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  Willie Jennings
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 contexualizations of 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 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 620 or the equivalent. 3 Course cr

REL 612b, 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—informs 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 616b, Introduction to East Asian Theologies  Chloe Starr
This course introduces a range of theological themes and key thinkers in twentieth- and twenty-first century Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. It surveys different theological movements within these countries (such as "homeland theology," Minjung theology, the "no-church" movement, etc.) and encourages a critical response to the challenges that these theologies raise for Christians in Asia and elsewhere. The course considers contextualization and incultration debates in each of these societies, as well as regional responses to Christianity. We read primary texts in English, with background reading for context, and students are encouraged to develop their own responses to the authors and their thought (e.g., students may submit theological reflections to count toward their grade). Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 617b, Worship, Culture, and Technology  Melanie Ross
The Christian community has long debated the most appropriate ways for faith and worship to relate to cultural surroundings. The first half of this course focuses on theories and definitions of culture. The second half gives special attention to issues of liturgical incultration in North America. Students are invited to explore their own questions about technology in worship through a final presentation and research project on a topic of their choosing. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 633b, 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 626b, Systematic Theology  Miroslav Volf
The aims of this course are (1) to learn the craft of doing theology by close reading of five theologians from ecumenically and socially diverse perspectives and significant trends in contemporary theology; and (2) to reflect critically on the task of theology. We pay special attention to how these theologians’ visions of flourishing life are rooted in the life and person of Jesus Christ; set in the larger story of God’s relation to the world; and informed by Scripture as the primary source for doing theology. Area II. 3 Course cr
REL 639a, 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 knowledge 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 643a, Music and Theology in the Sixteenth Century  Markus Rathen
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 645b, 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 Asian American feminist scholarship. 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 647b, Scientific Thought and Christian Theology  Mark Heim
This course does not attempt a comprehensive survey of the history of relations between science and theology, the areas of scientific research that raise religious issues, or theological doctrines that can be reconsidered in dialogue with science. The course provides a brief overview of major issues arising from physics (cosmology and quantum phenomena), biology (evolution and biogenetic processes), and cognitive science (neurological function) in relation to divine action, incarnation, theological anthropology, salvation, and eschatology. Each year the course focuses extensively on some selected topics. This year the focus is theological interaction with scientific explanations of religion itself, stemming from the cognitive science of religion on one hand ("What is religion doing in our brain?") and evolutionary biological analyses of religion ("What is religion doing in our evolutionary history?") on the other hand. Area II. Prerequisite: a background in theology at least equivalent to REL 600. 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 658a, Sacraments and Sacramentality  Mark Roosien
What is a sacrament? How might material reality be a sign and bearer of the sacred? What are the logics that govern this possibility? This class explores sacraments within ecclesial structures and notions of sacramentality more broadly as a mode of access to divine presence. The first half of the course examines the history of sacramental theology from the early church to the present, before pivoting to contemporary theologies of sacraments and sacramentality. Special attention is given to the natural world and human bodies as sites of sacramentality. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 664a, The Sabbath: The History and Theology of Rest from Antiquity to the Present  Marie-Ange Rakotonaiaina
Keeping the Sabbath goes beyond taking a moment of leisure or a refreshing parenthesis in a world obsessed with time, performance, and productivity. This course traces the history of the Sabbath rest from Genesis to the present, while unveiling its theological significance in Jewish and Christian traditions. Keeping the Sabbath involves new possibilities of dwelling in time, of inhabiting the cosmos, of redefining our sense of labor and (re)imagining our economics, of outlining the boundaries of one's social and religious communities. Thus, the following questions are explored: What are the representations and practices of the Sabbath (both ancient and modern)? How do the discourses surrounding Sabbath practice open new possibilities of being a community of worship and of living in the
society at large? How does rest depend upon one's conceptions of time and one's place in the cosmos? From exploration of biblical texts to contemporary theological reflections on rest, this course is an invitation to tackle the history of the Sabbath in theory and practice. In other words, students will grasp how keeping the Sabbath informs our way(s) of being in the world, of living time, of creating communities, of relating to God and creation. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 662b, Martin Luther, His Life and Work  William Rusch
This course consists of lectures, readings in English translation of selected works of Martin Luther, readings in secondary literature on Luther's life and thought, and class discussion. The course presupposes a basic knowledge of church history and European history, especially medieval and sixteenth-century history in the West. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 671a, Incarnations: Body, Theology, and Performativity  Eboni Marshall Turman
This interdisciplinary seminar considers the interrelationship and the fundamental political transactions among theology, embodiment, and performance. Building on the presupposition of the body as a primary source for constructive theological inquiry, the course interrogates questions of beauty and representation, violence and punishment, discipline and shame, affect, and performance as transformative redress for social constructions of bodily dis/respectability. Intersectional analysis of race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability guides classroom interactions with a range of theories, texts, and methodologies; emphasis is placed on the intersection of Christian theologies with contemporary theo-ethical concerns that emerge from embodied aesthetic considerations. In addition to regular reading and written assignments, the overarching foci of the course require students to perform theological vision and witness beyond the proscriptions of normative intellectual paradigms. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 682b, Marx and Nietzsche on Religion  Kathryn Tanner and Miroslav Volf
Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche have, each in his own way, shaped major trajectories of modern thought, and for each a critical engagement with religion was a central concern. In this course we explore their stances toward religion in the context of their overall philosophical vision. Toward the end of the course, we try to bring the two thinkers into conversation with each other. A major goal is to discern the import Marx's and Nietzsche's critique of religion might have on the way we practice faith and imagine our being in the world. Area II. Prerequisite: one basic course in either theology or philosophy. 3 Course cr

