

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

SPRING 2010

THEO 311/511: Understanding the Old Testament Professor George C. Heider TR 9:45 - 11:00 AM

The course provides a basic overview of the two-thirds of the Christian Bible with which Christians are least familiar (or even - - heretically, according to the Christian tradition - - reject, at least in practice). Selected OT texts will be examined from a literary, historical, and/or theological perspective. Course requirements include a test, a final exam, a paper/presentation on a scholarly methodology of interpretation, and a paper in which the student joins the conversation of interpreters that extends from before the time of Jesus and includes both Jewish and Christian perspectives in the years since. While THEO-200 is not a formal prerequisite, students are strongly encouraged to have taken it before enrolling in this course.

THEO 312/512: Understanding the New Testament Professor Richard DeMaris MWF 2:00 - 2:50 PM

The New Testament offers the reader snapshots or freeze-frames of the beliefs and practices of various groups in the Jesus movement (early Christianity) from around 50 C.E. to the early second century. These groups represent several stages or phases in what began as a reform movement within Israelite religion (emerging Judaism) and later became a distinctive religious tradition that we know today as Christianity. To capture this dynamic development and better understand the New Testament, it is worth looking at how human beings draw existing ideas (tradition) from their culture, shape them, and present them to others, which is what the New Testament writers did in their day. This appropriation and interpretation of tradition continues today in the way Jesus is portrayed in various media, which we will explore in the second half of the semester.

THEO 315/515: The Prophets Professor Mark Bartusch MWF 12:55 - 1:45 PM

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve. This course is a study of the roles of the prophets in Israelite society and religion. Attention is given to the cultural context and historical origins of the prophetic movement, its impact on Israel's political, social and religious life, and the continuing significance of the prophetic message in Jewish and Christian thought. Participants will complete reading guides on selected texts from the Prophets, perform a short prophetic text (to be accompanied by a 3-4 page paper), and write a 5-6 page paper on a second text from the Prophets. Evaluation will also include three examinations, including the final examination. There are no prerequisites for this course.

Bibliography will include:

- *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version. Fully Revised and Updated.* Edited by Harold W. Attridge [Wayne A. Meeks.] New York: HarperCollins, 2006.
- Leclerc, Thomas L. *Introduction to the Prophets: Their Stories, Sayings, and Scrolls.* New York: Paulist, 2007.
- Wilson, Robert R. *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1980.

THEO 318/518: Jesus & the Gospels Professor Frederick Niedner MWF 10:10 - 11:00 AM

This comparative study of the New Testament gospels focuses on the uniqueness of each presentation of the story about Jesus. The course consists of lectures, discussions, and readings that assist students in understanding the content, message, and structure of each gospel in light of its unique audience, historical context, and evangelical purpose.

In addition to the canonical gospels and other biblical materials, students will read Mark A. Powell's *Introduction to the Gospels* (ISBN 0-8006-3075-0). Two required projects include: a) a five-to-six page text study, book review, or small research project on a gospels-related topic; and b) an essay of approximately three pages that compares two films, drama, or other artistic depiction of Jesus' life as though they were modern "gospels." Students will also write three examinations, including the final examination.

THEO 319/519: Topics in Biblical Studies: Women in the Bible Lecturer Carolyn Leeb TR 1:20 - 2:35 PM

(Description forthcoming)

THEO 321 : Medieval Christianity: East & West Associate Professor Lisa Driver TR 9:45 AM - 11:00 AM

This course will take students on a global pilgrimage among the Christians of the fifth to the fifteenth centuries. European Christianity (Roman Catholic and Orthodox) provides the initial entry point and foundation for exploring the medieval period. From there, the course proceeds to the Church of the East (Asia and India) and finishes with the ancient African churches of Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. Along the way, students will encounter the distinctive beliefs and practices of these three branches of medieval Christianity. Important issues in this period involve how God and human beings interact in prayer and worship, how different branches of the 'family' relate to each other, and how Christians express their identity whether a government favors their religion or not.

A textbook provides historical and theological context, while primary sources will allow students to 'meet' Christians from the past. Evaluation will include both in-class tests and short essays on issues (4-6 pages).

