culture? How do we understand the dynamics of culture? What is the relationship between culture and religious beliefs, practices, narratives, and affects? And how can theological reflection position itself in the context of theories of culture, draw on their concepts, and reflect on itself as situated within a network of cultural processes?

This course will introduce you to some of the main theories, concepts and methods of the study of culture, focusing on central thinkers and texts in the sociology of culture, cultural anthropology, critical theory and cultural studies, including postcolonial critiques of “culture” and recent approaches in material culture (e.g. Max Weber, Mary Douglas, Theodor Adorno, Stuart Hall, Judith Butler, Gayatri Spivak, Colleen McDannell). We will also explore how theories of culture have informed scholarship in theology and religious studies.

THM: Prophetic Literature Approaches & Issues
THL 9150-001
Prerequisite: Foundation in Bible [THL 8001]
(capped at 7)

Dr. Ethan Schwartz
T 2:00 – 4:20 pm

The biblical prophetic literature (especially the Latter Prophets, i.e., Isaiah–Malachi) has exerted consequential influence on the history of biblical interpretation and the development of Judaism and Christianity. This doctoral seminar is an investigation of prominent paradigms in the critical study of biblical prophetic literature and an application of these paradigms to important issues in this literature. The semester will be divided into two sections along these lines. In the first part of the course, we will explore the methodological characteristics and intellectual histories of three broad approaches to prophetic literature: (1) the prophet as an individual, historical persona; (2) the prophet as an ancient Near Eastern social type; and (3) the prophet as a literary construct within or coextensive with the prophetic book. In the second part of the course, we will explore some of the most important issues that have guided critical engagement with prophetic literature, e.g., cult, gender, and apocalyptic. For each issue, we will consider how one’s understanding might be shaped by the scholarly paradigm that one adopts. Students should be aware that this course is *not* a survey of the prophetic corpus. Not all of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible will be represented, and our engagement with those that *are* represented will be guided first and foremost by our efforts to understand trajectories in the critical study of this literature.

THM: Post Humanism**THL 9200-001****This course will be co-taught with Dr. Theiner
(Philosophy)***Prerequisite: Foundations in Systematics [THL 8000]
(capped at 8)***Dr. Ilia Delio
W 6:00 – 8:30 pm**

"Posthuman" has become an umbrella term to refer to a variety of different movements and schools of thought, including philosophical, cultural, and critical posthumanism; transhumanism (in its variations of extropianism, liberal and democratic transhumanism, among others); the feminist approach of new materialisms; and the heterogeneous landscape of antihumanism, metahumanism, metahumanities, and posthumanities. The struggle over the meaning of "posthuman" can be seen as a way of coping with an urgency for the integral redefinition of the notion of the human, following the onto-epistemological as well as scientific and biotechnological developments of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Philosophers have taken note of these developments, but often invoke the label "posthuman" in a generic and all-inclusive way, to indicate any of these different perspectives, thereby creating methodological and theoretical confusion between experts and nonexperts alike.

THM: Trinity – Doctrine & Development**THL 9200-002***Prerequisite: Foundations in Systematics [THL 8000]
(capped at 7)***Dr. Anthony Godzieba
T 11:30 – 1:50 pm**

Belief in the Trinity is the foundation of all Christian living—not only our thinking and speaking about God, but also our relationships with God and with each other. This seminar analyzes the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the early Church and the receptions of the doctrine in the history of the Church. Emphasis will be placed on the early primary sources as well as contemporary theological retrievals and applications.

THM: Christian Environmental Ethics**THL 9340-001***Prerequisite: Foundations in Ethics [THL 8004]
(capped at 7)***Dr. Mark Graham
T 4:30 – 6:50 pm**

This course focuses on seminal thinkers and schools of thought in Christian environmental ethics. Part of the course is spent addressing foundational philosophical and theological issues in Christian environmental ethics. Substantial segments are devoted to agriculture, synthetic chemicals, and the moral standing of animals, and significant attention will be given to practical, contemporary environmental issues such as nuclear power, global warming, fast food, genetic engineering of animals, pollution, and automobile use, to mention but a few.

Course requirements: regular attendance; regular class participation; a mid-term and final oral exam; several in-class presentations; a 20+ page final paper; and approximately 75-100 pages of reading per week.

Texts:

Mark Graham, *Sustainable Agriculture*, Wipf and Stock, ISBN 1606088068, 2009.
Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology*, University of Illinois, ISBN 0252064674, 1995.

