

## AREA II: THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

The work of this area includes analysis of the development, thought, and institutional life of the Christian community in various periods and contexts, and training in the substance and forms of theological positions and argumentation.

1. The comprehensive purpose of the courses designated Theological Studies is to foster an understanding of the classical theological tradition of Christianity, acquaint students with contemporary theological thought, and develop the skills necessary to engage effectively in critical analysis and constructive argument.
2. The comprehensive purpose of the courses designated Christian Ethics is to foster an understanding of the classical theological tradition of Christian moral thought, acquaint students with contemporary Christian moral reasoning, and develop the skills necessary to engage effectively in critical analysis and constructive argument.
3. Liturgical Studies is intended to foster a serious and scholarly engagement with the origins and historical evolution of inherited patterns of worship, and to prepare students to lead the worship of contemporary Christian communities with competence and sensitivity.
4. The Denominational Courses are offered primarily, although not exclusively, for the constituencies of particular denominations. Distributional credit in Area II will be granted for only one denominational course.

### **REL 602a, Work, Debt, and Christian Witness** Kathryn Tanner

The course examines the changing nature of work and the growing role of debt within the U.S. economy. A variety of theoretical resources for understanding these changes is explored, along with theological perspectives on them. Area II. Prerequisite: REL 600 or REL 626 or the equivalent. 3 Course cr

### **REL 6091a, United Church of Christ Polity** Sarah Drummond

This course explores the polity of the United Church of Christ (UCC). The UCC is a young tradition rooted in numerous, different, centuries-old Christian denominations that, in 1957, sought voluntary covenantal connection. In this course, participants learn about the history, ethos, theology, polity, and ministries of the UCC. They explore the leadership practices for clergy of this tradition, which values local control, flat hierarchy, and trust in the Holy Spirit. 3 Course cr

### **REL 6201a, Early Christian Political Thought** Awet Andemicael

This course examines early Christian political thought, focusing on the contexts and conversations that shaped Christian theo-political thought from the Apostolic period to Augustine's *City of God*, as well as theological dynamics that continue to inform Christian political discourse today. Through readings, lectures, class discussion and presentations, students explore how Christians framed and grappled theologically with the political challenges which emerged in the first to early fifth centuries, including: Christian identity formation in dialogue with Greco-Roman and Jewish perspectives; state-sponsored persecution; dilemmas around political involvement, military service, wealth, and other church-empire tensions; and the shifting role of the church from a counter-cultural movement actively awaiting Christ's immanent return to an imperially-sanctioned religion settling in for a long-term presence on earth. In addition, the course

considers how early Christian texts provide theo-political resources that remain relevant today, including around concepts of power, freedom, authority, community, and the political dimension of creaturely and societal life. 3 Course cr

**REL 6202a, The Liturgical Year** Tyler Sampson

This course studies the history, theology, and practice of the liturgical year in an ecumenical context. As a course in liturgical studies, students are introduced to the liturgical and ritual marking of time, how and why feasts are celebrated, and the centrality of the mystery of salvation to the church's year. We pay special attention to how the feasts and seasons of the Church's year coincide with Christian prayer, song, and the lectionary cycle, and discuss practical dimensions of drawing upon the liturgical year as sources for catechesis and spiritual development in pastoral settings. Prerequisite: Foundations of Christian Worship or instructor permission. 3 Course cr

**REL 6204a, Religion and Ecology** Ryan Darr

This seminar offers a high-level orientation to the diverse and multidisciplinary field of religion and ecology. The course invites students to think synthetically about religion and ecology across subfields and disciplinary boundaries. It includes attention to history, biblical studies, ethics, theology, spirituality, activism, and literature. The course is multireligious in its reach but centered primarily on issues related to Christianity and ecology. 3 Course cr

**REL 6206a, Liberal Religion and Unitarian Universalism in U.S. History** Tisa Wenger

This course examines the complex history of Unitarian Universalism as part of the larger phenomenon of liberal religion in the United States. It is designed for YDS students who are part of these movements or for anyone who wants to understand their histories. What is the historical relationship between liberalism and religion? How did liberal religion take shape in the United States? How have liberal religious movements intersected with other cultural, social, and political forces over time? What challenges and internal contradictions have these movements faced? How do they fit into or diverge from broader trends in American religious history? 3 Course cr

