Faith, Reason and Culture
THL 1000-001
Fr. Francis Caponi, OSA
MWF 8:30 – 9:20 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 Christian 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 Christian 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 Christian answers to the big questions.

Required Texts
• C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
• Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ*
• Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*

Faith, Reason and Culture
THL 1000-002
Prof. Kenneth Fleischer
MWF 8:30 – 9:20 am

After establishing a foundational understanding of the relationship of faith and reason within modern and postmodern thought, the course surveys both Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament to extract the key elements of Christian faith found in the Nicene Creed. From this platform, the course explores “theology in action” within individual and collective investigation of several environmental crises through various lenses of Christian ethics. Finally, the course then examines “theology in thought” focusing primarily on the development of the Christian doctrine of God. Throughout the journey, particular effort is made to balance tradition and contemporary thought in scriptural interpretation and systematic theology.

Faith, Reason and Culture
THL 1000-003
THL 1000-006
THL 1000-026
Dr. Edward Hastings
MWF 10:30 – 11:20 am
MWF 11:30 – 12:20 pm
TR 4:00 – 5:15 pm

This course will examine what it is we believe as contemporary Christians. In the character of St. Augustine and in the words of St. Anselm, we will approach our beliefs with an attitude of “faith seeking understanding.” We will begin with our notion of God and consider how this notion developed throughout history. The course will then consider the sources and traditions of Christianity and reflect upon how our experiences and actions have been influenced by these foundations.
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 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 also engage 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 traditions.

Life is a mystery. It is a challenge to understand ourselves, our beliefs, our relationships, and our world. This course invites and challenges students to do theology, that is, to think critically and to reflect on the ultimate mystery, the mystery of God, who is revealed through the Word in Scripture, and through the Word Made Flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ. Throughout our study of the Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Testament we will explore key themes such as God as Creator, and the human person made in the image of the one God who loves us. We will reflect on the topic of faith, and the realities of grace and sin. We will focus on the theme of redemption through the saving power of Jesus, his cross and resurrection. We will explore the concept of the Paschal Mystery which gives us meaning and hope for the future. We will discuss the theme of discipleship in each of the four gospel and reflect on the call of each person to follow Jesus in his/her own unique way. We will explore the themes of faith and culture and discuss the influences of culture on religion and the influences of religion on culture. We will read and discuss current events that relate to religion, theology, culture and the world. Course requirements: Active participation in class discussions, which will include evidence of having completed the assigned readings; three tests and a final examination; one major writing project which includes the opportunity for revision; smaller writing assignments. The final grade will be an average of five grades: four test grades (including the exam), and the major writing assignment. Grades for other written assignments will be factored into the test grades. Class participation will also be taken into consideration when computing your final grade.

In every time and place, humans wrestle with the same issues: What is my purpose? Why is there suffering? How do I deal with loneliness? With relationships? Is there a God or at least something “more” to life? What should I do with the “one, wild and precious life” I have? We will sample Catholic Christianity’s answers to these questions and students will be given the opportunity to “try them on” and determine if these answers make sense for them. We will also pay attention to the mutual influence of religion and culture and dream about the role students may play as they step into
adulthood. Students will try out various prayer/reflective practices as well as perform service in the community.

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As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces students to the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John, which have contributed to shaping Christianity’s response to the fundamental human questions that underlie all religions and shape the human search for meaning. With a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, students engage these New Testament sources of 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 also engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary Greco-Roman cultural challenges. In this course, students are equipped to appreciate the ongoing quest of Christian faith seeking understanding, especially in relation to the Gospel witness concerning God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus’ disciples.

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“Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther ... are not dead but living. They still speak and demand a hearing as living voices”

Karl Barth

THL 1000 is not a “series of lessons” as much as it is a substantial, disciplined and spirited exploration of landmarks in the historical development of thoughts about God, Jesus, and the nature of shared life in a gathered community of committed believers. Secondly, this course is structured to condition scholarly encounter with specific issues such as the following: How can one speak of the existence of “one Church” when there are so many different (and at times, competing) denominations? How can community members claim membership in a “Holy Church” when so many members fall short of that holiness? What is the relation between the Sacred Scriptures (plus subsequent authoritative writings) and the Apostolic Tradition within which they were produced? What are the prospects for mutual enrichment and edification in the dialogue between Christians and those who do not identify with the Christian Tradition? Finally, what are Christian perspectives on the ultimate destiny of us all?

