RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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At Le Moyne College, we believe that exploring life’s religious dimensions yields valuable insights into individuals as well as entire cultures. Beyond its often-profound personal impact, religion plays a central role in shaping societies, prompting political action, and influencing the course of history. Examining the nature and function of religion is therefore an essential part of a liberal arts education, helping students develop a richer understanding of men, women, and the world in which they live and work.

To achieve this goal and to relate religious values and commitment to contemporary culture, each Le Moyne College student is required to take two (2) courses in the Department of Religious Studies as part of the core education requirements of the College. The first of these courses introduces students to some of the major questions addressed by the Catholic theological tradition, as well as to major questions the tradition has addressed throughout history. It may include opportunities for inter-religious dialogue through, for example, comparative study of those questions in relation to other religious traditions. By grounding theology in human experience, the course may also offer theological perspectives on critical issues in the contemporary world. In the second course, students develop their understanding of the role religion plays in shaping the contours of human experience through the study of one or more religious traditions. These courses may also explore the connections between religion and other communal and/or individual concerns, including but not limited to politics, ethics, psychology and aesthetics.

Students are also encouraged to elect additional courses in religious studies beyond those taken to fulfill the core requirement. The department offers major and minor programs of study in the field of Religious Studies.


Religion (REL)

REL 100. Catholic Theological Reflect on Service. 1 Credit Hour.

An introduction to religion as a dimension of human experience which affects all aspects of life. Students will be introduced to the basic concepts and methods necessary for the study of religion and will be exposed to the basic modes of religious experience and expression as found in the world’s religions. Special emphasis will be placed on the Jewish and Christian religious traditions.

REL 200. Religious Perspectives. 3 Credit Hours.

An introduction to the literature of the New Testament in the context of the history and religion of its times. After an overview of Hellenistic Judaism and the larger Greco-Roman world, the focus will be on the New Testament documents themselves: their history, literary structure and features, their theological stances, and the insight they may give into early Christian communities.

REL 309. New Testament. 3 Credit Hours.

An overview of church-state relations from colonial times to the present. It includes judicial decisions on the establishment of religion and the freedom of religious practice, the power of religious groups in the political process; church-state relationships in other nations. A one-credit integrated service learning experience may be offered with this course. Cross-listed Courses: PSC 314

REL 315. Biblical Archaeology. 3 Credit Hours.

Archaeology opens one window on the past. With its data we can create a theoretical reconstruction of life in antiquity: city size and design; types of economy; agricultural methods; industrial and military technologies; cult centers and artifacts. This particular course focuses on the archaeology of Syro-Palestine, especially on Jordan and Israel. It features a practical overview of an archaeological excavation set in the Middle East, from field work and record keeping to preservation of artifacts and analysis of data. It provides an overview of historical and cultural developments in the Middle East from the Paleolithic to Late Islamic periods. It also develops the skills to interpret and evaluate critically a variety of archaeological publications and data. Cross-listed Courses: ANT 315

REL 318. Religion and Science. 3 Credit Hours.

This course explores the intersection of religious thought and practice, on the one hand, and the natural sciences, on the other, as human attempts to understand and interpret both natural and human environments. The course will examine different models for conceiving the relationship between religion and the sciences as well as the meaning and function of specific concepts, theories, and paradigms in science and religion. Although the primary focus will be methodological, attention will also be devoted to particular questions of ethics and public policy that pertain to science and religion.
REL 319. Varieties of Latino/a Religions. 3 Credit Hours.
Varieties of Latino/a Religions is an introduction to New World religions in Mexico, the Caribbean, and the United States. This course will analyze the emergence of new traditions in and through the contact, collision, and exchange of Spanish Catholic, African, and American indigenous cultures. It will also explore their further transformations in the context of the modern, Anglo-Protestant culture of the United States. Theoretical issues to be explored will include religion and political in/subordination, religion and “hyphenated identity”, and religion and capitalism. Fulfills Core diversity requirement.

REL 320. Women and Religion. 3 Credit Hours.
In view of the rapidly changing self-concepts and roles of women, both in the churches and in society as well as the discussion about the nature of our images of God and our use of God language, this course explores some of the implications of these changes for modern women and men. Historical, archetypal and contemporary material is used in a seminar format. Cross-listed Courses: GWS 320

REL 323. Native American Religions. 3 Credit Hours.
A study of selected Native American traditions from historical and comparative perspectives. Particular attention will be given to the Iroquois and will include discussion of Iroquois-Christian interaction. Cross-listed Courses: ANT 312

REL 325. Religion and Ecology. 3 Credit Hours.
Religion and Ecology explores the ways that religious traditions understand and interact with their environments. The course asks how religious communities think about “nature” and “life” and how they define a human relationship to, and responsibility for, the earth. Students will develop skills in identifying the religious underpinnings of contemporary attitudes and practices regarding the environment.

REL 326. Religion and Popular Culture. 3 Credit Hours.
Popular culture can be studied from a variety of approaches. This course "reads" movies, TV, Internet sources (blogs, memes, YouTube, etc.) and other material in conversation with the study of religion. While in some cases this will mean the examination of how religion is portrayed in the source material, it will also involve asking how the sources function as religion in the United States today, and how ideas that we usually think of as "religious" might be found in popular sources. Prerequisites: Junior Standing.