THEO 323/523 : Reformation Theology Professor Ronald Rittgers TR 9:45 AM - 10:00 AM

The sixteenth century was one of the most creative and influential periods of theological reflection in the history of Christianity; church and society in western Europe (and far beyond) were profoundly shaped by the arguments and conclusions of theologians in this era. Reformation theology continues to inform and shape Christianity today. The purpose of this course is to provide students with an introduction to the major theological developments of the sixteenth-century reform movements, both Protestant and Catholic. Through careful reading of select theological texts students will explore the reformers' views of God, Scripture, the church, salvation, and the sacraments. There are no prerequisites for this course.

THEO-328/528 : The German Church Struggle Professor Matthew Becker MWF 11:50 AM - 12:40 PM

More than sixty years after its destruction, Nazi Germany continues to be a topic of interest to both historians and the public at large. Of particular concern are the actions of Christians in Germany during the Third Reich. This course examines the struggle for control of the churches in Germany from the Wilhelmine era to 1950. Participants will explore the roots of the struggle in pre-1914 Germany, the role of anti-Semitism in German society, World War I and the experience of defeat, church/state controversies during the Weimar Republic, the German Christian movement, the Confessing Church movement, congregations and state churches in the Nazi state, and the reconstruction of the German churches in the shadow of World War II and the Holocaust. The second part of the course will examine several representative German Lutheran theologians and their actions and writings during and shortly after the Nazi period. Students will write two short papers and take two exams.

THEO 329/529: Topic: Christian Spiritual Traditions & Practices Associate Professor Lisa Driver TR 11:50 AM - 1:05 PM

Christian "spirituality" involves the lived dimensions of deeply held belief in a way that seeks for transformative communion with God made possible through Jesus Christ. This course will examine several ways that Christians analyzed the human condition (as distant from God, yet made for God) and God's saving work in Christ. Drawing on distinctive models of human nature and of salvation, Christians developed practices for believers to utilize body and soul in a perpetual turning away from distractions and turning back to God. Important issues include the tension between individual and community, and the relative roles of God and human beings in recovering from sin and progressing in the faith.

The course consists of a survey of traditions and a more intensive examination of four traditions that continue to influence contemporary Christian spirituality: Benedictine, Ignatian (Jesuit), Orthodox and Lutheran. The associated practices include Benedictine prayerful reading of scripture, Ignatian examination of God's presence, Orthodox meditation on icons and assessment of distractions, and Lutheran devotions through the catechism and hymnody.

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Evaluation will be balanced between objective tests over surveyed material and essays that analyze individual traditions and practices.

THEO 331/531: Christian Theology in the 20th Century Professor Matthew Becker
MWF 2:00 - 2:50 PM

This course examines the principal developments in 20th-Century Christian theology. The course will thus analyze the most important ideas of such seminal figures as Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, H. Richard Niebuhr, and John Paul II, and also the most important theological movements of the past century, including feminist theology, eco-theologies, liberation theologies, Black theology, process theology, and American evangelical theology. Two exams and two short papers will be required

THEO 332: Christian Theology and the Moral Life Professor Gilbert Meilaender M
6:30 - 9:15 PM

In thinking about the moral life we focus on both character and conduct. In this course we will begin with character--exploring the meaning of virtue, the issues raised for Christian ethics by attention to virtue, and the alternative of a divine command theory of morality. Then we will consider how Christian character shapes conduct in several places of responsibility--marriage, family, and politics. Finally, we will explore the place of grace in the moral life, the way in which it both transforms and perfects virtue.

Reading will include a number of Stanley Hauerwas's essays on virtue, Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, and Marilynne Robinson's novel *Gilead*. Class time will be divided between lectures and discussion of assigned reading. Two exams and one paper will be required.

THEO 334-EV : Holocaust Theology Professor James F. Moore R 6:30 - 9:15 PM

This course is a systematic study of the many issues stemming from the events of the Nazi Holocaust and how those events emerged and continue to influence our current situation. The course is challenging, course materials will, at times, shock our sensibilities because they confront us with the horrors of the Holocaust and other genocides; yet the process of growth and understanding is worth the struggle.

The objective of the course is not only to acquaint students with the facts but also to engage students in a process of shaping a possible view of the meaning and the centrality of human rights and religion in a new context of a sense of global justice.

This course intends to expand the horizons of students so that students will be more adequately equipped to identify the importance of the Holocaust as an event of radical proportions; be more fully sensitive to the feelings, outlook and questions of many (if not most) contemporary Jews; and be more completely understanding of the necessity for adequate human responses to genocide. In so far as those objectives are met, students will see in the study of human rights in the context of reflection on genocidal violence a valuable case example of the interaction between culture, religion and the shaping of values. Thus, the course

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provides a fascinating model for understanding how culture and religion are closely intertwined, particularly in the area of moral values.