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The meaning of Christianity always has been thought out via interpretative models that reflect and are linked to the horizons of human experience. In other words, the essence of the faith is one thing and its articulation is another. In that regard, this section of the course will presuppose and be in dialogue with the scientific understanding of an evolving universe, a process of some 13.8 billion years. Intelligence or reason—as embodied in science and culture—engaged in a dialogue with the perspectives of faith can mutually challenge and enrich our human creativity, freedom, self-mastery, and solidarity. The course will focus on contemporary Christian understanding of God, Creation understood as an ongoing relationship, God's self-giving relationship with humans, human freedom and its effects, the problem of suffering, Jesus as a divine way of being fully human, and the community coming from Jesus. It will incorporate an overview/application of current biblical methodology, through analysis of selected passages from the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures.
This course offers an introduction to the history of Christian faith and culture through a careful reading of primary texts from the Eastern and Western traditions. Throughout, we will explore how certain beliefs, doctrines, and practices came to be articulated, defended, and embodied. Basic to our approach will be the contention that theology grows out of reflection upon lived experience. In order to highlight this intersection of theology and religious experience, we will read texts from a variety of genres—including saints’ lives, mystical writings, sermons, systematic treatises, and contemporary spiritual memoirs. We will also examine practices of devotion and piety—martyrdom, pilgrimage, prayer, meditation, and fasting, among others—in order to show the dynamic relationship between belief and practice, high ideals and the complicated realities of daily life, and the ways in which Christians have lived and understood faith within various cultural contexts.

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces you 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 Roman Catholicism, you will 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. You will also engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. In this course, you 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 traditions.

After a consideration of the horizon of our reflections – culture –, we will engage with basic human questions, such as faith, community and meaning, interrelating, according to the intention of the course, Christian and contemporary cultural perspectives in order to discuss the continued relevance of Christian approaches to these questions and their transformation in today’s culture. We will work with different genres of material and include diverse perspectives in our discussions.

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. Be prepared to introspect on deep issues of faith and justice; topics which maybe uncomfortable which we are now affected by globally. Group collaboration is a key ingredient to successful conversations in this class for presentations.

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.
In this particular section of the course, you will use historical, biblical, theological, and social science approaches to studying the relationship between theology and popular culture. You will also examine contemporary North American culture with the goal of developing ways to discern images of God, human nature, good and evil, salvation, and life beyond death that often operate below the surface of the common cultural life in North America.

**Faith, Reason and Culture**  
**THL 1000-015**  
Fr. Kevin DePrinzio, OSA  
TR 8:30 – 9:45 am

What is Faith? What is Culture? And can dialogue between the two be reason-able? As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces students to the rich living tradition of Christianity, a tradition that in its roots is about this essential dialogue and whose aim is to respond to the fundamental human questions that underlie religion and shape the human search for meaning. With a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, students will engage Christianity as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time. Students will also engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges.

One of the hallmarks of Augustine’s contribution to theology is his concern for oneness of mind and heart, which he used not only to form his own community of friends modeled on the Christian community found in the Acts of the Apostles, but to construct the basis of his pastoral ministry. This course will attend to this concern for integration of material and for integration of mind and heart and will employ a variety of instructional methods that will help the student better engage and be engaged by the course. And so, there will be lecture, facilitated class discussion, online assignments and group work.

**Faith, Reason and Culture**  
**THL 1000-016**  
Dr. Jessica Murdoch  
TR 8:30 – 9:45 am

This course is an introduction to Catholic theology. In this course we will examine the central themes of Christian thought, including: the relationship between faith and reason, the nature and purpose of revelation, the Christian understanding of the human person, the doctrine of the Trinity, the person of Christ, and the sacraments.