**REL 623a, Theologies of Religious Pluralism** Mark Heim

This course explores the primary theological perspectives through which Christians interpret the fact of religious pluralism and the substance of diverse religious traditions. It also introduces students to the area of comparative theology. The primary aim is to allow students to develop a constructive theology of religious pluralism to support leadership for religious communities in pluralistic societies, participation in interreligious dialogue, and engagement with the reality of multiple religious practices and belonging. Area II and Area V. Prerequisite: at least one term of study of theology. 3 Course cr

**REL 624a, Experience in Ethics** Clifton Granby

This course offers a critical examination of the category of experience, with special attention to its conception and deployment in nineteenth and twentieth-century American philosophical, religious, and political discourse. The course focuses on some influential, if limited appraisals of experience by classical pragmatists such as William James and John Dewey. It also engages the work of contemporary critics such as Sarah Ahmed, Imani Perry, and Cornel West. We pursue various lines of inquiry related but not limited to: presupposition and philosophical method; religious sentiment

and political praxis; mysticism and divine encounter; gendered spatiality and black geographic mappings; and the politics of enclosure, authority, and difference. Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

**REL 629a, Theology and Medicine** Mark Heim and Benjamin Doolittle

Team-taught by a member of the Yale School of Medicine faculty and a member of the Yale Divinity School faculty, this course explores the challenges of contemporary medicine from a theological perspective. It considers theological resources relevant for the practice of medicine and examines the practice of medicine as a resource for deepening theological reflection. Topics of traditional interest in both fields—suffering, illness, healing, and well-being—are addressed in interdisciplinary terms. The focus is not on chaplaincy ministry nor on biomedical ethics, but on a conversation reflecting on the application of healing science and religious wisdom to human need. Key to this conversation is recognition that doctors and theologians share a need for the healing and spiritual health they hope to nurture in others. There are class meetings at Yale New Haven Hospital in settings where the spirit and body intersect, through cooperation with the Program for Medicine, Spirituality, and Religion at Yale School of Medicine. Area II. Prerequisite: one term of graduate-level study of theology is assumed. 3 Course cr

**REL 630a, The Theology and Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer** Eboni Marshall Turman

This seminar is an examination of the life and select writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “the one German theologian who,” German liberation theologian Dorothee Sölle affirmed, “will lead us into the third millennium.” A pastor, theologian, staunch anti-Nazi insurgent, and founding member of the Confessing Church, Bonhoeffer’s life, thought, and death by execution at the Flossenbürg gallows distinguish him as one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century. In this course, students explore the evolution of Bonhoeffer’s theological project and the fundamental themes—Christ, community, discipleship, the church, difference, and justice for the oppressed—of his major work, in conversation with twenty-first-century moral issues like anti-Black racism, sexism, poverty, homo/transphobia, and xenophobia. An investigation of the varied genres of Bonhoeffer’s theological and ethical legacies which emerge from a life that spanned two world wars; crises of class, modernity, and difference; and the death-dealing scourge of the Nazi regime, propel consideration of the cost and the trajectory of responsible Christian faith and moral action for the contemporary church and in a world come of age. 3 Course cr

**REL 631a, Christian Ethics Seminar** Ryan Darr

This seminar offers a high-level introduction to and exploration of the state of the field of Christian ethics. We consider questions of the sources, methods, and interlocutors of Christian ethics. We also consider particular ethical topics garnering attention in the field, including political theology, animal ethics, racial justice and racial capitalism, aesthetics and ethics, religion and economy, recoveries and reappraisals of the history of ethics, and more. The seminar approaches the field in two ways. First, we read large portions of several recently published introductions to the field. This allows us to consider how the field is being understood in the process of handing it on to the next generation. Second, we read and discuss a number of influential recent works in Christian ethics. These works, all of which were published in the last ten years, are meant to give a sense of the breadth and leading edges of the field. Area II and Area V. Prerequisite: REL 615 or equivalent. 3 Course cr