Ethics of Higher Education
THL 9350-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in Ethics [THL 8004]
(capped at 7)

Dr. Gerald Beyer
W 9:00 – 11:20 am

This course heeds James F. Keenan’s indictment of higher education in his recent book *University Ethics*. Keenan correctly observes “the American University does not hold its employees to professional ethical standards because it has not created a culture of ethical consciousness and accountability... .” As Keenan contends, university professors are among the few professionals that lack a code of ethics. However, the modern university must contend with myriad, complex ethical issues. This course will address some of these issues, such as the corporatization of university, worker justice on campuses (with particular attention to the casualization of the academic workforce), access and affordability, promoting inclusion and equality for minoritized university members, socially responsible investment of university resources and environmental stewardship. We will read recent work that addresses these issues from various disciplinary perspectives. We will also undertake analysis through the normative lens of the Christian tradition. We will reflect on what it means to assume responsible membership in the academy as teachers and scholars in the current milieu of higher education. Keenan’s seminal book, along with other recent work by Christian ethicists, will guide our reflections.

A degree from Villanova’s doctoral program in theology should help “reclaim the relationship between critical education and social change,” rather than generate “gated intellectuals,” as critical pedagogy expert Henry Giroux puts it. As a Catholic institution of higher learning, Villanova University bears this obligation. As St. John Paul II states in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* Catholic universities “must be a living institutional witness to Christ.” This must entail “a study of serious contemporary problems in areas such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the search for peace and political stability, a more just sharing in the world’s resources, and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at a national and international level.” This course focuses on how institutional policies and practices advance this aspect of the university’s mission.

THM: Augustinian THL Tradition
THL 9400-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in History [THL 8002]
(capped at 7)

Dr. Ian Clausen
M 2:00 – 4:20 pm

Both the Order of Saint Augustine and Villanova University make much of their Augustinian legacy and their vocation to perpetuate “the Augustinian tradition.” But what exactly does it mean to be “in” the Augustinian tradition? More specifically, what does it mean to be distinctly “Augustinian” (or “non-Augustinian”!) in one’s theological, ethical, and political outlook?

A founding assumption of the recent volume *Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine* is that “there are as many versions of ‘Augustinianism’ as there are interpreters of Aug[ustine].” We might add that there are also many versions of Augustine that have inspired a range of responses to and receptions of his thought. What we do with Augustine may not always and everywhere matter, but it is hard to imagine doing Christian theology – and Christian philosophy, ethics, politics and spirituality – without encountering some aspect of his legacy and influence.

In this course, we will approach Augustine’s writings and ideas as both significant contributions to historical theology and as viable and contested resources for contemporary Christian thought. The historical work we accomplished in THL-8400 will support our efforts to engage important topics in ethics and politics: these may include Augustine’s contributions with regard to the self, evil, lying, marriage and sexuality, the two cities, the “just war,” conscience and coercion, and the life to come.

We will attend closely to Augustine’s own words and the contexts in which he wrote them, and sometimes include authors with whom he corresponded and sparred such as Julian of Eclanum. We will also read a selection of modern commentary that frames the reception history of Augustine’s thought and legacy. A primary goal is not simply to know some facts about Augustine, but to investigate how others have – to quote Karla Pollmann – “done things” with Augustine, and to ask what that means for a theology working in the Augustinian tradition.

THM: Global Christianities

THL 9450-001

*Prerequisite: Foundations in History [THL 8002]
(capped at 7)*

Dr. Kerry San Chirico

M 11:30 – 1:50 pm

This graduate seminar focuses on South Asian Christianities within a broader context of Global or World Christianities, Interreligious Studies, and Indic religion and culture. Forms of what we identify as Christian religion can be understood in many ways – denominationally, theologically, thematically, temporally, politically, and regionally. In this course we seek to examine Global Christianities through the lens of South Asia, also known as the Indian subcontinent. India has been deemed “good to think with” (Levi-Strauss) and this is certainly the case as we consider Christianities in South Asia.

At the same time, what the study of Christianity on the ground reveals that, historically, communities that have understood themselves to be Christian have borne other self-understandings that are not necessarily “religious” in nature. Through studying Christianity in South Asia, we will see that other social configurations were of deep significance, some of which include jati, or subcaste identity, relationships to sacred and temporal power, and perceived proximity to global networks. We will also find, perhaps surprisingly, that it was through the Western encounter with South Asia that “religion” as a category took on its present contours. This semester, themes addressed include but are not limited to ancient Christianities, linguistic, religious and cross-cultural translation and exchange, inter-religious relations, global flows, understandings of liberation/salvation implicit in Pentecostalism or Pentecostalized Christianity and Roman Catholic liberation theology and practice, representation of Yes/Isa and Dalit and women’s struggle for emancipation. Throughout the course, we shall try to root Christianity simultaneously in South Asia and of South Asia while cognizant of its existence as a global

phenomenon. Finally, the tools we use to examine a subject (and place) so vast are provided by anthropology, history, Indology, philosophy, religious studies, sociology, and theology.

