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.

THEOLOGY

REL 600a, Introduction to Theology  Linn Tonstad
The aim of this course is to introduce students to Christian theology, or better, Christian theologies. Through short readings and varied writing assignments, students develop the theological literacy needed to take part in cultural contestations over religion, to engage in church debates, and/or to inform their own decisions about faith and practice. The course makes use of historical and contemporary theological texts, art, and other resources to think about questions of doctrine, meaning, suffering, history, race, materiality, and transcendence. No particular faith commitment or background is assumed. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 603b, Love, Prophecy, and Social Criticism  Clifton Granby
This course examines competing philosophical and theological accounts of love, justice, and prophetic criticism. It also explores the roles, aims, and ethics of prophetic speech in public discourse. The course begins with the exploration of three related but distinct approaches to the ethics of love: philosophical, Augustinian, and a democratically inspired ethic of care of self, other, and world. The middle section of the course focuses on the ethics of prophetic practices and the role of social criticism in the public sphere. The course concludes with examination of the form, content, and methods of courageous exemplars working within and against various black prophetic traditions. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 605a, Black Theology  Eboni Marshall Turman
This course considers varied black theological traditions. It inquires: What does it mean to be black and Christian (and, by extension, to be black, Christian, and poor; black, Christian, and woman; black, Christian, and sexually minoritized; black, Christian, and diasporan immigrant; and/or any aggregation of these social indicators) amidst racist, sexist, heterosexist, and xenophobic social contexts and theological metanarratives rooted in white cisgendered heteronormativity? In light of black realities, black theology asks: Who is God and who is God in Christ for those who live and move and have their being in the margins of church and society? Students preliminarily engage the underpinnings of the black radical tradition as a proto-black theological response to anti-black racism in the United States. Students further engage the substantial intracommunal critique of black theological method. The course concludes with an examination of the problem of ontological blackness, as well as an abbreviated consideration of the peril and promise that varieties of blacknesses and black religious experience hold for the Black Church and for black theological and praxeological tasks in the twenty-first century. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 607a, The Theology of Vatican II  Teresa Berger
This course focuses on the key texts of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) and the theological vision they contain, especially with regard to the nature of the church, the liturgy, the Scriptures, the role of the church in the world, and religious pluralism. The Second Vatican Council constituted the most important moment in the life of the Roman Catholic Church in the twentieth century. Students study the key texts of the Council with emphasis on theological developments that preceded them and made the texts possible. And, for certain conciliar documents, the class examines their reception history in the fifty years since the Council ended. The course is thus not only an inquiry into historical theology but also an engagement with the Catholic tradition in the twenty-first century. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 609a, Theology of the Lutheran Confessions  William Rusch
Through lectures, assigned readings, and class discussion, this course examines the Book of Concord of 1580 and certain other documents that served as sources for the Book of Concord. The objectives of the course are twofold: to develop a knowledge and understanding of the Lutheran Confessions in their original context and to gain an appreciation of the contemporary importance and influence of these Confessions for Christianity in the twenty-first century. Given the nature of Lutheranism, what resources does it have in this century to proclaim the Christian faith and provide guidance for the Christian life? Area II. 3 Course cr
REL 610b, Worship, Cosmos, Creation  Teresa Berger
This course explores the manifold intersections between practices of Christian worship and understandings of creation and cosmos. The specific intersections highlighted during the term include biblical, historical, visual, and musical materials as well as contemporary theological and pastoral reflections on practices of worship. The course seeks to engage the many voices of a “green” Christian faith that have emerged among scholars and practitioners of worship during a time of unprecedented attention to ecological and cosmological concerns. Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 612a, Christ and Being Human  Drew Collins
This course explores the ways in which Christ—as a character in the gospel narratives, an object of Christian theological reflection, and a living presence in the life of the Church—inform Christian visions and practice of (individual, communal, and cosmic) flourishing. Students engage a thematic reading of the Gospel of Luke, organized around the Gospel’s core themes and touch-points with key concrete phenomena of human experience. The guiding questions are: What does it mean for Christ to be the key to human existence and flourishing? And what does flourishing look like if Jesus Christ is taken to be the key? Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 623b, 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. 3 Course cr