REL 327. Religion, Drugs, and Culture. 3 Credit Hours.
What's the different between a drug and medicine? Is there a relationship between legality and morality? Throughout human history, various types of natural and synthetic mind-altering substances have occupied central roles in a variety of cultures, religious rituals, and laws. Religion 327 explores the spiritual potentials as well as dark recesses that some of these substances have come to assume in specific cultural contexts. The first half of the course will interrogate differences between "hallucinogens" and "entheogens" by focusing on the sacramental importance of peyote, ayahuasca, and psychedelic mushrooms in particular indigenous rituals- as well as the modern western appropriation of these plants and/or their active psychotropic chemicals for the purpose of psychological exploration and medical experimentation. The second half of the course will focus primarily on alcohol, especially from the lenses of Islam, Christianity, and the contemporary American context, by exploring alcohol as a legally circumscribed and/or sacramentally sanctioned substance. Part of this exploration will involve the religious dimensions of addiction and recovery in both Native American and modern western settings, such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Through a critical analysis of "drugs" in their cultural contexts, Religion 327 will illuminate the central importance of mind-altering substances in religious thought and practice while at once questioning the boundaries between drugs and medicine, religion and culture. Your ability to benefit from this class will neither be hindered nor aided by your religious affiliations or lack thereof. The same goes for your personal experience with substances we learn about in the course. What will benefit you is your ability to seriously entertain a multiplicity of worldviews-some of which may strike you as illogical, grotesque, and strange, and others beautiful, compelling, and natural.

REL 331. Christian Ethics. 3 Credit Hours.
An introduction to significant approaches to religious ethics and the study of particular personal and social problems from religious perspectives. Examples of topics included might be marriage, abortion, homosexuality, nuclear warfare and world hunger.

REL 332. Catholic Social Teaching. 3 Credit Hours.
This course aims to help students clarify their unexpressed values as a step toward developing a value system. It seeks to develop habits of re-examining the student’s purposes, aspirations, attitudes and feelings to find an intelligent relationship between his or her life and the world. The course begins with a consideration of the viability of Christian ethics as applied to the personal and social aspects of life. It evaluates the value presuppositions of both students and leaders and applies these values to case studies.

REL 336. Comparative Social Ethics. 3 Credit Hours.
The course is a study in comparative religious ethics. The course will guide students through the ethical perspectives that eastern, western, and indigenous religious traditions have developed on four social issues facing our world: the construction of sexuality and gender, social justice, violence and the environment. Cross-listed Courses: PGS 336

REL 337. Christian Social Ethics. 3 Credit Hours.
This course offers an approach to contemporary social issues and underscores the importance of the Christian ethical dimension in these issues and in character formation. Students will be introduced to the methods and resources for ethical analysis and decision making. Issues addressed will include the family, liberation, violence, non-violence, the environment, sexuality, the economy, life and death and medicine.
REL 345. What Does Prayer Do?. 3 Credit Hours.
The monk, the poet, the neuroscientist, the constitutional lawyer—all hear the question what does prayer do from their own perspectives. Students will approach this enduring question from multiple disciplinary perspectives, including theology, philosophy, religious studies, medicine, the social sciences, law, and the arts. Readings will be chosen from major wisdom traditions, with some emphasis on Christian examples. Prerequisites: PHL 100-level and PHL 200-level.

REL 346. Religion and Life Stories. 3 Credit Hours.
One way in which humans carry out their quest for meaning in life is by attending to the lives of others. Such a quest involves the religious dimensions (broadly understood) of human existence. This course investigates such a quest for meaning in the life stories of significant individuals in history.

REL 349. Religion in Contemporary Film. 3 Credit Hours.
This core course is a writing-intensive critical analysis of contemporary European and American films from the perspective of concerns and questions associated with a critical study of religion: freedom, violence, gender and sexuality, grace, eros, reconciliation, sacrifice, the other, redemption. Visual texts or films for the course include, but are not limited to, Amadeus, Kundun, Little Buddha, Smoke Signals, Unforgiven, Aliens, Babette’s Feast and Breaking the Waves. Course readings are (1) primary religious texts from indigenous traditions, Asian religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; and (2) film criticism incorporating feminist, literary, biblical, and theological methodologies. Class style: short lectures, guided discussion (led by students and instructor), screening of films. There are weekly papers or electronic postings, a course project and short presentation on that project. Fulfills REL 300 core requirement. Fulfills core Visual and Performing Arts requirement. (VPA).

REL 350. World Religions and Film. 3 Credit Hours.
This course satisfies the REL 300 core requirement. It offers a comparative study of major world religious traditions as manifested in both religious writings and a variety of international film texts. Through lectures, discussions, assigned readings, and weekly screenings of films rooted in specific religious traditions, students will gain a broad, basic knowledge of contemporary Eastern and Western religions. Students will consider Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with emphasis varying each semester. The course pays attention to the tenets, ritual and worship, ethics and historical background of each tradition through as seen in both classic and contemporary films. The course is valuable to students unfamiliar with major world religious traditions or the cinema’s profound ability to inform, motivate and inspire. Requirements: weekly readings, short papers, film screenings, lectures, discussion and final exam. Fulfills Core requirement(s): VPA. Cross-listed Courses: REL 386

REL 360. The Qur’an. 3 Credit Hours.
This course will approach the Qur’an from a broad angle by covering not only the text’s historical development, reception, and classical interpretations, but also modern topics, such as the Qur’an in American politics as well as perspectives of violent resistance groups who justify martyrdom operations by citing specific passages of the text. Additionally, because the Qur’an remains a primarily oral text even today, a significant component of the course would involve aural exercises. We will also give attention to calligraphy, amulets, ritual, and literature that draw upon the holy text of Islam—all in order to holistically investigate our subject.

