

Department of Theology and Religious Studies
Graduate Doctoral Courses
Spring 2020

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

Foundations in Ethics
THL 8004-002

Restricted to Ph.D. students only.

Dr. Vincent Lloyd
Monday 4:30 – 6:50 pm

Examination of basic questions and research methods in Christian ethics. Special attention to the relationships between faith and culture.

Pauline Tradition
THL 9120-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in Bible [THL 8001]

Dr. Peter Spitaler
Thursday 11:30 – 1:50 pm

A distinctive feature of the New Testament is that most of its twenty-seven “books” are actually *letters*, thanks primarily to the influence and proliferation of the apostle Paul. His letters (Romans, Galatians, 1-2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon, and Philippians) are the earliest witness to the religious movement that later came to be called Christianity. Written to communities too distant to visit, they provided the model for other writings (deutero-Pauline letters) that eventually became part of the Christian Bible or were excluded (apocryphal letters).

This course examines letters written by, and in the name of Paul (undisputed, deutero-Pauline, and apocryphal letters). Class work includes a study of current exegetical methodologies and an exploration of how they are used to illuminate Paul’s handling of various issues within early communities of believers in Christ, including: social status, hierarchy, ethnic and gender relations, community, slavery, and religious ritual. Attention will be given to important themes such as Paul’s treatment of the law, the righteousness of God, the cross, Israel, and the roles of women and men in the church.

God in the 21st Century
THL 9210-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in Theology [THL 8000]

Dr. Anthony Godzieba
Tuesday 4:30 – 6:50 pm

The complexion of the contemporary discussion of God has changed drastically from that of a half-century ago. Major catalysts have come not only from continental European philosophy (especially hermeneutics, critical theory, and post-structuralism), but also from the re-examination of Western secularity and the recent focus on diverse Christian inculturations.

This course is taught from a theological perspective that takes these major catalysts into account. The basic scaffolding of the course will be provided by a number of the thinkers profiled in Christina Gschwandtner’s *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (2013), along with discussions of Western secularity (Charles Taylor), of the problem of God in Western culture (Anthony Godzieba), and of diverse inculturated

experiences of God (Elizabeth Johnson). The course will conclude with an attempt to bring these threads together into a constructive theological synthesis for the early twenty-first century.

Ecclesiology via the Prism of Church Architecture

THL 9270-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in Theology [THL 8000]

Dr. Bernard Prusak

Tuesday 2:00 – 4:20 pm

The Greek term *ekklēsia*, now translated as church, originally meant *assembly*. It designated those who stood around the table for the Lord’s Supper in a particular place. For Paul, the “table of the Lord” was the focal point around which the *ekklēsia* or assembly in a particular locale gathered together (1 Cor 10:21 & 11:18). All were involved in a genuinely full and active participation around that table, in a celebration that came to be called a Thanksgiving (Eucharist).

The course will especially study the theology of church *from below*, through an analysis of the diverse experiences of assemblies in various architectural periods. The designs and interior arrangements of church buildings over the centuries reflect different understandings of the theology of church, and, more particularly, of the roles of the ordained and the non-ordained faithful.

The earliest Christians celebrated the Lord’s Supper or “breaking of bread” in homes. In the second and third centuries, houses were remodeled/expanded into gathering spaces for the Eucharist. During the fourth century, in the West, the imperial Roman architectural style called basilica was adopted. In Rome, some basilicas were erected over the site of the house in which the community had earlier assembled. (We shall likewise consider alternate architectural styles that developed in the East.) In the West, later centuries saw the rise of Romanesque, Gothic, and then Italian Renaissance architecture. After the Reformation, Baroque architecture emerged, followed by Rococo. The nineteenth century saw a Gothic revival, exemplified by St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York and the Villanova University church. More recently, modern architectural styles and materials have been adopted and applied.

Exploring church architecture, this course will consider how historical, cultural, and artistic contexts shaped the liturgical celebrations and the theology of church of each era. In his address opening the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII declared that the teaching of the Church “should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing and the way in which it is presented is another.” In the post-Vatican II era, how should contemporary Christianity be presented or embodied in architecture, and in art and music? How can contemporary church architecture—in its exterior designs and interior arrangements—and the characteristics of the liturgical celebration within those buildings, best respond to the present cultural era?

Economic Ethics

THL 9320-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in Ethics [THL 8004]

Dr. Gerald Beyer

Wednesday 9:00 – 11:20 am

This course will utilize historical and contemporary sources in Christian ethics, Catholic social teaching, economics, and other disciplines to explore questions of economic justice and Christian discipleship in the economic sphere. Specifically, the course considers questions such

as globalization, consumerism, poverty and its relationship to race and gender, economic rights, just wages and other worker justice issues and socially responsible investment.