REL 625b, Lives of Christ  Chloe Starr
The course premise is simple: each week we read, digest, and discuss a “life of Christ.” The genre is extensive, from studies that offer a themed commentary, such as Jesus as social revolutionary, to the more avowedly fictional Jesus on Mars or Zombie Jesus. We trace the history of lives of Jesus portrayals, looking at genre-defining examples like Ernest Renan’s 1863 Vie de Jesus, and examine the range of historical fiction and modern fictional reworkings in their cultural and social backgrounds. In their papers students may elect to study the texts thematically and focus on comparative Christologies; adopt a literary approach; or combine or cross disciplinary boundaries (including creative writing). All of the works studied take the life of Jesus of Nazareth as their central theme, and all works are available in English, although the diversity of origin languages (Italian, German, Chinese, Japanese, French, etc.) points to one focus of study: the universality of literary reworkings of the gospel narratives and the riches of these texts as a source for intercultural theologies. Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 626b, Systematic Theology  Kathryn Tanner
The purpose of this course is to explore varieties of the Christian “story of everything” and the kinds of visions of the flourishing life that they render plausible and motivate. We do this by examining the work of five key late-twentieth-century theologians from different Christian traditions—Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant—who reflect on the Christian faith by asking the question: What does it mean to think and be a Christian in the context of modernity? We pay special attention to the character and systematic connections of the central elements of their “story of everything” and their bearing on the vision of flourishing life. In conversation with the readings, lectures, and one another, students are encouraged to formulate their own account of flourishing life and the “story of everything” that motivates it. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 627b, Passion and Atonement: The Cross in Contemporary Theological Discussion  Mark Heim
This course explores the significance of the death of Jesus and engages contemporary discussion of theologies of atonement. The objectives are for students to demonstrate knowledge of major interpretive views of the cross in the Christian theological tradition; demonstrate understanding of major contemporary criticisms of atonement doctrine and some major reconstructions of it; encounter the work of René Girard and its relevance for theological reflection; and develop and state their own theological framework for addressing these issues personally, pastorally, and institutionally. Area II and Area V. Prerequisite: one term of theology at graduate level or equivalent. 3 Course cr

REL 629a, Theology and Medicine  Mark Heim and Benjamin Doolittle
Team-taught with a member of the Yale School of Medicine 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 but on a conversation among those who reflect on the application of physiological 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 several field trips to and class meetings at Yale New Haven Hospital. Students attend rounds with medical teams, explore laboratory settings, and meet with faculty who practice 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 642a, Asian American Theologies  Chloe Starr
This course examines the development of Asian American theologies and their key themes: migration, intercultural theology, autobiographical narratives, political activism. The course looks at marginality and intergenerational conflicts, Asian American biblical hermeneutics, and questions such as why Korean Buddhists might attend church when in America. Students are encouraged to undertake a fieldwork project of their own choosing on an aspect of Asian American Christianity. This course is aimed at all students: the topics and
methodologies are highly relevant to anyone doing theology in contemporary society and promote a greater awareness of the need for inter-multicultural theologies in today's America. Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 649a, Christ and the Bodhisattva: Comparative Theology and Buddhist Wisdom  Mark Heim
This course provides a brief introduction to the general field of comparative theology, a basic orientation to Mahayana Buddhist teaching and practice (with a particular focus on the case of the bodhisattva through the lens of Shantideva's classic The Way of the Bodhisattva), and an exploration of Christian comparative reflection on these sources. The class engages several prominent theologians working in the Buddhist-Christian theological conversation and explores the ways in which Christian thought and practice can be informed by comparative learning from Buddhist sources. Area II and Area V. Prerequisite: one term of graduate-level study of theology or equivalent. 3 Course cr

REL 651b, Digital Media, Liturgy, and Theology  Kathryn Tanner and Teresa Berger
This course inquires into ecclesial practices that have migrated online and are digitally mediated, especially those of prayer and worship. In recent years, both very old and entirely new liturgical practices have flourished in digital social space, from the live streaming of worship services to digital prayer chapels, virtual choirs, online pilgrimages, and digitally mediated devotions such as daily prayer via tweets or “pray-as-you-go” apps. Some communities have experimented with so-called cyber-baptisms and, especially in the wake of COVID-19, cyber-communions. Digital social space also hosts communities of faith that exist only online, for example, in web-based interactive virtual reality environments. This course brings the tools and insights of new media theories, liturgical studies, and constructive theology to the inquiry into these ecclesial practices. Area II and Area V. Prerequisite: at least one liturgy and/or theology course (previous or concurrent) is highly desirable. 3 Course cr