**REL 639a, Suffering** Miroslav Volf

For much of human history, suffering, though unwelcome, was seen as an inescapable part of human life. The Christian faith, along with other great spiritual and philosophical traditions, maintained that at least some suffering can be meaningful and salutary. In the course of modernity, we have come to believe, more tacitly than explicitly, that suffering is an unmitigated evil which can and ought to be eliminated. In this course we use philosophical and theological engagements with suffering in order to explore how to respond to suffering, our own and that of others; discern what forms the struggle against suffering should take; and consider whether and, if so, under what conditions suffering may be embraced as an arduous but life-giving good. Area II.

3 Course cr

**REL 643a, Music and Theology in the Sixteenth Century** Markus Rathey

The Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century was a “media event.” The invention of letterpress printing, the partisanship of famous artists like Dürer and Cranach, and—not least—the support by many musicians and composers were responsible for the spreading of the thoughts of Reformation. But while Luther gave an important place to music, Zwingli and Calvin were much more skeptical. Music, especially sacred music, constituted a problem because it was tightly connected with Catholic liturgical and aesthetic traditions. Reformers had to think about the place music could have in worship and about the function of music in secular life. Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

**REL 662a, The Anglican Way I** Justin Crisp

This course explores the origins and development of the Anglican way of being Christian, focusing attention on two case studies: the Church of England and the Episcopal Church, from the English Reformation (sixteenth century) through “The Colenso Affair” (nineteenth century). The course is a companion to REL 663, making a two-term study of the historical evolution and theological traditions of the Anglican way of being Christian. The primary aim of the course is to analyze and make a constructive theological assessment of early Anglican traditions and to explore these as a pastoral and spiritual resource for Christian life and ministry. We do this by engaging in the study of both well-known and lesser-studied texts and figures. In addition to lectures, each week we discuss the respective texts, interrogating them with respect to the distribution of power, questions arising from colonialism, and issues relevant to the formation of the global Anglican Communion. We ask the questions: What does it mean to be Christian in the Anglican Way, and how do we do Anglican theology? How do we approach the study of the Anglican story in light of the dialectic between the Catholic and contextual, secular and Church, universal and particular, the global and the local? To what extent is the Anglican Way an exercise in depolarization?

3 Course cr

**REL 663a, The Anglican Way II: Continuing Depolarization** Edward Watson

This course explores the continued development of the Anglican way of being Christian in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, giving particular attention to the continued evolution of the Episcopal Church and emergence of the Anglican Communion, as well as the controversies that face Anglicans in their postcolonial situation. It is a companion to REL 662, making a two-term study of the historical evolution and theological traditions of the Anglican way of being Christian. The primary aim of the course is to analyze and make a constructive theological assessment of modern Anglican traditions

and to explore these as a pastoral and spiritual resource for Christian life and ministry. We do this by engaging in the study of both well-known and lesser-studied texts and figures. In addition to lectures, each week we discuss the respective texts, interrogating them with respect to the distribution of power, questions arising from colonialism, and issues relevant to the formation of the global Anglican Communion. These questions guide us: What does it mean to be Christian in the Anglican Way, and how do we do Anglican theology? How do we approach the study of the Anglican story in light of the dialectic between the Catholic and contextual, secular and Church, universal and particular, the global and the local? To what extent is the Anglican Way an exercise in depolarization? Area II and Area III. Prerequisite: REL 662. 3 Course cr

**REL 669a, Black Feminist Theory, Black Womanist Ethics** Eboni Marshall Turman  
This advanced seminar considers the relationship between black feminist theory and black womanist theological ethics. Building on the work of black feminist scholars and intellectual activists, the course places contemporary black feminist thinkers in conversation with black womanist theological ethics to identify critical points of continuity and divergence that frame black women's intellectual production in church, academy, and society. Attention is given to theo-ethical reflection on contemporary social concerns that disproportionately impact the lives and life chances of black women, as well as praxial application of black feminist theoretical considerations. Area II and Area V. Prerequisite: REL 614, REL 605, or permission of the instructor. 3 Course cr

