

## 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 some of the central questions and practices of Christian theologies. Through short readings and varied writing assignments, students develop the theological literacy needed to take part in cultural contestations over religion, to participate in church practice and debates, or to inform their own decisions about faith and life. The course makes use of historical and contemporary theological texts, art, and other resources to think about questions of creation, suffering and redemption, history, race, materiality, and more. No particular faith commitment or background is assumed. Area II. 3 Course cr

#### **REL 607a, Theology and Violence** Eboni Marshall Turman

The intersection of theology and violence is undeniable. Whether we admit it or not, violence is a central character in Christian theological imagination. Violence is justified in the foundations of Christian tradition and symbolism and ritually practiced in religious acts of terrorism, white supremacy, genocide, and war. This seminar examines the religious and theological underpinnings of this regrettable connection. Theoretical inquiry unpacks the origins, normalization, and persistence of structural violence. Cross-disciplinary analysis of matters of context and faith supports student interrogation of complex variations of violence in church and society. Attention is given to the theological nature of historical, rhetorical, political, and practical representations of violence, with special emphasis placed on how violence responds to and interacts with minoritized race, gender, and sexual indicators. The semester concludes with consideration of *defiance* and *refusal* as a Black feminist/womanist theological response to the everydayness of structural violence. Area II. 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—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 touchpoints 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 626b, Systematic Theology** Willie Jennings

This is a course in systematic theology, which means it is a course that examines the theological practices of Christian faith. It is the *practice of thinking inside the practices* of the faith that constitutes the idea of “system” in this course. To that end, this course considers three categories of practice: the practice of worship, the practice of ministry, and the practice of witness, roughly aligning with the threefold identity-ministry of Jesus, as prophet, priest, and king. The task of thinking inside these practices brings us to doctrines that have formed at the sites of these practices and which in turn help to shape the practices. This task also brings us to forms of Christian communal life that are facilitated by these practices and that, in turn, situate these practices in their reason for being. Area II. Prerequisites: One bible course and one theology course. 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 637a, Doctrine of Creation** Willie Jennings

This course explores the Christian doctrine of creation, which continues to be one of the least appreciated and poorly deployed aspects of Christian thought. Understanding the human as “a creature” and the world as “created” plays a crucial role in addressing issues of personal identity and our life in the world. The purpose of this course is to consider how the doctrine of creation helps us think through many of the most pressing matters of life today. Area II. Prerequisite: one theology course. 3 Course cr

**REL 644b, Christianity and Social Power** Kathryn Tanner

This course examines intersections between Christian theology and issues of sociopolitical equality through the study of historical cases. Cases include Christian justifications of hierarchical rule in the early church, medieval arguments over the status of women in church and society, controversies over “New World” colonization, leveling

movements in the English civil war, arguments for and against slavery in the United States, nineteenth-century reactions to democratic reform movements on the continent, and contemporary controversies over the ordination of women and queer people. The course helps equip students to answer the following general questions: What is the relation between Christian belief and action? When is Christian belief being used ideologically, to serve independent interests in gaining and maintaining power? On what basis can one judge between conflicting uses of the same Christian beliefs? Area II. Prerequisite: REL 600 or REL 626 or the equivalent. 3 Course cr

**REL 649b, 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 652a, A.I. Ethics and Theology** Jennifer Herdt and Kathryn Tanner  
Rapid advances in AI and digital technologies that include predictive and generative AI raise a host of ethical and theological questions. What kinds of subject formation result from the expanding reach of these technologies? How are they transforming our interpersonal relationships? Our societies? This course takes up these questions and more, exploring issues ranging from bias, data discrimination, economic exploitation, misinformation, and deep fakes, to ecological impacts and the use of autonomous weapons systems. In addition, we consider how the advent of generative AI reshapes discussions of theological and philosophical anthropology, and survey principlist, rights-based, virtue-ethical, and emerging theological responses to the issues that now face us. Area II and Area V. Prerequisite: REL 600 or REL 615 or the equivalent. 3 Course cr

**REL 660a / WGSS 661a, Queer Theology** Linn Tonstad

This course provides an introduction to queer theology and its theoretical grounding in queer theory. Readings focus on questions of body, flesh, desire, religious symbolism and interpretation, genres and practices of writing queer theology, and the significance of spirituality for queer and trans lifeworlds. Area II. Prerequisite: two graduate-level seminars in religion, philosophy, or gender and sexuality studies or permission of the instructor. 3 Course cr

**REL 673a, Irenaeus Seminar** Awet Andemicael

In this course, we explore the theological work and contemporary relevance of Irenaeus of Lyon, a second-century Christian theologian who wrote the earliest extensive account of the Christian faith that remains extant today. We read together most of Irenaeus' surviving texts, *On the Apostolic Preaching (Epidexis)* and *Against the Heresies (Adversus Haereses)*. We also learn about key elements of his theology, become familiar with some of the secondary scholarship on his writings, and analyze more recent theological engagement with his thought, including works by Hans Urs von Balthasar (*The Glory of the Lord*), J. Kameron Carter (*Race: A Theological Account*), and Catherine Keller (*The Face of the Deep*). Previous experience reading texts from late antiquity, early

Christian texts, or other theological texts would be helpful, but is not required. Area II.  
3 Course cr