REL 362. Judaism. 3 Credit Hours.
The general purpose of this course is to provide a historical survey of Jewish religious thought from its biblical origins through the post-biblical era to the present. An overview of the major ideas that influenced Jewish history is followed by an analysis of the outstanding theological concepts. Consideration is given to the life cycle that affects Jewish personal existence. This course also includes the ethical and moral precepts that characterize Judaism throughout the ages. Course sponsored by the Jewish Chautauqua Society.

REL 363. Religions of Asia. 3 Credit Hours.
The practices, beliefs and history of Hinduism, Buddhism (including Japanese developments) and Taoism will be examined in this course. Particular attention will be given to the relationship of each tradition to its cultural context in the course of history and to problems confronting each tradition in the modern world. Fulfills Core Requirement(s): DIV.

REL 364. Religion in America. 3 Credit Hours.
From a religious point of view, major historians have described America variously as a righteous empire, a lively experiment in pluralism and a nation with the soul of a church. As these descriptions, taken together hint, American religious history is colored by the existence of three distinct and often conflicting forces: evangelical piety, a political pluralism and a distinctive form of civil religion. This course will attempt to trace and to celebrate the enduring vitality of each of these forces throughout the history of the republic and to make the student aware of the tensions which have arisen and which continue to arise as a result of the divided pedigree of American religion. Topics to be covered will include the New England way, immigration and nativism, Manifest Destiny and the rise of independent American religious communities.

REL 365. Islam. 3 Credit Hours.
Followers of Islam, called Muslims, number at well over a billion and span the globe from California to Cairo to Kuala Lumpur. Because their languages, practices and geographical centers are diverse and complex we will approach a variety of texts (e.g., the Qur’an, prophetic reports, and prayer manuals), people (e.g., Muhammad, Rabi’a of Basra, and Malcolm X), and concepts (e.g., faith, afterlife, and violence), from multiple angles—a process that should prove both challenging and rewarding. The course will take a roughly chronological approach, beginning with the genesis of Islam in the 7th-century Arabian peninsula, but we will also examine themes such as gender, mysticism, and language. Given our 21st-century America context, moreover, we will also consider the implications of our subject on the modern world and America in particular throughout the entire semester. Therefore, this course will not only give attention to "Islam" per se, but also how to metacognitively study Islam. The course will press you to seriously entertain a multiplicity of worldviews—some of which may strike you as illogical, grotesque, and strange, and others beautiful, compelling, and natural.

REL 366. Islamic Mysticism. 3 Credit Hours.
Sometimes called Sufism, mystical expressions of Islam have varied greatly across space and time. This course will emphasize commonalities of mysticism across traditions as well as the distinctive qualities of Islamic mysticism and its relationship to the Sufi tradition. By examining the lives and works of seminal Muslim thinkers such as Rabi’a of Basra (d. 801), Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), and Jalal ad-Din Rumi (d.1273), while also exploring film, art, music, and other media, we will seek to understand the diverse expressions of Sufism and mysticism in Islam as well their roles in the premodern and contemporary worlds.
REL 368. Rel Thought/Cult in Lat Americ. 3 Credit Hours.
This course offers a thematic examination of religious thought and culture in Latin America from the time of conquest to the present. From the perspective of cultural studies, this course explores the pervasive influence of religion in the formation of Latin America identity, culture, politics and material history. Particular attention will be given to the diversity and syncretization of religious traditions, as well as to the continuing importance and influence of pre-conquest religious ideas, values, and traditions. Topics considered include: colonialism and missionary history; influence and effects of Spanish and African religious traditions; religion and intellectual life; political movements and the theologies of liberation; relationship; relationship to U.S. Latino religious identity and traditions.
Cross-listed Courses: PGS 368

REL 369. Sociology of Religion. 3 Credit Hours.
The relationship between religion and society is complex, dynamic, and ever-changing. It has been at the root of sociology itself since the discipline began and was central to the work of many of its founders. In this course, you will use a sociological perspective to examine this relationship between religion and society. Much of the class will deal with American forms of religion, but we will also consider examples of religion outside of the U.S. context. Fulfills Core diversity requirement.
Cross-listed Courses: SOC 369

REL 371. History and Spirituality of the Jesuits. 3 Credit Hours.
This course will acquaint students with the history and the distinctive, world-engaging spirituality of the Society of Jesus. In addition to presenting a chronological overview of Jesuit history, it will also examine the central themes of the Spiritual Exercises and the missionary strategies and philosophy of education of the Jesuits.
Prerequisite: Must have at least Junior status to register for this course.
Cross-listed Courses: HST 343

REL 374. African Christian Theology. 3 Credit Hours.
The course examines the encounter between African traditional religions and cultures and European Christianity during nineteenth century missionary expansion into sub-Saharan Africa. It also explores the movements that gave rise to contemporary African Christian theology. Although the course is ecumenical in scope, it places particular emphasis on the Roman Catholic theological tradition.
Cross-listed Courses: PGS 374

REL 375. Catholic Theology. 3 Credit Hours.
This course will introduce the student to contemporary understandings of Catholicism. The development of the church’s tradition will be traced from its foundations in Scripture and the Councils of the Church to the present day. Topics to be covered include Christology, ecclesiology, morality and sacramental theology.