Catholic Sexual Ethics
THL 9370-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in Ethics [THL 8004]

Dr. Kathleen Grimes
Thursday 7:00 – 9:20 pm

This course seeks answers to the following questions: what makes sex good? And what, if anything, makes sex Catholic? In pursuit of these questions, students will consider the relation between sex, discipleship, and the imago dei. This course brings the Catholic tradition to bear on contemporary questions of sexual controversy, paying special attention to Thomistic approaches to natural law and virtue theory. Issues to be discussed include same-sex relationships, sex and gender, desire, contraception, pornography, and the family.

Thought of Augustine
THL 9400-001

Prerequisite: Thought of Augustine [THL 8400]

Dr. Jonathan Yates
Monday 2:00 – 4:20 pm

Both the *Order of Saint Augustine* (O.S.A.) 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” in one’s theology as well as in one’s view of life and of the world in which we find ourselves?

This course will contribute to answering these and other complex questions by deepening your knowledge of both the thought of Augustine of Hippo (354-430 C.E.) and of aspects of his teaching that have made him the single most influential post-biblical theologian in the entire history of western Christianity. These aspects include his views on sin, grace, human sexuality, and predestination/election, all of which have proven crucial for solidifying many of the positions and doctrines for which Augustine was read in later generations and for which he is best known in our own.

Via primary texts in translation, this course will study the most important theological elements of Pelagianism and of the so-called Pelagian Controversy, Western Christianity’s first indigenous “heresy.” Thus, the vast majority of this course’s Augustinian texts will be “late,” having been produced during the last two decades of Augustine’s life (i.e., between 411-430 C.E.). But this course will also expose you to texts produced by the “Pelagians” themselves: both samples drawn from Pelagius’s own efforts and texts produced by (sometimes anonymous) authors who were broadly sympathetic to him and/or to his theological views.

It is indisputable that many of the ideas Augustine formulated and/or refined during this “late” period were largely formulated and/or refined in direct response to the published works of one or more “Pelagian” author(s). Likewise, it is indisputable that they all continue to impact the intellectual and theological context of our own day—for the better or for the worse.

THM: Ancient Scriptural Exegesis
THL 9430-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in History [THL 8002]

Dr. Kevin Hughes
Tuesday 7:00 – 9:20 pm

For Christians in Late Antiquity, the interpretation of Scripture was intertwined intimately with both the formation of a self-consciously Christian culture and the contemplative heights of mystical union. Through a close study of patristic Song of Songs commentaries, including those of Origen of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory the Great, and key recent critical studies by John David Dawson, Frances Young, Denys Turner, and others, we will grapple with key questions of theology and culture: theopoetics and the role of eros; body, soul, and spirit; ecclesial identity and Israel; the apophatic (at least these).

Catholicism and Political Modernity
THL 9470-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in History [THL 8002]

Dr. Massimo Faggioli
Monday 7:00 – 9:20 pm

One key aspect of the understanding of the role of the Catholic Church in today's world is the history of the "political culture" of Catholicism: government, power, rights, revolution, and a new geopolitical context. This seminar will deal with some fundamental issues in the relationship between Catholicism and politics from the point of view of the development of some ideas about politics in Catholic teaching.

The readings and discussion will focus on the experience and perspectives of Catholic theologians and of the Catholic institution, from the first to the second millennium and with a particular focus on the 19th and 20th centuries.

The course combines *theology, canon law, political science, history* - in an historical-theological analysis of the issues key to understand and address the role of the Church in the context of contemporary multicultural and global social conditions and interactions.

Spiritual But Not Religious
THL 9540-001

Prerequisite: Foundations in Spirituality [THL 8003]

Dr. Brett Grainger
Wednesday 4:30 – 6:50 pm

Defining "spirituality" today is a bit like trying to nail Jell-O to a wall. A diffuse and hazy term in popular usage, it has been summoned to capture a range of ideas, feelings, desires, and practices that seem to have little in common: mountain climbing, crystal therapy, meditation, Reiki, yoga, astral projection, vegetarianism, and telepathy, to name but a few. So why do an increasing number of Americans identify themselves as "spiritual but not religious" and what does it mean to do so?

This course explores the modern turn to non-institutional forms of religion. We begin by surveying some of the historical figures and movements from the last two centuries that have contributed to the emergence of a nascent "tradition" in spirituality. We will also consider the range of intellectual, cultural, and social forces implicated in these developments, including consumerism, popular culture, psychology, democratic norms, gender, race, globalization, and pluralism.

Taking an approach that is empathetic and critical, we will attend to the sources of spirituality's appeal assess a number of trenchant critiques raised by its opponents. Among the

questions we will ask: What is spirituality and what distinguishes it from religion? How does spirituality relate to science and to “secular” forms of identity? How has institutional religion responded to trends in privatized spirituality? Is spirituality’s amalgamative drive—its ceaseless borrowing across religious traditions—ever separable from the politics of empire and neoliberalism? Are spirituality’s therapeutic regimens salvageable from a culture of narcissism and an economy of unsustainable consumption? Is spirituality the future or the end of American religion?