**Faith, Reason and Culture**  
**THL 1000-019**  
Fr. Martin Laird, OSA  
TR 10:00 – 11:15 am

At the very beginning of his time as Pope, Benedict XVI reminds us that, “Faith is not a bundle of doctrines but a relationship.” Like any relationship there is growth and development. The same is true with faith. Its growth and development, like any living relationship, normally includes alternating periods of curiosity, questioning, doubt, which ultimately lead to deepening trust. This introduction to the theological life is no mere high school course in religion that some may bring to college with them. Often this has involved parroting back to the teacher what we have been taught for years (or what we think we have been taught). Perhaps this sufficed as we moved from childhood into our high school years. But is this adequate? Is this sufficient to meet the challenges faith undergoes as we move through our college years into emerging adulthood? This course will focus on topics such as (1) the stages of faith development from childhood into stages of adulthood (keep in mind that an adult faith does not always happen). (2) How the practice of contemplation (silent meditation) opens us up to our
own depths that we did not know were there. This is crucial to the full development of faith. (3) God is not a thing. God does not exist the way other things exist such as a pencil, your cell phone, gravity, back holes, quantum entanglement. These things can be explored scientifically. What then is the nature of God if God cannot be measured, is both near and far, cannot be pinned down by concepts. Put another way how is God not a problem that can be solved, but an intimate mystery that can be loved and encountered? (4) How does the Church express its embrace of inclusivity (diversity/inclusion) or all people and learn from the wisdom of other faiths. Finally (5) how does the Church consider the positive relationship between science and religion?

Faith, Reason and Culture
THL 1000-018
Dr. Carey Walsh
TR 10:00 – 11:15 am

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 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 also engage 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 traditions.

Faith, Reason and Culture
THL 1000-021
Prof. Gregory Grimes
TR 1:00 – 2:15 pm

The focus of this course is on the relevance of the Christian message and the Catholic tradition for confronting and dealing with the most pressing concerns of contemporary culture. In short, how does this message and tradition equip people today for living a more meaningful existence, oriented toward God, and for working toward a more peaceful and just society, as envisioned in the reign of God? We begin with a diagnosis of the contemporary situation: how history impacts our preconceived understandings; how market and cultural forces as well as technology impact our sense of self, how we think and how we engage the world; how economic trends and practices, political and social violence, ecological concerns, scientific naturalism and the resurgence of atheism, challenge claims for meaning, truth and respectability of worldviews informed by rich traditions, namely Christianity. With a properly historical examination of Biblical sources, we will attempt a lively rendering of what Jesus meant by the reign of God, how he sought to reorient people toward this vision of God’s intentions for humanity, and how this message was demonstrated in his own life. Students will learn interpretive skills that help to open a conversation between Jesus’s message and contemporary cultural concerns and questions.

These same skills and fundamental understanding of Jesus’s message will be applied in examining the role of the church in today’s world, as well as the issue of the relationship between faith, reason and culture. Here we will examine the role of Christianity in culture and civil society, as well as discuss key issues that challenge the church’s role in the world, as well as how these challenges can be faced. Thus a more vivid and lively understanding of the Gospels and early Christianity is sought with a view toward gaining insights as to how a more relevant understanding of Christianity can be
achieved in today’s world. And further, how this understanding can lead to a better existence for particular persons and the world as a whole.

Researchers at MIT recently hailed Jesus of Nazareth as the most influential person in the history of the world, and Christianity stands as one of the major forces behind the development of Western culture. At the same time, however, religious faith is increasingly under attack, and some persons are claiming that atheism has won “the culture war.” How can we make sense of such a situation? This course will aim to do so in three main ways. First, under the rubric of “Culture,” it will survey the contemporary social and religious landscape, focusing on the rise of atheism in modernity and on how Christians have sought to address it. Second, with regard to “Reason,” it will explore what may be the greatest question to confront the human mind: does God exist? Finally, with an eye to “Faith,” it will examine the origin and nature of what Christians believe about God. The upshot, it is hoped, will be a course that will not only equip students to better understand the core teachings of Christianity, but also will help them to situate those teachings in the context of humanity’s perpetual interest in, and questioning of, the possibility of transcendence.

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.

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 engage 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.
In this particular section of the course, you will use historical, biblical, theological, and social science approaches to studying the relationship between theology and popular culture. You will also examine contemporary North American culture with the goal of developing ways to discern images of God, human nature, good and evil, salvation, and life beyond death that often operate below the surface of the common cultural life in the US.

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“Christian” and “Christianity” are ancient and complex terms (cf. Acts 11:25-27). Questions such as “What is a Christian like?” or “What is Christianity?” will undoubtedly receive various responses depending upon to whom and in what context(s) they are asked.