REL 378. Jesus Christ Through History. 3 Credit Hours.
From the time of the historical Jesus until the present, the figure of Jesus has undergone significant changes in interpretation. This course will trace these changes and assess the reasons for them. The course will also allow students to assess contemporary interpretations of Jesus.

REL 382. Buddhism & Catholicism. 3 Credit Hours.
This course will enter into the contemporary dialogue between Catholicism and Buddhism, exploring both the fundamental differences and the possible affinities between them. In addition to becoming acquainted with another major world religion, students will be presented with fresh perspectives for approaching Catholicism's own rich heritage of mysticism, monasticism and social service. Students will pursue comparative study of such topics as the relation between religious language and experience, concepts of the self and ultimate reality, the causes of and remedies for human suffering and the meaning of spirituality as an engagement with the world, not a flight from it.

REL 383. Philosophies of Judaism. 3 Credit Hours.
An examination of a variety of Jewish philosophical tendencies as responses to fundamental crises and challenges. The course will focus on several paradigmatic philosophies of Judaism in terms of the following: (a) the human person (philosophical anthropology); (b) revelation and obligation; (c) theology; and (d) Jewish identity and existence. The influence and importance of gender and culture in the development of these philosophies will also be stressed.
Cross-listed Courses: PHL 324

REL 386. World Religions and Film. 4 Credit Hours.
Special Topics: This course satisfies the REL 300 core requirement. It offers a comparative study of major religious traditions of the world as manifested in both religious writings and a variety of international film texts. Through lectures, discussions, assigned readings, and weekly screenings of films rooted in specific religious traditions, students will gain a broad, basic knowledge of contemporary Eastern and Western religions. We will consider Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with attention paid to the tenets, ritual and worship, ethics and historical background of each as seen in a representative selection of classic and contemporary films. This course will be of value to students unfamiliar with the major religious traditions of the world or with the cinema's profound ability to inform, to motivate, and to inspire. Weekly readings and short papers, lectures, screenings, final exam.
Cross-listed Courses: REL 350

REL 389. Dynamic Creation: Faith and Reason. 3 Credit Hours.
Special Topics: An interdisciplinary approach to the consideration of cosmology from the complementary perspectives of revelation and reason. The course will first consider the order of the universe as envisioned in selected works of the New Testament; it will then consider the data that the natural science of astronomy affords.
Prerequisite: Rel 200.
Cross-listed Courses: PHS 175

REL 390. Independent Study. 1-3 Credit Hours.
A student who wishes to pursue independent study for academic credit must submit, prior to registration, a proposed plan of study that includes the topic to be studied, the goal to be achieved, the methodology to be followed, the schedule of supervision, the end product, the evaluation procedure and the number of credits sought. All proposals must be approved by the supervising faculty member, the department chair and the academic dean. They will be kept on file in the academic dean's office.
Prerequisite: REL 200.
REL 391. Independent Study. 3 Credit Hours.
A student who wishes to pursue independent study for academic credit must submit, prior to registration, a proposed plan of study that includes the topic to be studied, the goal to be achieved, the methodology to be followed, the schedule of supervision, the end product, the evaluation procedure and the number of credits sought. All proposals must be approved by the supervising faculty member, the department chair and the academic dean. They will be kept on file in the academic dean’s office.
Prerequisite: REL 200.

REL 392. Independent Study. 1-3 Credit Hours.
A student who wishes to pursue independent study for academic credit must submit, prior to registration, a proposed plan of study that includes the topic to be studied, the goal to be achieved, the methodology to be followed, the schedule of supervision, the end product, the evaluation procedure and the number of credits sought. All proposals must be approved by the supervising faculty member, the department chair and the academic dean. They will be kept on file in the academic dean’s office.
Prerequisite: REL 200.

REL 395. Special Topics. 3 Credit Hours.
The department of religious studies recognizes that students often have interests that are not covered in the scheduled course offerings. REL 395-399 provides a structure by which a group of students may petition the department to offer a course in a subject matter of particular interest to the students. The following conditions must be met in order for such a course to be offered: (1) A group of at least 10 students must agree on an area of inquiry and submit formal petition to the chair of the department; (2) the petition normally must be filed with the chair by Oct. 15 for a spring semester course and by March 1 for a fall semester course; (3) necessary resources among faculty and library must be available; and (4) the petition must be reviewed and approved by the curriculum committee of the department of religious studies.
Prerequisite: REL 200.

REL 398. Religious Studies Colloquium. 1 Credit Hour.
The colloquium will meet bi-weekly for two hours to examine significant topics and developments pertinent to the history, expression, and study of religion. Faculty and students will decide upon a unifying theme for the course each semester, but course topics will depend on the interests of the student (or occasionally faculty person) presenting for the day. Colloquium will take advantage of public lectures, both at Le Moyne and in the region. Students will actively assess their progress toward meeting Religious Studies learning objectives. Eligible students may develop ideas for departmental Honors projects and, as they progress on their projects, present their research to their peers.