The course will include the reading of 5 books, taking two take-home exams and writing a research paper of approximately 8-10 pages.

**THEO 346/546: Topic: Faith and Healing Prof. Dr. Christoffer H. Grundmann,
John R. Eckrich University TR 2:50 - 4:05 PM**

Faith-healing while for ages a common practice within the various religions and cultures throughout the world has recently become the topic not just of scholarly study but of scientific research as well. To the rational secular mind faith-healing and faith-healing phenomena exert a certain fascination, which make people wonder what's going on. Can it really be the way in which people speak and write or report about it? Is it not fake? Is it genuine and authentic?

Beyond it's mere curiosity for the common public faith-healing poses a host of interesting and serious issues of general scientific and theological character like trust in God, miracle working, existence of supernatural powers and spirits and the like. Can that what appears to be "faith" in the eyes of pious religious people not just be the outcome of a self-betrayal distorting "reality"? Can "faith" not be explained as a strong "psychic" potential for healing and as such a means of an autotherapeutic device of humans for the sake of staying alive helping to overcome serious health crises? If it is something like this, can such "faith" not also become a powerful resource to be availed of by medical professionals/ psychotherapists and the health-care providers to achieve their desired goal of restoring people to health? This would explain the increased interest these people have in the subject in order to tap this source as an assumed "cheap" means of achieving their goals. But what, then, is "faith" this paramount element of any religious life?

This course will explore the multifaceted, highly complex relationships between faith and its impact on healing or becoming well again. This will shed light on the interface of medicine, theology, the contemporary mind set and epistemology and, of course on the perception of faith and personal trust. It also will give insights into the history of faith-healing and faith-healing movements with special reference to the 20th century developments in the US besides identifying the various elements which make faith-healing "work."

Literature: 1) Harold G. Koenig, *Medicine, Religion, and Health*, Templeton, 2008.
2) D. Matthews, *The Faith Factor: Proof of the Healing Power of Prayer*, Penguin, 1999. 3) J. Randi, *The Faith Healers*, Prometheus, 1989. 4) D. Sulmasy, *The Healer's Calling*, Paulist, 1997.

THEO 348-X : Theology and Literature Professor Edward Upton MWF 9:05 - 9:55 AM

This course will ask what kind of theology is done in writing and reading literature. Christians have consistently found it necessary to understand and shape lives of faith through imaginative writing. This course will give special attention to two forms of such imagination, lyric poetry and the novel, examining ways in which they help us to imagine other human beings, other ways of living, or the Divine Other.

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Readings for the class will include works by a number of lyric poets and novelists. The course will spend some time, in conjunction with performances of the Valparaiso Bach Institute, with Bach's St. Matthew Passion and will culminate in a reading of Dante's *Purgatorio*. Requirements will include weekly critical assignments, two 3-4 page papers, one final 10-12 page paper, and an oral presentation based on the final paper.

THEO 349-A: Topic for Spring: The Problems of Christian Love Lecturer David Weber MW 3:00 - 4:15 PM

Why is God's command to love one another such a problem? This course considers 5 of these problems beginning with the *Resentment* that arises because the demands of Christian love exceed our will and strength. Second, we look at the view that love is less a gift, a thing to be passively received, and more a virtue that is purposefully practiced. Third, we consider St. Paul's difficult assertion that patience is the first corollary of Christian love and fourthly we consider why Søren Kierkegaard argues that Christian love, first and foremost, aims to love one's enemies. We conclude with C.S. Lewis' very important argument that our human loves need not be in competition with but are rather completed by God's love.

THEO 353-A: Theology and Practice of Youth Ministry Assistant Professor Renee Schoer MWF 2:00 - 2:50 PM

This class will explore several different styles and theological understandings of youth ministry in the life of the church today; discuss the role of youth minister as scholar, theologian, and practitioner; and assist the student in developing both skills and perspectives in leading youth ministry in the local church.

Course Objectives: Exploring features of a family based ministry model of youth ministry, a spiritual practices/formation model, a programmatic model, and one emphasizing social justice and service. Identify some of the different aspects of an effective youth ministry in the local church today. Reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses as a youth minister, developing a sense of their call to youth ministry. Identify the challenges and opportunities in different youth ministry contexts and develop strategies to meet them.

Class activities include lectures, interviews, discussion, reflection papers, church visits, and a final paper.