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational Theology course asks you to consider several important aspects of what it means to be a Christian (in terms of faith, reason, and faith-based action, i.e., ethics), even as it also asks you to consider several important ways in which Christians have influenced (and have been influenced by) the cultures in which they have lived. Likewise, this course asks you to analyze several important beliefs, practices, and lifestyles of Christianity, both as they have developed through the past twenty centuries and as they continue to develop in our day. This course will do these things via a selection of primary texts, contemporary literature, film, social commentary, communal “faith and culture” events (see below), and focused discussions, many of which will draw directly upon either select Christian thinkers or select critics of Christianity or both.

Specifically, this course will look closely at some of Christianity’s attempts to explain itself both to itself and to its cultural (i.e., its intellectual, social, and political) opponents. This course will look just as closely at some (often implicit) attempts to discredit Christianity and/or to construct a way of life for which Christianity is assumed to be irrelevant, outdated, or (intellectually) exhausted. Along the way, this course will provide you with some of the tools that are necessary for participating in contemporary cultural debates that either directly or indirectly intersect with Christianity’s claims, values, and/or (traditional) lifestyles.

In conjunction with three other sections of THL-1000, participants in this course will attend four “faith and culture” events during the semester. These four events will be required, but they will also take place during class time. These events and their supporting activities (e.g., readings and in-class debates/discussions) will comprise roughly twenty-five percent of this course’s material and, via exams and/or quizzes, will make up an important part of its assessment process.

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This section uses Christian ethics as a port of entry to study the dynamic of faith, reason, and culture. Attention will be given to sources for ethical decision making, the use of Scripture, different types of Christian moral reasoning, and the meaning of using Jesus as a model for the ethical life. Then, using the knowledge gained during the more foundational segment of the course, we will undertake the applicative move by analyzing several contemporary ethical issues, including, but not limited to, the modification of our bodies via advanced technologies.

In conjunction with three other sections of THL-1000, participants in this course will attend four “faith and culture” events during the semester. These four events will be required, but they will also take place during class time. These events and their supporting activities (e.g., readings and in-class debates/discussions) will comprise roughly twenty-five percent of this course’s material and, via exams and/or quizzes, will make up an important part of its assessment process.
Faith, Reason and Culture
THL 1000-028
Dr. Brett Grainger
TR  4:00 – 5:15 pm

This course is an exploration of the religious impulse in human culture, as that impulse has been expressed in traditions of Christianity. After familiarizing ourselves with some of the distinctive methods (historical, theological, and social scientific) used by scholars in the study of theology and religion, we will attend to some of the central themes, movements, practices, and tensions that characterize Christianity as a “lived religion,” which is to say, religion as it is lived out in everyday life. Among other topics, we will explore the Christian conceptions of the sacred, ritual practice, religious authority, nature, and the human condition.

Faith, Reason and Culture
THL 1000-100
Dr. Stefanie Knauss
Monday  6:10 – 8:50 pm

As an integral part of the Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, this foundational course introduces you 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 Roman Catholicism, you will 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. You will also engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. In this course, you 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 traditions. After a consideration of the horizon of our reflections – culture –, we will engage with basic human questions, such as faith, community and meaning, interrelating, according to the intention of the course, Christian and contemporary cultural perspectives in order to discuss the continued relevance of Christian approaches to these questions and their transformation in today’s culture. We will work with different genres of material and include diverse perspectives in our discussions.

Faith, Reason and Culture
THL 1000-101
Dr. Ilia Delio
Tuesday  6:10 – 8:50 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 religion and shape the human search for meaning. With a particular focus on Roman Catholicism, students will engage Christianity as a living tradition of beliefs and practices that have developed over time in various cultural and religious contexts. Students will also engage Christian truth-claims, themes, values, and witness as resources for analyzing and critically evaluating contemporary cultural challenges. A fundamental aim of the course is to appreciate the ongoing quest of the Augustinian theme, faith seeks understanding, as it enters into conversation with a range of human knowledge and experience, including other faith traditions.

Faith, Reason and Culture
THL 1000-102
Dr. Michael McElwee
Thursday  6:10 – 8:50 pm

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The world culture is derived from cult, and so in the broadest sense we could say that cultures are formed and shaped by faiths or worldviews. For this class we will look at Christianity’s relation to culture – and suppose that the connector between faith and culture is reason or philosophy. A class about faith, reason and culture has to examine those three things in respect of what they are in themselves, and how they relate to each other, either favorably or critically, and this we will do from a Christian perspective. John Paul II wrote about faith and reason that they, “…are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.” The critical term there is truth. In Christianity the standard of truth is the person and reality of Christ, but truth is also a term that implies reason and good philosophy and the reasoned effort to achieve it.