REL 399. Religious Studies Colloquium. 1 Credit Hour.
The colloquium will meet bi-weekly for two hours to examine significant topics and developments pertinent to the history, expression, and study of religion. Faculty and students will decide upon a unifying theme for the course each semester, but course topics will depend on the interests of the student (or occasionally faculty person) presenting for the day. Colloquium will take advantage of public lectures, both at Le Moyne and in the region. Students will actively assess their progress toward meeting Religious Studies learning objectives. Eligible students may develop ideas for departmental Honors projects and, as they progress on their projects, present their research to their peers. Sophomore/Junior/Senior standing.

REL 400. Religion, Conflict, Peace/African Context. 3 Credit Hours.
This course is designed to introduce the class to basic questions, patterns, and contemporary issues on religion, justice, and peace in an African context. As such, the course will not be centered on the presentation of a particular narrative, thematic or structural account of the history of the multiple conflict situations in Africa. On the contrary, it is the aim of this course to take a case-study approach to the problems affecting Africa. In the light of the perspectives on Peace and Global Studies Program at Le Moyne College, we shall focus on ethnicity, religion and justice in conflict situation in African context. While this course aims to introduce student to the socio-economic, political and religious problems affecting the continent go back to the colonial period.
Fulfills Core Requirement(s): DIV.
Cross-listed Courses: PGS 408

REL 401. Corporate Responsibility. 3 Credit Hours.
Corporations (public and private) play important roles in the lives and livelihoods of individuals; in fact, they seem to envelope, if not replace, persons as the loci of power and responsibility. Corporate Responsibility is an integrative and interdisciplinary senior capstone course which deals with the critical social and moral questions that such an economic life raises. Through a combination of case studies, lectures and student group projects, the course will underscore the importance of the religious ethical traditions, especially the Christian, in the struggle to understand whether “economic decisions have human consequences and moral content.” Open to students from all major disciplines. Senior core seminar.
Prerequisites: REL 200, a REL 300-level course and senior standing.

REL 402. Jerusalem-The Politics of Sacred Space. 3 Credit Hours.
These courses are designed to investigate the presuppositions, structures and images that underlie the human attempt to understand basic religious issues. Through various unifying foci (such as the question of God, theory and praxis, faith and justice, etc.), students will be enabled to come to a reflective understanding of their own religious assumptions and values in the context of their previous years of study. The courses will have a seminar format, with an emphasis on student discussion and active integration of material through class presentations and written work.
Cross-listed Courses: PGS 404

REL 403. Religion and Globalization. 3 Credit Hours.
The peoples of the world have increasingly come to live as a single social unit. The historical process by which this has come about is referred to as globalization. Religions have contributed to, and been affected by, globalization. While some religions aspire to become global, today many religious leaders decry globalization, and in particular the global economy, for forcing developing countries to become severely dependent on industrial and post-industrial nations. The seminar discusses the concept of globalization, investigates the globalization of religions, and pursues ethical issues concerning globalization. A case study approach encourages students to work collaboratively on topics of interest to them and to make the seminar a capstone experience in which they may integrate their work across the curriculum. Fulfills core Visual and Performing Arts requirement. (VPA).
Cross-listed Courses: GWS 403
REL 404. Before Heaven & Hell. 3 Credit Hours.
This seminar asks two interrelated questions. First, how might understandings of death inform the way we live? Second, what do various conceptions of an afterlife - for example, notions of judgement, the immortality of the soul, and resurrection of the body - suggest about what it means to be human? Early Christian sources from the New Testament to Augustine are considered in the context of readings from earlier and surrounding cultures, including the Hebrew Bible and Greco-Roman literature.

REL 405. Ethics: Perspectives of Oppressed. 3 Credit Hours.
This senior seminar will study ethics from the perspective of social groups in American society whose voices have too often been muted because of oppression and marginalization. Those groups include the poor, women, people of color (African American, Native American and Latino) and gays/lesbians. The focus will be to allow these groups to voice the nature of their oppression (its causes and extent), to challenge the inadequacies of traditional morality and to identify the moral resources to promote social change.
Prerequisites: REL 200, a REL 300-level course, and senior standing.

REL 406. Theology of Christian Art. 3 Credit Hours.
The course will explore Christian religious art as symbols which promote human faith and the consequent creative and redemptive work of God. This course explores the works of Christian art in tandem with Christian expressions of and/or reflection upon that faith which those works seek to promote. Through the study of primary texts which elucidate that faith in its historical contexts the seminar will seek to understand the role which art plays in God’s work of creation and redemption. Readings will be drawn from key texts from key texts from Scripture, the early Christian apologists, patristic writers, ecumenical councils, mystics, theologians and reformers. Art works will range from frescoes in the catacombs through medieval, renaissance and modern architecture, sculpture and painting. Senior core seminar.
Prerequisites: Senior standing.

REL 407. Postcolonial Theol & Cinemas of 3rd Wrld. 3 Credit Hours.
This Senior Seminar will explore both the emerging discipline of postcolonial theology and the growing importance of Third World cinema. Considering the challenges posed by contemporary Third World theologians, both female and male, this course will explore the many ways in which their concerns have been manifested in an international variety of works by male and female filmmakers. As we analyze emerging themes and issues in African, Latin American, and Asian culture today, the course will promote global awareness in doing theology and explore possibilities for dialogue and solidarity among people in different contexts. It will also show how Christianity’s historical relationship with empire has shaped recent and contemporary understandings of non-western traditions and interpretive frameworks.