**REL 676a, Natural Theology and the New Animism** Willie Jennings  
This seminar explores the question and status of natural theology in contemporary theology. We engage the question of a natural theology in relation to recent reflections on animism. Two questions guide our exploration. First, what is the relation between visions of animacy and concepts of revelation? Second, how is knowing (God and self) constituted within and/or formed in resistance to visions of an animate and communicative world? With these questions we are seeking to examine the relationship between the idea of a living communicative God and a living communicative world, and the various effects of how one articulates that relationship. Area II. Prerequisite: limited to second-year master's students (unless students have had significant work in theology and philosophy before entering divinity school) who have had at least two courses in bible and two courses in theology and/or ethics. Students from outside the Divinity School are welcome to enroll with permission of the instructor. 3 Course cr

**REL 681a, Imago Dei and Human Dignity** Jennifer Herdt  
Christian conceptions of human dignity are very often explicated in terms of human creation in the image of God. But human dignity can be conceived of in terms either of inherent capacities or in terms of bestowed worth, and the *imago dei* plays a different role in these two conceptions. Moreover, it is not clear that all understandings of the *imago dei* lend themselves to undergirding claims to universal human dignity. Nor is it clear that the discourse of human dignity has served to advance human equality, rather than reinforcing the power and privilege of certain groups. In the first half of this course, we consider structural, relational and functional, and developmental understandings of the *imago dei* as these have emerged in the Christian tradition and consider how these are transformed in the context of Western liberal modernity. In the second half of the course, we turn to contemporary discussions of human dignity against this backdrop and consider the ways in which these debates inform

contemporary thought, touching on questions of race, human rights, and animal dignity. We discuss secular critiques of the notion of human dignity, secular analogues to Christian conceptions, and a range of Christian responses. Prerequisite: REL 615, REL 631, or the equivalent. 3 Course cr

**REL 682a, Foundations of Christian Worship** Melanie Ross

This course focuses on theological and historical approaches to the study of Christian worship, with appropriate attention to cultural context and contemporary issues. The first part of the course seeks to familiarize students with the foundations of communal, public prayer in the Christian tradition (such as its roots in Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament; its Trinitarian source and direction; its ways of figuring time, space, and human embodiment; its use of language, music, the visual arts, etc.). The second part offers a sketch of historical developments, from earliest Christian communities to present times. Area II. 3 Course cr

**REL 687a, Books of Common Prayer: Anglican Liturgy in History, Theology, and Practice** Andrew McGowan

This course traces the development of Anglican liturgy from the time of Henry VIII through the English prayer books of 1549–1662, and then the books and practices of the Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion to the present day. Attention is given to the Reformation, the first American liturgies, the aftermath of the Oxford Movement, and the twentieth-century Liturgical Movement. Theologies and practices in present Anglican worship, including sacramental theology and issues of enculturation, are also addressed. Area II and Area III. Prerequisite: M.Div. students should normally have taken REL 682. 3 Course cr

**REL 689a, Theology, Race, and the Built Environment** Willie Jennings

This seminar explores the processes of building environments and the roles theological reflection and racial reasoning have played and continue to play in those processes. We consider two overarching questions: First, what does it mean theologically to build architectural, geographical, economic, and social environments? Second, how have racial reasoning and racial vision been implicated in that work of building? With these questions we are seeking to articulate the work of creating church and home and the connection between those two works of creating. Area II. Prerequisites: two courses in either theology or ethics or theology and ethics; one course in bible; and one course in history. 3 Course cr

**REL 690a, Liturgical Theology** Melanie Ross

This seminar proposes for scholarly inquiry key texts and themes in theological reflections on Christian worship. We probe some of the voices that initially defined the field in the twentieth century, asking: What is “theological” about this reflection on worship? How is the relationship between Christian faith and cultural context understood? What has been occluded in most traditional definitions of “liturgical theology”? Who is absent, and who cannot be rendered visible, within the traditional framework? We also keep our eyes open to theologies of worship embedded in actual, local congregational practices. These practices are integrated into the work of the seminar through visits to distinctly different worshipping communities during the course of the term. Area II. 3 Course cr