REL 660b / WGSS 661b, Queer Theology  Linn Tonstad
This course provides an introduction to queer theology, its theoretical grounding in queer theory, and some of its current controversies and possibilities. The first part of the course considers the idea of queerness as it emerges in some of queer theory’s major theoretical strands, including queer’s relation to capitalism and radical social change, queer of color theory, tensions between queerness and gay and lesbian identity, and method in queer studies. The second part of the course surveys contemporary queer theology from a variety of directions. We examine the dominant Christian and some Jewish approaches to queer theology; ask questions about method, representation, and the nature of complex symbol systems; look at the developing field of trans theology; and consider whether and how religious symbols and claims can reflect or help to transform the social conditions of queer life. The final part of the course looks at performance and performance art, resignification, genre, and the promise of queer religious reflection beyond Christianity and Judaism. Area II. Prerequisite: graduate-level seminar in theology, philosophy, or WGSS/LGBT studies, or permission of the instructor. 3 Course cr

REL 661b, Augustine's City of God  Adam Eitel
This course examines the entirety of Augustine's City of God, to enable students to grasp the multiple themes, arguments, and contexts of one of the most influential and widely read works of Late Antiquity. Area II. Prerequisite: at least one graduate-level seminar in theology, ethics, or philosophy. 3 Course cr

REL 666b, Evil in Early Christian Thought  Gabrielle Thomas
Approaches to supernatural evil form the most striking difference between contemporary Christianity in the West and the Global South. While the South takes seriously “powers and principalities,” the Enlightenment has left the West ambivalent to a great extent. This course introduces students to the nexus of beliefs and practices within earlier Western and Eastern Christian traditions, which take seriously the concept of supernatural evil. It analyzes portrayals and personifications of evil from apostolic times through the sixteenth century. Students analyze evil with respect to diverse themes such as the personification of evil, the status of evil, the construal of evil in accounts of creation and atonement, and the methods of resisting evil employed by the saints. Students are exposed to a range of primary sources and are challenged to both read texts on their own terms and assess their significance for contemporary thought and practice. Area II and Area III. Prerequisite: REL 712. 3 Course cr

REL 670a, Christian Identity and the Formation of the Racial World  Willie Jennings
This course explores the modern racial condition and the possibility of a Christian identity that challenges that condition. This is done by examining the formation and growth of the modern racial world. Within the context of this examination, we engage in three related tasks: (1) we analyze the development and deployment of racial subjectivities in the modern Christian social imagination; (2) we consider African diaspora responses to white Christianity in terms of its Christian forms of witness; (3) we outline in a substantial way a theological vision (drawn in part from African diasporic responses and in part from a recalibration of the original biblical trajectories of Christian identity) that questions the racial order of the world. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 677b, Natural Disasters in the Christian Tradition: Ritual and Theological Responses  Mark Roosien
Natural disasters are uniquely productive sites of ritual action and theological reflection, cutting to the core of a group’s identity and threatening the stability of theological systems. In the Christian tradition, natural disasters have been critical moments in which the relationship among humans, God, and the world are negotiated, both in ritual action and theological reflection. This seminar explores natural disasters in the Christian tradition by examining ritual and theological responses to environmental catastrophe from early Christianity to the present. The questions raised are: How does environmental instability affect the practice and theory of Christianity? What continuities and discontinuities can be seen in Christian responses to natural disasters across time and space? What resources can the history of disaster responses provide for contemporary religious practice? Students are expected to participate actively in class
discussions and write a 10–12-page research paper related to the themes of the course. Students present their work to the class, conference style, in the final two weeks of class. Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

**REL 680a, The Churches of the East: Syrian Orthodox and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Churches**  Bryan Spinks

This course gives an introduction to the different churches of the East. It examines the Christological controversies that caused the divisions between the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Church of the East, using primary documents in English translation. It then focuses on the liturgies of the Syrian Orthodox and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Churches, using primary liturgical texts, classical commentaries, and secondary sources from modern liturgical scholarship. Area II. 3 Course cr

**CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

**REL 615b, Introduction to Christian Ethics**  Jennifer Herdt

This course introduces students to standard debates in Christian moral discourse, with a special focus on norms, practices, and ideals. Drawing from a range of historical and contemporary sources, it examines the role of competing Christian visions in moral and political assessments related but not limited to the ends that persons and groups endorse, the actions they require, and the character traits they esteem. The course begins with recent work on the moral vision of the New Testament canon. It then examines the ethics and politics of war, economy, race, vulnerability, and gender. Central themes include probing the demands of loving God, self, and neighbor; thinking through the challenges posed by complicity, tragedy, and historicity; and devising strategies for naming and resisting social and economic injustices. Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

**REL 631a, Theological Ethics**  Adam Eitel

This course grapples with some of the basic (and also some of the most deeply contested) ideas by which Christian moral discourse is governed. Students examine theological accounts of what it means to live well, focusing mainly on classical and contemporary works of relevance to central problems in Christian moral thought and in modern religious thought more generally: the relations between divine excellence and human flourishing, the sources of human action, the conditions of moral transformation, competing standards of moral assessment, the significance of divine commands, and rival conceptions of sacred value, virtue, tradition, and vocation. Area II.