REL 686a, Gratitude  Ryan McAnnally-Linz
Gratitude has been having a moment. Philosophers and theologians have devoted more focused attention to it. Positive psychologists have extolled its many apparent benefits. Media personalities have taught us how to harness its power. Whether it is understood as an emotion, a virtue, a social practice, or some combination of the three, gratitude, we are commonly told, is an ingredient in a good life—maybe even in the good life. This course explores both historical Christian theological reflection on gratitude and contemporary treatments of the subject in theology (Christian and Jewish), philosophy, and psychology. Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 698b, Religious Eros  Kathryn Tanner
This course concerns Christian interpretations of human desire, dissatisfaction, and the search for human happiness: the desire for God as the ground and goal of all human thought and action. Area II. Prerequisite: REL 600 or REL 626 or the equivalent. 3 Course cr

CHRISTIAN ETHICS

REL 615b, Introduction to Christian Ethics  Eboni Marshall Turman
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, Christian Ethics Seminar  Staff
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 and Area V. Prerequisite: REL 615. Students with a demonstrated background in theological and/or philosophical disciplines may be admitted with instructor approval. 3 Course cr

REL 636b, The Ethics of Thomas Aquinas  Adam Eitel
This seminar examines the ethics of Thomas Aquinas. Although chiefly focused on the second part of the Summa Theologica, the course devotes considerable attention to Aquinas's biblical commentaries and Scriptum on the Sentences, his commentary on the work of twelfth-century theologian Peter Lombard. Students consider Aquinas's account of several interlocking topics: the nature of human flourishing; the dynamics of human action; the passions and their role in the moral life; the theological substance of law, grace, virtues, and gifts; the reality of sin; and the promise of redemption. Area II. Prerequisite: at least one graduate seminar in theology, ethics, or philosophy. 3 Course cr
LITURGICAL STUDIES

REL 608b, Christian Initiation in Late Antiquity  Mark Roosien
This course explores the texts and practices of Christian initiation, including baptism, anointing, fasting, confession, etc., in the first five hundred years of the Common Era. The class balances three aspects of early Christian initiation set within their historical and cultural contexts: the evolution of rites and texts, the relationship between initiation and soteriology, and the artistic and architectural settings for ritual performance. Area II.  3 Course cr

REL 611b, Understanding American Evangelical Worship  Melanie Ross
This course draws upon ethnographic studies to introduce students to historical and theological developments in American evangelical worship over the past seventy years. Topics to be covered include liturgical innovations in American megachurches, evangelical patterns and practices of prayer, trends and controversies in contemporary worship music, Pentecostal contributions to evangelical worship, and the role of race in shaping worship identity. Area II.  3 Course cr

