AREA III: HISTORICAL STUDIES

The intent of Historical Studies is to foster and demand serious consideration by students of the essential historical substance of Christian faith and tradition. Two aspects of inquiry merge in this area of the curriculum: (1) the development of analytic capacities for the understanding of religious thought and practice in their cultural context, and (2) special studies in the cultural context itself that are deemed essential to competent ministry. Work in this area includes social and cultural analysis often focusing on issues that arise at the intersection of established disciplines. Area III thus includes subjects falling outside the domain of explicitly Christian thought.

REL 703a, Methods and Sources of Religious History Bruce Gordon
This course introduces students to the study of sources, primary and secondary, relating to the history of Christianity. Students work with visiting scholars on materials from antiquity to our contemporary world. Students develop their projects over the course of the term under the guidance of their adviser and in workshops. The course prepares students to proceed toward thesis research. The course is not, however, limited to those intending to write a thesis. Prerequisites: Some background in history and permission of the instructor. 3 Course cr

REL 712a, History of Early Christianity: Origins and Growth Teresa Morgan
This course introduces students to early Christianity from the first to the eighth century. This is an introductory course that does not assume any prior knowledge of the topic. We examine the social, political, religious, and cultural contexts in which early Christianity (or Christianities) emerged, and how "the faith" grew, was shaped by, and helped shape the world around it. We explore practices of corporate worship and devotion; the development of doctrine and the idea of orthodoxy; the evolution of Church institutions; the formation of Christian scriptures; the impact of persecution and imperial patronage; the development of Christian material culture, art and architecture; and what it meant for people in different roles and situations to live as "the faithful" in everyday life. In dialogue with influential theologians of the period, we explore how Christian identities are formed and articulated and the role of power, conflict, and resistance in that process. Students encounter a wide range of primary sources, secondary literature, and historical methods and approaches, giving them the opportunity to sharpen their critical and historiographical skills. In many ways, this is the most formative and influential period of Christian history, and getting to grips with its broad outlines and key themes is both fascinating in itself and gives students vital contextual knowledge for understanding later developments in Christian history and thought. This course serves as essential preparation for the study of Christian history and theology in later historical periods. Above all, it provides an opportunity to consider early Christianity on its own terms and to discover how it continues to shape the lives of Christians today. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 713b, History of Medieval Christianity: Learning, Faith, and Conflict Volker Leppin
The Middle Ages have been defined by European culture as the period between 500 and 1500. It is a period that witnesses the transformation of European Christianity into a Latin-speaking religious community under the Pope. It became increasingly separate from the developments in the Near East and Asia. For all too long this epoch

has served in legitimating discourses of confessions, nations, and ethnic groups, such as in the nationalistic construction of the Germanic tribes. The course aims to draw a new image of these thousand years in terms of time, geography, ethnicity, gender, and culture. Medieval Christianity offers multiple possibilities for understanding both the perils and development of Christianity in an age of rapid change. On the one hand, the course examines processes of establishing power by exclusion, mainly of Jewish and Muslim believers, and of building strong hierarchies almost exclusively male. On the other hand, we find fascinating debates within Scholasticism about how to combine philosophical reason with Christian faith. Further, we explore the evolution of deep, inner spiritual practices among mystics, with special regard to female nuns, who were prolific writers. From this perspective we see how medieval Christianity is part of what we now experience as global Christianity, making a distinctive contribution to the emergence of a widely shared faith. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 714a, History of Early Modern Christianity: Reformation to Enlightenment Bruce Gordon

This course introduces students to the rapidly changing world of early modern Christianity, a period that ranges from the Reformation to the Enlightenment and the transatlantic worlds of the eighteenth century. This age saw the dramatic expansion of Christianity beyond Europe to Africa, Asia, and the Americas, and the course explores the global nature of the early modern world. Themes such as colonization, slavery, and the diversities of religious experience are examined. Students are exposed to a range of primary sources and historical methods to examine rival interpretations and perspectives. The course focuses on the reading of a wide variety of primary sources from the period. Above all, it challenges students to consider the past both on its own terms and how it continues to shape our present. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 715b, History of Modern Christianity: American Encounters, Postmodern Transformations Tisa Wenger

This class focuses on critical encounters among peoples who have contributed to the development of modern Christian cultures in the Americas from the eighteenth century to the present. It does not aim to provide an exhaustive history of religion (or even of Christianity) in North America and Latin America, but rather highlights key topics such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and the dynamics of imperialism, modernity, and postmodernity in religious history. Students are challenged to consider various methods for interpreting the past, to develop their own skills of historical interpretation, and to locate their own communities as products of the histories we consider. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 717a, Witchcraft and Witch-hunting in Early Modern Europe and America Kenneth Minkema