REL 409. Cults and Cultural Conflicts. 3 Credit Hours.
A common feature of the experience of religious “cults”, which have emerged in all major religious traditions, is some degree of conflict with the surrounding culture. This course will explore the dynamics of cultural conflict experienced by “cults”. We will explore the following questions: What do we mean by the terms, “cult”, new religious movement, alternative religion, and minority religion? Why does conflict between “cults” and the surrounding culture occur? What forms does it take? What factors exacerbate or mitigate conflict? What strategies have various “cults” employed to deal with conflict? Which strategies have been most successful? Why? What strategies have various cultures employed to deal with conflict with “cults”? Which strategies have been most successful? Why?

REL 410. The End is Nigh! Understanding the Apocalyptic Worldview. 3 Credit Hours.
This course investigates the origins, development, and legacies of the apocalyptic and millennial worldviews. The course will explore the origins of these worldviews in the myths, stories, and traditions of the Ancient Near East; how these images and motifs are incorporated in the Biblical tradition(s); and how the worldview develops within various historical periods of hope and crisis. The course will also investigate apocalyptic literature, the elements of the genre, how these become lenses for evaluating the social and political reality of believers and non-believers alike. Students will explore the adaptation and appropriation of apocalypticism/millennialism by various social and religious movements as well as the “Americanization” and mainstreaming of this worldview. Lastly students will have the chance to research and present on a variety of religious and political apocalyptic movements. Prerequisites or corequisites: Successful completion of REL 200 and REL 300. This course is open to students with senior standing and fulfills the Core Senior PHL/REL Seminar requirement. The department chair may admit other students at his/her discretion.

REL 411. Public Religion and the Social Order. 3 Credit Hours.
This seminar will study the religious dimensions of secular, social behavior by uncovering the experiences of ultimacy or sacrality in political, economic and social institutions, myths and behavior. Students will investigate a variety of ways that religious persons and groups have used historically both to interpret and to interact with the social order. In addition, the effect of changes in the political and social order upon religious communities and traditions will also be examined. Primary attention will be devoted to religion and the social order in the United States of America.
Prerequisites: REL 200, a REL 300-level course and senior standing.

REL 412. Religion, Sex and Gender. 3 Credit Hours.
This seminar will study the religious understandings of sex and sexuality, and the role which religion plays in establishing and reinforcing gender roles. Students will explore the attitudes toward sex and sexuality found in religious art, music and literature. The course will treat the dualisms which prevail in all cultures and academic disciplines that assign different tasks and qualities to men and women. Students will also discuss the gender expectations of different religious traditions to assess the impact that such expectations have on the pursuit of knowledge. Senior core seminar.
Prerequisites: REL 200, a REL 300-level course and senior standing.

REL 413. Religion and the Imagination. 3 Credit Hours.
In this seminar, students will be asked to examine patterns of symbols in literature, in the visual and performing arts, including religious myths, texts and rituals. The purpose of this study will be to appreciate the role of the imagination in the creation and interpretation of various cultural expressions. The seminar will also discuss the limitations which post-Enlightenment efforts at demystification impose on under standing the human condition. Senior core seminar. Fulfills core Visual and Performing Arts requirement. (VPA)
Prerequisites: REL 200, a REL 300-level course and senior standing.
REL 414. Post-Modern Christian Theology. 3 Credit Hours.
In this seminar, students will be asked to explore the mutual influence of theology and culture. Post-modernity critiques the Enlightenment mentality, but there are several strands of such criticism, some congenial to theology, others that are not. Within this context, attention will be paid to postmodern expressions of culture in art, literature and philosophy; the questions raised for and by theology; and the responses of various theologies to these questions. Senior core seminar.
Prerequisites: REL 200, a REL 300-level course and senior standing.

REL 415. Theol/Philosoph of Liberation. 3 Credit Hours.
This seminar will provide the opportunity for students to examine philosophical and religious traditions of social and political liberation in the Americas. Special consideration will be given to reflections on gender, race and class in theology and religion. The convergence of theory and social praxis in ecclesial base communities, as well as the politicization of Latin American philosophical thought in the midtwentieth century as a response to the Cuban Revolution challenge to liberation philosophy and theology will be studied. Prerequisites or corequisites: REL 200, REL 300, PHL 101, PHL 201, PHL 301. This seminar may be taken as either philosophy or religious studies. In either case, it will fulfill the core senior PHL/REL seminar requirement.
Cross-listed Courses: PHL 415

REL 416. Religion and the Media. 3 Credit Hours.
This course focuses on the relationship between mass media and religion in U.S. and other cultures. It introduces students to media studies and some of the methods used to study the intersections of religion and mass media, and analyzes how print and electronic news media, as well as television and film, have depicted (represented) specific religious groups and religion in general, as well as how such media represents gender, class, race, and ethnicity in a religious context of religion. The course also considers the ways in which religion and media interact and influence each other.

REL 420. The Future of Being Human. 3 Credit Hours.
In light of ecological crisis, rapid technological change, and widespread social alienation, what is the future of being human? This transdisciplinary course invites students to join a conversation about what it means to be human in the twenty-first century, a conversation also incorporating voices of theologians, philosophers, scholars of religion, fiction writers, literary critics, and natural and social scientists. The course features both a public lecture series and a more intimate seminar experience. Prerequisite(s): Senior Standing.

REL 421. The Occult in American Religions. 3 Credit Hours.
From the eighteenth century until today, a succession of metaphysical/occult religions has emerged in the United States emphasizing the marvelous and weird dimensions of the modern world. Religious Studies 421 analyzes the cultural appeal and function of wonder, terror, and desire in a number of these movements, including Freemasonry, early Mormonism, Spiritualism, Ufology, New Age spirituality, and Scientology.