THM: Myst, Mourning, Melancholia

THL 9500-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in History [THL 8002]

(capped at 7)

Dr. Rachel Smith

R 11:30 – 1:50 pm

The use of psychoanalytic concepts in the history of religion has often been limited by the simplistic and anachronistic application of its categories, diagnoses and anthropologies to premodern materials. With such cautionary tales in mind, in this course we will attempt to find the ways in which theory might elucidate and yield new insights of ancient texts and practices without distorting, obscuring or making presentist reductions of those texts, and ancient texts might act as resources for contemporary questions. This inquiry will concern questions of mourning and melancholia in particular.

The work of the medievalist Amy Hollywood undertakes such a conversation between psychoanalytic theory and the Christian mystical tradition. She argues that there is a need for an explicitly feminist philosophy and/or theology of mourning. This argument unfolds against the horizon of a presumption found in much second-wave feminist theory that death does not pose a challenge for women in the same way that it does for men. According to this view, only an over-attachment to individuality, the ego, or the self renders human mortality problematic. Women, insofar as they reject these presumably masculinist values, do not or will not fear death. Yet even *if* we accept this argument, the reality of human fear and sorrow in the face of the other's death remains. In this course we will follow Hollywood in asking the question of what an explicitly feminist philosophy and/or theology of mourning could look like. Toward this end, we will read important historical accounts of women's relationship to death and mourning in Western Europe, as well as theoretical texts that articulate the role of mourning and melancholia in subject formation and the complex relationships between mourning, melancholic identification, gender, sexuality, and race. Finally, we will explore the claim that Christian mystical traditions provide an important resource for thinking toward a feminist philosophy or theology of mourning.

THM: Early Christian

Monasticism: Contemplative Training in a Culture of Noise.

THL 9510-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in Spirituality [THL 8003]

(capped at 7)

Fr. Martin Laird, O.S.A.

W 4:30 – 6:50 pm

As far as lay movements in Late Antiquity go, early Christian monasticism is one of the most significant and far reaching. Out of the new social freedoms offered to men and women by the monastic movements of the fourth-century (and beyond), there emerges an abundance of teachings on the inner freedom of the heart-mind (*kardia*). This course will introduce the student to some key figures and teachings of the early monastic movements, such as Melania the Elder, Evagrius Ponticus, *The Life of St. Anthony*, *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, *The Rule of St. Augustine* as well as selections from the foundational collection of contemplative writings of the Orthodox church, *The Philokalia*.

The principle focus of this course will be early monastic teachings on training the attention to face the onslaught of afflictive thoughts that generates inner noise and the noise-driven lifestyles that emerge from them—all manifestations of minds full of clutter. Over many seasons this training leads the monastic to the inner quiet and stability of continual prayer that perdures even amidst the ordeals of life.

Above and beyond a close reading of early monastic sources in historical context, there is also a *practical component* to this course. To gain personal and practical knowledge into this practice of inner silence, we shall begin the first 15 minutes of class, opening ourselves through stillness to the Sacred within. Explicit instructions and guidance in how to go about this practice will be given and revisited at various points throughout the semester.

THM: Medieval Spirituality: Affection & Devotion
THL 9520-001

Dr. Rachel Smith
T 9:00 – 11:20 am

Prerequisite: Foundations in Spirituality [THL 8003]
(capped at 7)

In this course we will look at an important issue in medieval Christian spirituality: devotion to the humanity of Christ, considered particularly in terms of his suffering and death, and the feelings of joy and sorrow experienced by his mother in response to her son. This devotion, although not absent in earlier Christian traditions, proliferated in the high Middle Ages, and encouraged the development of techniques of meditation upon the events of Christ's life rendered vivid through imaginative engagement intended to stir up emotional responses, including fear and love.

We will examine the devotional practices, texts—including poetry, meditations, prayer, hagiography, hymns, and treatises in the Latin and vernacular—as well as images, in order to understand both the theological foundations of such devotion and the literary and bodily techniques used in order to generate affective connection to the human Christ and Mary. At all times, these phenomena will be situated in their wider cultural contexts. In addition to the primary medieval materials, will study a variety of historiographical debates regarding the purpose, cause and temporal parameters of such piety.

Key questions to be considered are the nature and role of the passions in such meditation: What are they and what are their purposes? How do texts, images and prayer techniques function to enflame particular feelings? How are such responses contextualized theologically in relation to Christological and soteriological arguments? What roles did women play in the development of these forms of devotion? How do lay and clerical figures intersect or diverge in the articulation of devotion to the humanity of Christ? How were meditative strategies designed to render central and vivid the torture of Christ related to the rise of Anti-Jewish discourse and persecution and the prosecution of heretics? What were the theological critiques of imaginative and passionate engagement with the events of Christ's life?