This seminar examines witchcraft and witch-hunting in Europe and America from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century through reading and discussion of primary documents and classic and recent studies in the field—including social, cultural, and intellectual history, gender and women's studies, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and town and environmental studies. Students learn about the interaction of religious beliefs relating to witchcraft and the occult with social and cultural conditions and shifts, the history of the interpretation of witchcraft and witch-hunting, and the continuing relevance of witchcraft studies as a laboratory for new approaches and methods. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 719a, Christianity and Coloniality in Contemporary Africa Kyama Mugambi
Missionary complicity with the colonial enterprise puts Christianity at the heart of the problematic relationship between the African continent and the West. At the same time, Christianity has continued to grow rapidly in post-independence Africa. In much of Africa south of the Sahara, decolonization efforts coincided with the period of the greatest Christian expansion in history. Africa is now the continent with the highest population of Christians. This course examines this conundrum through critical engagement with theory, literature, and data from the continent. Students explore historiographic, political, social, economic, and demographic dimensions of this discussion. They meet key theories posited with regard to African Christianity in the wake of a colonial history. The course surveys contemporary issues in the discourse within the urban, educational, social, and cultural spheres. Students also consider gender perspectives on coloniality as it pertains to religion and politics. The course assesses the role of indigenous agency in the development of Christianity within contemporary Africa. Through this course students gain a more nuanced perspective as they examine and problematize critical arguments in the prevailing discourse on Christianity and coloniality in Africa today. Area III, Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 728a, Religion and U.S. Empire Tisa Wenger and Zareena Grewal
This course draws on theoretical perspectives from anthropology, American studies, religious studies, and postcolonial studies to interrogate the varied intersections between religion and U.S. empire. It asks not only how Christianity and other religious traditions have facilitated imperialism and how they have served as resources for resistance, but also how the categories of "religion" and the "secular" have been assembled as imperial products alongside modern formations of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Through response papers, seminar discussions, and (for graduate students) a final historiographical paper, students develop the analytical and writing skills that are the building blocks of all scholarship in the humanities. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 730a, Native Americans and Christianity Tisa Wenger
This course examines the complex and often painful history of American Indian encounters with Christianity in colonial North America and the United States. Moving from the early colonial period to the present, and with particular attention to Native American voices, we explore a variety of indigenous responses to Catholic and Protestant missions and the development of distinctively Native Christian traditions. Along the way, the course interrogates and historicizes key trends in the study of indigenous Christianity, including Red-Power era critiques of missions, the influence of postcolonial theory, and the recent emphasis on indigenous Christian agency. Students build critical awareness of the historical intersections of colonialism and Christianity; apply postcolonial frameworks to understand the role of Christianity in indigenous communities; and develop skills in historical analysis. Area III and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 739b, Pentecostalism in Africa: Perspectives, Practice, and Prospects Kyama Mugambi
African Pentecostalism represents one of the fastest-growing religious movements in the world. After decades of dismissal of the movement as a marginal phenomenon, religious scholarship has only recently begun to conduct in-depth research on it. This course uses a World Christianity studies lens to critically engage with elements of the African Pentecostal experience. Students explore the ways in which this diverse religious expression interacts with hope in the midst of the rapid change occurring on

the continent. The class probes multidimensional perspectives of the pathologies that ail some strains of African Pentecostalism. The course draws from examples in East, West, and South Africa to illuminate a broad range of elements. The course considers conversion; pathologies and pathways to hope; storytelling and epistemology; the miraculous as spiritual power dynamic; sermons and prayer as dialectics of hope; the paradox of spontaneity and tradition in oral worship; the mediation of identity through aesthetics; the pragmatism of public engagement; communality and leadership; and the Pentecostal vision within African religion. Area III and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 741b, Averroes and Thomas Aquinas Volker Leppin and Frank Griffel
Averroes (Ibn Rushd, d. 1198) and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) are two of the most interesting thinkers in Islam and in Christianity. Living in different parts of Europe less than a hundred years apart, the two are among the most important philosophers in the Western tradition. Both were fascinated by the philosophy of Aristotle, to whom they responded in different ways. And both were active theologians and authors. This seminar considers the similarities and differences in their lives and thinking—exploring, for instance, how Thomas reacted to Averroes and how Averroes, in turn, would have reacted to Thomas. This seminar introduces each of these thinkers in their own right, focusing on their accomplishments in the fields of philosophy and theology. We study not only their own writings but also consider secondary literature as well. The focus of this seminar, however, is on discussion of primary sources in English translation. Area III and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 745a, Byzantine Art and Architecture Vasileios Marinis
This lecture course explores the art, architecture, and material culture of the Byzantine Empire from the foundation of its capital, Constantinople, in the fourth century to the fifteenth century. Centered around the Eastern Mediterranean, Byzantium was a dominant political power in Europe for several centuries and fostered a highly sophisticated artistic culture. This course aims to familiarize students with key objects and monuments from various media—mosaic, frescoes, wooden panels, metalwork, ivory carvings—and from a variety of contexts—public and private, lay and monastic, imperial and political. We give special attention to issues of patronage, propaganda, reception, and theological milieux, as well as the interaction of architecture and ritual. More generally, students become acquainted with the methodological tools and vocabulary that art historians employ to describe, understand, and interpret works of art. Area III and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 750b, Readings in Early Evangelicalism in Europe and North America, 1580–1830 Kenneth Minkema
This graduate-level seminar focuses on consideration of important classic interpretations and recent studies in the development of the religious phenomena known as "evangelicalism," with the intention of giving students a historiographical and methodological grounding in the subject. Readings, lectures, and discussion consider topics such as the rise of a distinct phase known as "early evangelicalism" in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which included a distinct brand of exegesis, a millennialist impulse, and other features; the spread of "religion of the heart" among Reformed, Pietist, and other protestant movements, as well as among more mystical strains of Catholicism; the coalescing of a conversionist religious culture featuring revivalism, including specific instances in the Netherlands, England, Wales, Scotland, and North America during the eighteenth century, epitomized by the so-called