REL 490. Research. 1-3 Credit Hours.
An upper-class student who wishes to undertake a research project for academic credit during a given semester must submit a research proposal prior to registration and a research report at the end of the semester. The proposal should specify the number of credits sought. All proposals must be approved by the research director, the department chair and the academic dean. They will be kept on file in the academic dean's office. May be used to fulfill the second religious studies course required by the core curriculum.
Prerequisite: REL 200.

Theology (THE)

THE 100. Catholic Theological Reflection on Service. 3 Credit Hours.
This course analyzes and explores the theological dimensions of service in critical dialogue with the Catholic tradition, thereby introducing students to a central question or questions in Catholic theology, as per the specifications of the Core IV document.

THE 125. Biblical Women. 3 Credit Hours.
Focusing on close readings of stories of biblical women, this course introduces students to the Hebrew Bible, deuterocanonical sources, and the New Testament, with attention to the social and historical contexts of those writings, the afterlives of biblical women in later religious traditions, and gender theory.

THE 175. Catholic Theology. 3 Credit Hours.
This course will introduce the student to contemporary understandings of Catholicism. The development of the church's tradition will be traced from its foundations in Scripture and the Councils of the Church to the present day. Topics to be covered include Christology, ecclesiology, morality and sacramental theology.

THE 184. Christian Creed: Mystery and Symbol. 3 Credit Hours.
An exploration and critique of the beliefs of Christianity through an examination of its expression in the ancient creeds of the church. The course will relate the Nicene Creed common to nearly all Christians to its roots in the Bible and then develop a commentary of the contents of the creed from a contemporary perspective.

THE 200. Theology in a Secular World. 3 Credit Hours.
This course is an introduction to theology and its relevance to other academic disciplines. How does theology relate to other fields in the natural and social sciences? How are its truth claims to be understood and evaluated? And what are the practical benefits to studying theology in the twenty-first century? In this class we will read theological and biblical texts side by side with works from such contemporary disciplines as psychology, religious studies, and environmental science. We will analyze how prominent theological writers translate a number of concepts into the language and categories of modern thought, and how they seek to find meaning in the data uncovered by the modern sciences. Readings will include works by a number of prominent Catholic writers-including Thomas Berry, Paul Knitter, Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, and Richard Rohr-as well as texts from other religious traditions and secular fields.

THE 201. Old Testament. 3 Credit Hours.
A general introduction to the literature of the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament). The course will consider different approaches to this material, such as historical criticism, rhetorical analysis, etc. Students will also explore the history of biblical Israel within the context of the ancient Near East. Selections of the Torah (Pentateuch), the prophets and the writings will be studied.

THE 202. A Rabbi Meets Jesus: a Jewish-Christian Encounter. 3 Credit Hours.
In the context of contemporary Jewish-Christian encounter, it is important to identify and to evaluate critically theological concepts which each of these religions teach and believe, including the idea of God, Law, Kingdom, Covenant, messiah, Holiness, and Sabbath. These theological concepts will be central to this course and will be explored through the study of primary religious texts, doctrines, and theological arguments.
THE 235. Eco-Theology and Film. 3 Credit Hours.
This course will introduce the rising field of Eco-Theology, presenting many of the ways in which humanity's relationship to nature has been understood. Our approach will be interdisciplinary, and students will be encouraged to explore the issues and materials from a range of perspectives, both theological and artistic.

THE 237. Christian Social Ethics. 3 Credit Hours.
This course offers an approach to contemporary social issues and underscores the importance of the Christian ethical dimension in these issues and in character formation. Students will be introduced to the methods and resources for ethical analysis and decision making. Issues addressed will include the family, liberation, violence, non-violence, the environment, sexuality, the economy, life and death and medicine.

THE 240. Theological Responses to Suffering. 3 Credit Hours.
This course will examine the various types, causes, and dimensions of suffering, as well as traditional and contemporary religious responses to human suffering. While the course will draw from the wisdom of both Eastern and Western theological and spiritual traditions, particular attention will be given to the Christian/Catholic tradition.

THE 247. Christian Life: Symbol and Practice. 3 Credit Hours.
This course will explore various components of Christian life as it is contemporaneously experienced and symbolized. To achieve this, the topics of religious experience, faith belief and conversion will be treated in the context of various modes of symbolization: scripture, sacrament and liturgy, doctrine and literature.

THE 248. Christian Spirituality. 3 Credit Hours.
This course will provide the student with an overview of Christian spirituality. It will consider the biblical foundations of Christian spirituality and its historical development through the centuries. A major portion of the course will look at the contemporary practice of Christian spirituality, including prayer, discernment, spiritual direction and the usefulness of insights from psychology regarding dreams, personality and gender. Students will be introduced in-class to various methods of Christian meditation.

THE 267. American Catholicism. 3 Credit Hours.
This course will introduce the student to the history of American Catholicism from colonial days to the present. Special emphasis will be placed upon a consideration of the problems which the church faced as it tried simultaneously to be American enough to please a frequently skeptical and sometimes hostile American culture; conspicuously Catholic enough to please Rome and Catholic enough in the forms of piety and governance to please the diverse ethnic groups that comprised its membership. Topics covered will include Catholic patriotism, Americanization, the Americanist crisis, nativism and American Catholic intellectual life.