THEO 353-BX: Death and Dying Associate Professor Peter Venturelli & Adjunct Assistant Professor Gregory A. Jones MW 3:00 - 4:15 PM

This is a cross-disciplinary course using both sociological and theological perspectives on the termination of human life. We explore both societal reaction to death and the belief and the non-belief of life after death.

The course is designed to address the events and concerns surrounding what can be termed the "ultimate transitions" within the period of life known as death and dying. Sociologically, this course will look at the following topics: how we think

about death, what is death, the death system, dying, hospice and palliative care, end-of-life issues and decisions, suicide, euthanasia, assisted death, abortion, and the right to die, death in the world of childhood, bereavement, grief, and mourning, the funeral process. Theologically, this course will explore the concepts and belief traditions of other selected cultural communities in an effort to examine the existential questions about life after death and visit common religious beliefs, theories, and practices regarding the various explanations about after death experience. Emphasis is directed toward the social and cultural responses to this event and the theological views most commonly held about this event in the life journey and we may also visit several non traditional ways to understand this critical period known as the end of life.

THEO 361/561-A: Indian Religions and Culture Assistant Professor George Pati TR
11:50 AM - 1:05 PM

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THEO 361/561-B: TR 1:20 - 2:35 PM

This survey course aims to introduce characteristic forms and key concepts of major world religions that have emerged in India through lecture and discussion. It seeks to engage students in a critical understanding of the history, philosophy, and practices of the different traditions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. In particular, this course will trace both conceptual and historical continuities and examine the development of the various religious traditions exploring issues of divinity, ritual practices, festivals, and concepts of salvation through different time periods. Students will be able to engage in cross-cultural understanding of these traditions and cultures within and beyond India.

THEO 364-A: Native American Religions Adjunct Assistant Professor Gregory A. Jones MWF 10:10 AM - 11:00 AM

A study of the most common religious features found in Native American societies north of Mexico and Central American indigenous cultures. Special attention is given to formal and informal ritualized spirituality and value based behaviors of Native American cultures as it relates to traditional and contemporary Native American communities.

THEO 367/567: Reading Devotional Poetry Assistant Professor George Pati TR
9:45 - 11:00 AM

This course aims to engage in an in-depth examination of poetry from within the Hindu *bhakti* or devotional traditions, focusing on three specific geographic/cultural regions within the Indian subcontinent: the Tamil and Malayalam-speaking South, the Hindi-speaking North, and the Bengali-speaking region of eastern India. Keeping in mind both continuities and differences in the devotional traditions of these three distinct cultural areas, we will examine a variety of devotional poetry in English translation and consider the enduring significance and use of that deeply

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emotional poetry in the lives of Hindus today. In addition, the course will enable students to understand the symbols, tenets, and ritualized temple practices within the devotional traditions and how elements of devotion are expressed aesthetically.

THEO 368-X: Children & Childhood: Jewish, Christian & Muslim Perspectives
Professor Marcia Bunge MWF 11:50 AM - 12:40 PM

The aims of this course are to explore diverse religious understandings of children and childhood and to reexamine our own attitudes and obligations to children. The course first examines contemporary challenges facing children and families both here and abroad and then focuses on some of the following fundamental questions: How do various traditions within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam speak about the nature and status of children? How do they view obligations of parents and the community to children? How do they speak about the moral and spiritual formation of children? What kinds of religious practices do they emphasize for passing on a particular faith tradition to children? How do they view the responsibilities of children and their role in religious rituals and communal life? How are leaders of various religious traditions responding to current national and international debates about child wellbeing and children's rights? Participants in the course will read and discuss selected classical and contemporary texts on these and other related questions. Students will also carry out a research project on a topic of their choice. Requirements include active participation in class discussion; two short papers on common reading assignments (4-5 pages each); and a final research paper (10 pages).

THEO 490-X: Faith & History Professor Ronald Rittgers TR 1:20 - 2:35 PM

What difference does Christian faith make in the way one conducts one's intellectual affairs? How does viewing one's chosen area of study as a Christian vocation influence the way one approaches one's academic pursuits? The task of this course is to take up these questions with respect to the study of history, both "sacred" and "secular." This course will explore resources in the Christian tradition for thinking about what history is, how one seeks to make sense of it, and how one attempts to teach and write about it for contemporary audiences. While designed especially for HIST and THEO majors, this course is open to any student who wishes to examine more closely the possible implications of Christian faith for the study of the past.

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