"Great Awakening"; the emergence of sects and movements, such as Moravianism, Methodism, Separatism, Shakerism, and Mormonism; the birth of Native and Black churches out of this period, with their own theologies, views of Scripture, preaching styles, and bodies of hymns; and the institutionalization of the movement(s) in British Evangelicalism and the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century, which engendered publishing empires, reform movements, and domestic and international missions. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 760b, Jews, Christians, and Renaissance Bibles Joel Baden and Bruce Gordon
This course examines Jewish and Christian sacred texts, and their production, interpretation, and cultural contexts, from antiquity to the seventeenth century, with particular emphasis on the two centuries following the introduction of moveable type in Europe. The course is taught in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library and focuses on the study and examination of works from Yale's rich collection of Judaica and Bibles. The course examines the complex history of Jewish biblical interpretation and its appropriation by Christian scholars in the medieval and early modern periods. Included are such topics as translation techniques, rabbinic commentaries, the history of printing, Christian humanism and Hebraism, reading practices, the use of Bibles in worship and study, and anti-Semitism. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 767a, Gods, Goods, and the Goals of Life: Early Christian Ethical Thinking in Ancient World Contexts Teresa Morgan
This course explores early Christian ethical thinking, to around the end of the second century, in its social and cultural contexts. In the process we encounter the differences among approaches to ethics in history, anthropology, philosophy, and theology and consider how they influence the way ethics are interpreted. We discuss some of the most important passages of the Hebrew Bible that frame later Jewish and Christian ethical thinking, and we consider how later Jewish writing relates especially to the Mosaic Law. We explore some classics of Greek and Roman philosophical ethics and popular morality and how they influenced Christian thought. Against these backgrounds we read some of the key passages of ethical teaching in the New Testament together with a cross-section of non-testamental second-century writers. At every point, we are interested both in where Christianity is in continuity with the ethical discourses that helped to shape it and where it is distinctive. We discuss what ethical topics these writers talk about, and what they do not, and why. Where God is the ultimate moral authority, what aspects of God are invoked in ethical contexts? Where God is the ultimate authority, are ethics always deontological, or are there other reasons for doing the right thing? What is the relationship between divine command and human freedom? Where does evil come from? Can human beings argue effectively with God, or protest against God's commands, or improve on them? What evaluative language do these texts employ—good and bad, good and evil, useful, necessary, beautiful, sweet—and what difference does it make? Why do ethical texts so often take the form of miscellanies? How do ethical writings contribute to our understanding of early Christian thinking about God, Christ, and the Church? What are the challenges as we draw on early Christian tradition to help us think ethically today? Area II and Area III. Prerequisite: At least one course in Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Greek Philosophy, or Ethics. 3 Course cr

REL 778a, 2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: A History of the African Church
Kyama Mugambi
The rapid, previously unexpected growth of Christianity in Africa in the twentieth century calls for deeper scholarly reflection. Keen students of global trends are aware that Africa is now home to more Christians than Europe or North America. While the rapid growth can be traced to a century of vigorous activity, Christianity has a long eventful history on the continent. This course provides a broad overview of Christianity in Africa over two millennia. The early part of the course focuses on the beginnings and development of the Church in Africa. The material highlights the role of African Christian thinkers in shaping early Christian discourses in increasingly dynamic global and continental contexts. The course weaves critical themes emerging in African Christianity north of the expansive Sahara desert, and then south of it. Students encounter critical issues in missionary Christianity in Africa and gain a historical understanding of the milestones in Christian growth that contribute to Christianity's status as both an African and global religion. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 779b, American Religion in the Archives Tisa Wenger
This research seminar asks what counts as "data" for the study of American religion, interrogates the formation and the limits of historical archives, and considers the various ways scholars identify, collect, and interpret their sources. Students work collaboratively to analyze selected archival collections located in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library and in the Yale Divinity Library. Each student writes experimentally on the sources they find in these collections. Area III. Prerequisite: prior coursework in history and/or the study of American religion. 3 Course cr