THE 274. African Christian Theology. 3 Credit Hours.
The course examines the encounter between African traditional religions and cultures and European Christianity during nineteenth century missionary expansion into sub-Saharan Africa. It also explores the movements that gave rise to contemporary African Christian theology. Although the course is ecumenical in scope, it places particular emphasis on the Roman Catholic theological tradition.
Cross-listed Courses: PGS 374

THE 277. The Church: Community in Christ. 3 Credit Hours.
An exploration of the community of Jesus' disciples which developed into a worldwide, multi-faceted and structure communion of communions. This study will consider the scriptural roots of this communion and its subsequent theological development. It will also propose and critique contemporary concepts of the church.

THE 284. Christian Mysticism. 3 Credit Hours.
This course will trace mystical theologies and the practices tied to them within Christianity, as well as outlining issues of definition and method in the study of mysticism. It will explore the roots of Christian mysticism and the development of various forms of mysticism from late antiquity to modern era.

THE 285. Eating As a Sacred Act: an Intellectual And Gustatory Exploration of Food and Faith. 3 Credit Hours.
The fundamental aim of this course will be to articulate a theology of eating. In many ways, food is a simple thing. Someone grows it; someone prepares and eats it. But in reality, food/eating is perhaps one of the most complicated of human acts since it involves so many facets of creation and human ingenuity. Eating does not merely fill our bellies. Eating has a transcendent dimension to it as well. In the Christian tradition, there exists an obvious connection to Eucharist, eating, that leads to communion through creation, humanity and ultimately God. Food and eating will be viewed through multiple academic lenses: theological (principally), ritual, sacramental, cultural, agricultural, ecological, and moral. The aim is to lead the student to a deeper awareness of this ordinary but complex act that joins one to the entire cosmos. There will also be a gustatory component in which the student will explore the local food shed that will include shared meals.

THE 303. Prophets. 3 Credit Hours.
This course concerns the prophetic writings of the Hebrew Bible. The class will study the phenomenon of prophecy in the ancient Near East in general and in biblical Israel in particular. Using the work of anthropologists and social scientists, the class will also consider briefly prophecy in contemporary tribal societies in order to understand the role of prophecy in Israelite society. The class will meet the prophetic books on their own terms, as the works of theologians and thinkers, influenced by their social contexts, with specific notions about God, history, the future and the role of human choice and behavior in shaping national and personal destiny.

THE 310. Synoptic Gospels. 3 Credit Hours.
An in-depth examination of Matthew, Mark and Luke. This course will examine what is common to the first three Gospels, including, but not limited to parables, healing stories, controversy stories and accounts of the passion and resurrection. Questions of methodology and background will be treated as necessary. The emphasis will then shift to close readings of each Gospel in order to gain an appreciation for the distinctive theology and literary structure of the three.

THE 311. Johannine Literature. 3 Credit Hours.
An in-depth examination of the fourth Gospel and Johannine epistles. The distinctive Johannine theology will be assessed, with some attention to the differences (literary and theological) between John and the synoptic Gospels. The course will also discuss theories of the history of the Johannine community, with consideration for how the community's situation may have affected its theology.
THE 312. Pauline Epistles. 3 Credit Hours.
The course has two main purposes: (1) to answer the question, "What gospel does Paul preach?"—that is, to come to an understanding of Paul's rich theology; and (2) to learn, through the epistles, more about the milieu in which Paul worked: the social conditions, competing theological movements within early Christianity, issues of community life. As time permits, the course may also include an overview of the images of Paul preserved by other writings such as Acts of the Apostles and the deuteropauline Letters.

THE 331. Christian Ethics. 3 Credit Hours.
An introduction to significant approaches to religious ethics and the study of particular personal and social problems from religious perspectives. Examples of topics included might be marriage, abortion, homosexuality, nuclear warfare and world hunger.

THE 332. Catholic Social Thought. 3 Credit Hours.
This course aims to help students clarify their unexpressed values as a step toward developing a value system. It seeks to develop habits of re-examining the student's purposes, aspirations, attitudes and feelings to find an intelligent relationship between his or her life and the world. The course begins with a consideration of the viability of Christian ethics as applied to the personal and social aspects of life. It evaluates the value presuppositions of both students and leaders and applies these values to case studies.

THE 378. Jesus Christ Through History. 3 Credit Hours.
From the time of the historical Jesus until the present, the figure of Jesus has undergone significant changes in interpretation. This course will trace these changes and assess the reasons for them. The course will also allow students to assess contemporary interpretations of Jesus.

THE 381. Christianity in Dialogue With World Religions. 3 Credit Hours.
If Jesus is the only Way what does that mean for our brothers and sisters of other faiths? What does the Catholic Church really teach about the possibility of salvation for those who do not become Catholic? Can Catholics and other Christians engage in respectful dialogue and active cooperation with people of other faiths? How might interfaith dialogue enhance and deepen the faith one already holds? In this course students will explore a number of different theological answers and perspectives that address these and other questions with special emphasis on official Catholic teaching. In addition, we will be introduced to a number of concrete examples of Christians engaging in dialogue with the faithful of other religions. In the second half of the course, students will choose one particular non-Christian tradition and enter more intensively into examples of dialogue between Christianity and that particular faith with the goal of considering and questioning more deeply their own understanding of the world and their position in it.