**REL 678b, Remember Your Death: Memento Mori Practices in Comparative Perspective** Kathryn Tanner

This course explores memento mori practices in a variety of religious traditions in order to assess how the remembrance of death affects everyday life and the degree to which the diversity of these implications for everyday life is conditioned by religious context. Prior course work in theology or philosophy is recommended. Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

**REL 679a, Slavery and Obedience** Willie Jennings

This course considers the theological architecture of Christian obedience. Students examine obedience in relation to its historic social couplet—slavery. Slavery, especially in its modernist reformulation from the fifteenth century forward, framed the problems of Christian obedience with great urgency. The articulation of Christian obedience is plagued with two problems: problems of identity (Who obeys whom?) and problems of time (What is the relation of ancient forms and regimes of obedience to current forms and regimes of obedience?). These two problems build from a more basic theological challenge of articulation—What is the relationship of the obedience of Jesus to our obedience? The goal of this course is to formulate a theology of obedience that is attuned to questions of gendered and racial identities and history, as well as the nature of intellectual obedience in the modern university and the ongoing realities of slavery's social and economic echoes. Area II. Prerequisite: one course in theology and one course in Bible. 3 Course cr

**REL 683a, 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

## CHRISTIAN ETHICS

**REL 615b, Introduction to Christian Ethics** Staff

This course offers an introduction to Christian ethical thought. It includes attention to biblical and historical sources, current debates, and concrete applications. The course is structured around central points of tension that have driven the Christian ethical tradition: love versus justice, universality versus particularity, individual versus collective, human exceptionalism versus the value of all creation, etc. Each of these tensions is explored theoretically and with regard to current issues. Issues explored include wealth and economy, immigration, the use of violence, punishment and prison abolition, reparations, and the treatment of non-human animals, among others. Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

**REL 619a, Eco-Futures: Theology, Ethics, Imagination** Ryan Darr

The looming dangers of climate change, especially given the inadequacy of the global political response, are now evident. Many of those who are paying attention find

themselves feeling overwhelmed, powerless, and hopeless in the face of increasing natural disasters, rapidly disappearing species, and compounding environmental injustices. This class begins from these challenges. It asks: Can we sustain hope in a just and sustainable ecological future? Should we sustain such a hope? If so, what would such a future look like? Can we imagine a future beyond fossil fuels, beyond exploitative and extractivist relations among humans and between humans and the more-than-human world? Can we imagine a decolonial future, a future of multispecies justice? How do these hopes and visions interact with ultimate religious hopes? How should these hopes and visions shape our actions and emotions in this moment? We approach these issues by reading theological and ethical works together with future-oriented speculative fiction: sci-fi, Afrofuturism, Indigenous futurism, solarpunk, hopepunk. We assess the speculative futures theologically and ethically while also allowing these speculative futures to shape our theological and ethical visions. There are no specific prerequisites for this course, but introductory courses in theology and ethics are recommended. Area II and Area V. 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, climate 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 and discuss a number of influential recent works in Christian ethics. Second, we consider several recently published introductions to the field. The latter allows us to consider the field from a broad perspective as it is being handed on to new generations, and the former allows us to explore some of its emerging edges. Area II and Area V. Prerequisite: REL 615 or equivalent. 3 Course cr

**REL 652a, A.I. Ethics and Theology** Jennifer Herdt and Kathryn Tanner

Rapid advances in AI and digital technologies that include predictive and generative AI raise a host of ethical and theological questions. What kinds of subject formation result from the expanding reach of these technologies? How are they transforming our interpersonal relationships? Our societies? This course takes up these questions and more, exploring issues ranging from bias, data discrimination, economic exploitation, misinformation, and deep fakes, to ecological impacts and the use of autonomous weapons systems. In addition, we consider how the advent of generative AI reshapes discussions of theological and philosophical anthropology, and survey principlist, rights-based, virtue-ethical, and emerging theological responses to the issues that now face us. Area II and Area V. Prerequisite: REL 600 or REL 615 or the equivalent. 3 Course cr

**REL 681b, Imago Dei and Human Dignity** Staff

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 bioethics. We discuss secular critiques of the notion of human dignity, secular analogues to Christian conceptions, and a range of Christian responses. Authors range from Augustine, Locke, Kant, and Frederick Douglass to Waldron, Nussbaum, and Kelsey. Area II. Prerequisite: REL 615, REL 631, or equivalent. 3 Course cr

## LITURGICAL STUDIES

### **REL 675a, Baptism and Eucharist in Ecumenical Dialogue** Melanie Ross

This course engages students in recent conversations around the theology and practice of baptism and eucharist. Beginning with the 1982 World Council of Churches document *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, we read texts that have emerged from ecumenical sacramental dialogues in the past three decades and discuss major issues such as mutual recognition of baptism, patterns of Christian initiation, who may administer the sacraments, and open communion. 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, the contemporary migration of liturgical practices into digital social space, and the ecological emergency of our time and its impact on practices of worship. 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

## 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 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 and Yejide Peters Pietersen

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 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 2024–2025 sections are Baptist, Presbyterian, and Unitarian Universalist. Other sections offered, most in alternate years, include A.M.E. Zion, Disciples of Christ, Lutheran, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and United Church of Christ. Area II. 3 Course cr