Prerequisite: REL 615. Students with a demonstrated background in theological and/or philosophical disciplines may be admitted with instructor approval. 3 Course cr

**REL 635b, Catholic Social Teaching**  Adam Eitel

A close reading of magisterial documents promulgated between 1878 and 2015, to introduce students to the tradition of Catholic social teaching and the shifting political, economic, and social conditions from which it has emerged, as well as the various crises to which it has sought to respond. Area II. Prerequisite: at least one graduate-level seminar in theology, ethics, or philosophy. 3 Course cr

**LITURGICAL STUDIES**

**REL 648a, Reel Presence: Explorations in Liturgy and Film**  Teresa Berger

We live in an intensely visual culture, and film—as a key component of that culture—shapes the cultural imagination as well as our own inner lives. Christian liturgy and religious ritual are present in many contemporary films. These “reel presences” are the subject matter of this course, which focuses on worship as it comes to be constructed and reflected in the medium of contemporary film. Representations of worship in films are never value-neutral; they carry within them rereadings and reinterpretations. How then do filmmakers image, exploit, or advance assumptions about Christian worship? In this course, films are seen as theologically and liturgically relevant pertinent “texts” that can be investigated. To sharpen the ability to “read” and interrogate the construal of Christian worship in popular films, films are paired with readings from the field of liturgical studies that illumine the topic embedded in the film’s (sub-)text on liturgy. Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

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

This is the core course in Liturgical Studies. The 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. In addition, select class sessions focus on questions of overall importance for liturgical life, such as the relationship between gender differences and worship life, and the contemporary migration of liturgical practices into cyberspace. Area II. 3 Course cr

**REL 687a, English Reformation Liturgical Traditions and the Evolution of the Books of Common Prayer**  Bryan Spinks

This course falls into two sections. The first covers the period 1500–1789 and is concerned with the development and theologies of the Reformation liturgical traditions in England and Scotland. The second is concerned with the impact of the Tractarian and Liturgical Movements to the present. It considers issues in the proposed revision of the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer and reviews some rites in the Anglican Church of North America BCP 2019, the Church of Ireland BCP 2004, and the BCP of the West Indies. Attendance at the ISM Liturgy Symposium is required. Area II and Area III. Prerequisite: prior or concurrent enrollment in REL 682. 3 Course cr

**REL 690b, 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

DENOMINATIONAL COURSES

Note: Denominational colloquia are listed near the end of this chapter under Courses without Area Designations.

REL 619a, Anglican Theology and History II: ECUSA and the Anglican Communion  Ian Douglas and Justin Crisp
This course explores the origins and development of the Episcopal Church and the global Anglican Communion. The history of the Episcopal Church from colonial origins to its contemporary multinational and increasingly multicultural realities is studied within the context of the growth of worldwide Anglicanism. Attention is given to a variety of theological voices in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. Episcopal polity, with a focus on clergy discipline (Title IV), is offered as a contextual case study of how a contemporary Anglican church orders its life and vocation in service to God’s mission. Contested issues of identity and authority in a postcolonial Anglican Communion frame the discussion of the Episcopal Church in a new missional age. A prevailing question is the relationship between unity and diversity within the Body of Christ. Area II. Prerequisite: REL 618. 3 Course cr

REL 662b, The Anglican Way I  Gabrielle Thomas
This course explores the origins and development of the Anglican way of being Christian, focusing its 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? Area II and Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 691a or b, Ecclesiology, Ministry, and Polity  Staff
Lectures on comparative ecclesiology, doctrines of the ministry, and patterns of church polity in Western Christianity. Sections are arranged to enable students to study the history, doctrine, worship, and polity of their own denominations. The 2020–2021 sections are Presbyterian, Baptist, Unitarian Universalist, and Methodist. Other sections offered, most in alternate years, include United Church of Christ, Lutheran, A.M.E. Zion, and Roman Catholic. Area II. 3 Course cr