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 602b, 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 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
Area II: Theological Studies

courageous exemplars working within and against various black prophetic traditions.

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 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 616a, 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 inculturation 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 620a, Pessimism  Miroslav Volf
This seminar examines the philosophical tradition of pessimism. Though we touch on future-oriented versions of pessimism (either negative expectation about the future or lack of any systematic belief about the future), we concentrate on value-oriented versions of pessimism (i.e., negative judgment about whether life is worth living or whether the world can, in a significant sense, be called good). We discuss to what extent and in what ways the world can be affirmed as good. We examine in greater detail the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, the most influential of pessimist philosophers. Area II and Area V. 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 626b, Systematic Theology  Willie Jennings
This is a course in systematic theology, which means it is 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.

**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 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.

**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.

**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.

**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 some 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
Area II: Theological Studies

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.

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.

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 and flesh, trans theologies, queerness and pandemics, queer theology and race, religious symbolism and representation, and theological genres. Area II. Prerequisite: at least two graduate-level seminars in religion, philosophy, or gender and sexuality-studies, or permission of the instructor.

REL 667a, A Survey of Medieval Latin
John Dillon
This is an introductory reading course in Late Antique and Medieval Latin that is intended to help students interested in Christian Latin sources improve their reading ability. The primary objective is to familiarize students with Medieval Latin and improve their proficiency in reading and translating Medieval Latin texts. Students come to recognize the features (grammatical and syntactical) that make Medieval Latin distinct, improve their overall command of Latin by reviewing grammar and syntax, and gain an appreciation of the immense variety of texts written in Medieval Latin. Area II. Prerequisite: basic knowledge of Latin grammar and syntax, equivalent to the elementary Latin grammar courses offered by the Classics department (LATN 110, LATN 120) or the YDS summer intensive REL 3607.

REL 676b, 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.
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  Roberto Sirvent
This course is an introduction to Christian moral norms, ideals, and practices, and to some classical and contemporary disputes over their substance and application. Drawing upon a variety of historical and contemporary sources, we ask what difference Christian commitments make for assessing the ends that human beings pursue, the actions we permit and prohibit, and the traits of character we praise, tolerate, and admonish. We consider the ways in which Christian moral thinking is shaped by the Hebrew Bible and New Testament before considering interlocking questions concerning the ethics of the use of force, the economy, property, prison abolition, immigration, families, disabilities, environmental justice, and food. 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 fossils 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 621a, Bioethics, Public Health, and Environmental Justice  Roberto Sirvent
This seminar draws on the fields of Black studies, anti-colonial thought, religious studies, and queer and trans theory to examine how the “afterlives” of slavery and colonialism can inform contemporary debates about bioethics, public health, and environmental justice. Students discuss how various social movements have demanded that institutions treat policing as a public health issue, as well as how gentrification, housing policies, incarceration, and environmental racism affect both the physical and mental health of vulnerable populations. We also explore important matters related to reproductive justice, sports and bioethics, the religious roots of trans-moral panics, and what it means to view U.S. imperialism as a public health issue. The seminar is especially relevant for students interested in narrative medicine, gender and sexuality,
Africana religions, Indigenous epistemologies, psychopharmacology, biopolitics, and critical theories of race. Area II and Area V. 3 Course cr

**REL 631a, Christian Ethics Seminar**  Clifton Granby
This course examines a number of contemporary approaches to problems in Christian moral thought and modern religious thought more generally. Course topics include political theology; religious ethics and culture; human flourishing and social responsibility; virtue, vice, and vocation; and relations of love, power, and justice. Methodological approaches to these topics comprise theological, philosophical, historical, politico-economic, and ethnographic perspectives. 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

**LITURGICAL STUDIES**

**REL 610a, 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 over the course of 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 650a, Worship and Evangelism**  Melanie Ross
Christian participation in Baptism and Eucharist mandates that evangelism and social justice are integral to every believer’s witness. This course draws on Christian Scripture, ecclesial traditions, and contemporary practices to help students develop theologically informed practices of evangelism. It argues for an understanding of the church’s mission in relationship to the Triune God, practiced in empowering and sustainable relationships with neighbors and creation. 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 685b, In the Face of Death: Worship, Music, Art**  Teresa Berger and Markus Rathey
Given the breadth of the subject matter, this course attends to a broad spectrum of themes related to Christian ritual, music, and art “in the face of death,” but has to do so quite selectively. Readings of historical sources themselves (textual and non textual), scholarly research into past practices surrounding dying and death, and analysis of
contemporary practices form the core materials. The course is shaped by three foci of inquiry in the realm of ritual, music, and art as they relate to (1) those who have died, (2) those who are dying, i.e., facing imminent death, and (3) the confrontation with one’s own finitude, mortality, and dying. The Christian tradition holds rich resources and insights for all three of these subject matters. The course creates space for a nuanced reflection on this tradition, as both backdrop and resource for contemporary engagement. Area II and Area V.  

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.  

DENOMINATIONAL COURSES

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

REL 662b, The Anglican Way I  Teresa Morgan and 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.  

REL 663a, The Anglican Way II: Continuing Depolarization  Justin Crisp and Yejide Peters
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 2023–2024 sections are Lutheran, Methodist, and UCC. Other sections offered, most in alternate years, include Baptist, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian, A.M.E. Zion, Unitarian Universalist, and Roman Catholic. Area II. 3 Course cr