Faith refers to what is believed, why it is believed, and how that belief has been lived. Therefore, we will look at that faith in its origins and how it has appeared in history and developed in history. That exercise will show us, among other things, how Christianity has impacted culture, and by analogy how it may do so today.

Paul said that our faith (worship) should be “reasoned” (Rom 12:1). Peter said we should “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have”. The Church has a long tradition of using the best reason or philosophy available to explain its faith to persons and cultures from ancient Greece to modern China. This is always the challenge of Christianity.

We will seek in this class that reasoned faith, in dialogue with culture where those connections can be made. That means examining everything from the central Christian doctrines like the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Bible, the history and development of the Church and theology, and the mutual influences between Christianity and culture from the beginning. The goal is that at the end students will have a knowledge of the faith and an understanding of the rich connections between faith and culture, and that students could explain and apply these in their futures.
This course introduces the student to the study of the basic elements of the Christian faith tradition and to the method of critical theological reflection within a contemporary context.

How should we approach this introductory course? It’s hard to know because of three important factors: the participants all have varying backgrounds and attitudes with regard to religion; a course on religion or Christian theology taught within the university is probably different from any other study of religion that the participants have ever done; and our contemporary Western culture, which is the context for our study and which is made up of so many diverse factors and interests, argues many times against the meaningfulness of those same religious realities that we want to examine in this course.

Any theology course which doesn’t take these points into account is doomed even before it starts. To have a productive course, then, it may look as though we have to handle just about everything. But we only have a semester, and we can handle only a limited number of topics. I would suggest these as a way to gain insight into the basic issues:

1. a brief diagnosis of contemporary Western culture, looking especially at its relationship to religious experience and to Christianity in particular;
2. an examination of the character and tasks of Christian theology;
3. a study of the biblical Jesus, and the ethical effect that Jesus has on the lived experience of those who commit themselves to discipleship (following Jesus and the God of Jesus);
4. a study of some of the basic faith claims of Christianity (the nature of faith and revelation, the Christian doctrine of God, salvation/redemption/liberation, the Christian view of the human person), along with some application, showing how these claims relate to contemporary lived experience, including its social, political, and economic concerns.

The course requirements are personal and active presence at all class sessions, two research assignments (between 2 and 4 printed, double-spaced pages in length), two interim tests (first quarter and third quarter of the course), a mid-term exam, and a final exam.

No religion hovers above culture. Rather, it is embodied by living, breathing human beings in time and space, constituted by persons and societies of varying beliefs and practices. Christianity is no different. This religious tradition (or traditions) developed in response to a first century Galilean Jewish teacher named Yeshua ben Yusef. He is also known as Īsa, Yesu Masih, Jesucristo, Tian chu, Jidu, Xristos, and Christ. From its inception, Christianity has been a cross-cultural phenomenon, born from the encounter of Judaism and Hellenism in a time before the inception of a genus called “religion.” Since that time, Christianity has both encountered culture, been a bearer of culture, and has itself been shaped by culture—leading to tremendous global diversity. And yet all the while it has been animated by two root questions: “Who do you say that I am?” and “What must I do to be saved?”. The answers to both questions necessitate the birth of theology, or “faith seeking understanding.” While in this class we will certainly be “doing theology,” we will employ other fields of learning in this course: anthropology, social theory, comparative religion, philosophy, and history, ever conscious that with a subject so vast and with questions so vital, no one methodology and no one interpretive lens is itself adequate to the task. Finally, the method of instruction will vary. You can expect lectures, textual exegesis, film, case studies, and discussion—lots of discussion.
Karl Marx famously stated that religion is “the sigh of the oppressed creature” and “the opium of the people.” Like many thinkers before and after him, Marx argued that Christian faith impedes human progress and the promotion of justice. On the other hand, Christianity increasingly emphasized the relationship between faith and justice throughout the 20th century. Does Christianity hinder or foster justice and the common good? Has Christianity helped or hindered the advancement of the rights of women? Can Christian faith be reconciled with evolution, or does the acceptance of evolution make faith obsolete, as the New Atheists staunchly contend? In this course we will examine the responses of Christian theologians and their critics to such questions. We will also consider the political, social, and economic implications of the classic theological doctrines, sources, and ritual practices of the Catholic tradition, along with obstacles to Christian discipleship such as consumerism, racism, and excessive individualism.