REL 655a, Liturgy and Life  Melanie Ross
Vatican II denounced the “split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives,” characterizing it as “among the more serious errors of our age” (Gaudium et Spes, no. 43). How does our experience in the Sunday liturgy relate to the way we live our lives in the “real world”? Is such a distinction between sacred and secular valid? What about the problematic fact that worship is often used to reinforce political and ethical status quo? This course investigates how several contemporary thinkers have addressed these concerns through their liturgical and sacramental theologies. Area II.  3 Course cr

REL 656a, James Cone  Eboni Marshall Turman
“If God is not Black, kill God!” James H. Cone is one of the most important systematic theologians of the twentieth century. The father of black liberation theology, Cone was the foremost systematizer of black God-talk in the modern world and trained more than four generations of black theologians and pastors. More than fifty years ago, amidst the twentieth-century iteration of the movement for black freedom, he dared to contend that black lives matter to God by thinking about God and interpreting the Gospel from the perspectives of poor black people. In the face of anti-black racism and its concomitant violence, he contended for an opaque biblical hermeneutic that indisputably reveals that God is black and black is beautiful. Challenging the veracity of white theology and its malevolent commitments to preserving and propelling anti-black racism, Cone’s scholarship and witness almost single-handedly transformed the intellectual landscape of the modern theological project. This seminar attends to the specificity of James Cone’s treatment of race and the interpretation of the Christian faith. Through intensive primary source engagement, it invites students into an advanced understanding of the full spectrum of Cone’s intellectual contributions toward social transformation in church, academy, and society. In a state-sponsored neo-lynching age of insurrection, this seminar positions Cone’s corpus as a Christian testimony against pernicious white theology and as a map toward the liberation of the oppressed. Special attention is given to Cone’s origins in Jim Crow Arkansas, his vision, method, blues aesthetic, and diasporan global concern for black life and flourishing. Area II.  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, 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 688a, Catholic Liturgy  Teresa Berger
This course offers an introduction to Roman Catholic liturgical traditions and practices. Given the breadth of the subject matter (2,000 years of history; complex dogmatic developments; numerous rites, rituals, and rhythms; contemporary tensions), the course seeks to range broadly, yet has to do so quite selectively. One focus is on key liturgical documents of the past hundred years or so. And throughout the course, attention is paid to the broader cultural realities that always influence practices of worship, e.g., ethnic identities, and, more recently, media developments (for example, the migration of Catholic liturgical practices into digital social space). Area II. Prerequisites: REL 682a, concurrent or completed, will be an asset, as will a course in liturgical studies and/or Catholic theology.  3 Course cr

REL 693a, Gender and Liturgy  Teresa Berger
The basic questions pursued in this course are: How have gender differences shaped liturgical practices, and how does gender continue to inflect Christian worship? The category “gender” will be understood to attend to all gendered identities and sexualities, and thus go beyond binary femininity and masculinity to include all gendered particularities (e.g., eunuchs in Byzantium, or people with intersex conditions in North America today, as well as men and women). This course, then, investigates how liturgical history was profoundly shaped by, and continues to shape, gendered lives and symbolic meanings associated with gender identities. Given the breadth of the
subject matter, the course attends to a spectrum of themes related to gender and liturgy, yet has to do so quite selectively. Overall, the course seeks to create space for a nuanced reflection on gender-specific themes in the liturgical past as both backdrop and resource for contemporary gender-based concerns in the worship life of Christian communities. Area II. Prerequisite: completion of REL 682 is desirable. 3 Course cr

REL 697a, The Eucharist: Communion and Community  Mark Roosien
The eucharist is a meeting point of the divine and the created, the spiritual and the social, the transcendent and the everyday. This class explores the theological, liturgical, and sociocultural dimensions of the eucharist from its origins to the present. It addresses, in particular, the following questions: How did eucharistic rites and texts evolve over time? What are the main theologies of the eucharist historically, and what has been at stake in debates about them? How should we understand the eucharist as both an inclusive and exclusive mode of Christian praxis? Area II. 3 Course cr

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

REL 662b, The Anglican Way I  Justin Crisp
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 663a, The Anglican Way II: Continuing Depolarization  Justin Crisp
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 691a, 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 2021–2022 sections are Lutheran and UCC. Other sections offered, most in alternate years, include Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, A.M.E. Zion, Unitarian Universalist, and Roman Catholic. Area II. 3 Course cr