RELIGION AND THEOLOGY (THL)

THL 100  The Biblical Heritage of Christianity 4 credits
An investigation of the sacred literature and basic theological expressions of the Christian tradition. The course emphasizes the covenant dealings of God with His people and the completion of the old covenant in God's new covenant in Jesus Christ. Students will read selected portions from each major division of the Old and New Testaments and will explore themes taken up by the ecumenical creeds. This course fulfills the introductory general education requirement for Theology and counts toward the minor in Religion. (THL 100 is not open to students enrolled in or having taken THL 203, THL 206 or THL 303)

THL 200 Scripture and its interpretation: A Global Introduction to the Bible 3 credits
Concisely introduces the Old and New Testaments and related topics and examines a variety of historical and contemporary interpretive approaches, including Lutheran perspectives from African, African-American, Asian, and Hispanic communities.

THL 201 Old Testament 3 credits
An introduction to the historical context and literature of the Old Testament. Special attention is paid to the concepts of promise, law, covenant, grace, and the presence of God in the narratives of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets. The course also examines the nature of prophecy and the psalm and wisdom resources in the Prophets and Writings.

THL 205 History and Literature of the Old Testament 4 credits
An introduction to the historical context and literature of the Old Testament. Special attention is paid to the concepts of promise, law, covenant, grace, and the presence of God in the narratives of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets. The course also examines the nature of prophecy and the psalm and wisdom resources in the Prophets and Writings. Students begin to use the tools of Biblical interpretation and practice reading texts in their historical and literary contexts.

THL 206 New Testament 3 credits
An introduction to the historical context and literature of the New Testament. Students master the stories and teachings of early Christianity, and grow in their ability to read texts of the Bible in their historical and literary contexts.

THL 215 History and Literature of the New Testament 4 credits
An introduction to the historical context and literature of the New Testament. Students master the stories and teachings of early Christianity, practice the use of the tools of biblical interpretation, and grow in their ability to read texts of the Bible in their historical and literary contexts.

THL 218 The Land of the Bible 1 credit
This course is a study tour which combines travel with lectures and readings to provide students with a rich, on-site learning experience. Students will spend at least ten days in Israel visiting sites throughout the country that formed the stage on which so many biblical events were played out. The travel portion will move region-by-region, spending time in the Galilee, the Dead Sea area, and Jerusalem. In each area students will learn about its geography and archaeology, exploring how the features of each area shaped the history of its people. Attention will also be given to the imagery and symbolism connected with each region in both the Old and New Testaments. [Please be aware that this course is physically demanding. It will involve significant amounts of walking/hiking at times in quite rugged environments.] (Prerequisite: TH 100 or THL 206)

THL 219 Principles of Biblical Interpretation 3 credits
As an introduction to principles and methods of Biblical interpretation as employed by Lutherans with a high view of the Scriptures, students will focus on learning and practicing methodological models for studying and interpreting Biblical literature. Special attention will be given to the study of the historical-cultural context and literary nature of the inspired text.

THL 241 Church History 3 credits
A panoramic survey of Christian history and thought from the apostolic age to the present. As such, the course traces the church's institutional history, its theology, its worship life, and the history of its missionary expansion against the larger political, intellectual, and socio-cultural back drop. This course is required for the minor in Confessional Lutheranism. It is not a general education course.

THL 270 Our Living Faith 4 credits
A study of the content and effective application of the Christian understanding of creation, redemption, and sanctification; with an exploration of the biblical basis, the conceptual framework and the contemporary significance of the historic doctrines of the church. This course is required for the minor in Confessional Lutheranism. (Required Prerequisite: Minimum C- in THL205; Recommended Prerequisite: THL215)

THL 310 Archaeology and the Bible 4 credits
Archaeology has become an indispensable source for the reconstruction of past cultures and therefore is of direct importance for Biblical studies. The course aims at giving students insight into the material culture of societies in the ancient Levant from the Bronze and Iron ages down to the material context of Early Christianity in the Roman and Byzantine periods. Students will be introduced to basic methods of archaeological work and to important archaeological regions, periods and types of material culture relevant to the world of the Bible and Christianity. Students will use archaeological data to reconstruct contexts for biblical texts. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206 or THL 215)

THL 320 Global Christianity 4 credits
The question “What is Christianity?” will be explored from a global perspective. After surveying the state of Christianity, its teachings, and practices, students will wrestle with basic questions of life and Christian vocation in the third millennium. A major component of the course will be study of worship practices of area churches representing diverse cultural and immigrant groups. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206 or THL 215)
THL 325  Christian Ethics 4 credits
In this course, students will examine the ways in which both philosophical and theological frameworks change how we live our individual lives and shape the future of our families, friendships, sports teams, businesses, and political societies. In particular, the course invites students to relate these frameworks to their own thinking about sex and family, war and peace, work and the use of its financial fruits—and more generally, to the moral and political action to which they believe they are called in this life. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206 or THL 215)

THL 336  The Problem of Evil 4 credits
The problem of evil has led human beings to ask difficult questions about God. If God is both all-powerful and completely good (as many religious traditions claim), then why does God allow evil? Or, does evil demonstrate that in fact, there is no God? In this course, students will grapple with classic philosophical, Christian, and other religious approaches to these questions. They also will examine how these different approaches lead to different practical responses to evil in our personal lives and in our public life together. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 206 or THL 215)

THL 342  Athens and Jerusalem: Philosophy and Christianity 4 credits
A selective historical survey of the principal areas of inquiry, key figures, major issues, and central themes commonly addressed by western philosophy and Christian theology during the ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary periods. Among the topics that may be considered are the relationship of faith and reason; truth; nature and grace; the classical arguments for the existence of God; evil; the philosophical and theological virtues; and religious language. The course is based on extensive readings from primary sources and is supplemented by lectures and discussions. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206 or THL 215)

THL 344  Martin Luther: Saint & Sinner 4 credits
This course examines the life and theology of the Martin Luther, instigator of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. A prolific writer and bold thinker, Luther appears today on many top ten lists of most influential people in the last millennium. By studying Luther in his medieval context and by reviewing the influence of his thought since the 16th century, the course will explore the relevance of his theology for the 21st century. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206 or THL 215)

THL 345  Callings: Christianity and Vocation 3 credits
Challenges students to explore their purpose and/or baptismal call through elements of Christian theology and exemplars from the history of Christianity. Students will explore the concept of Christian vocation from historical and theological perspectives with special emphasis given to Martin Luther’s doctrine of vocation in relation to service of one’s neighbor. Students are challenged to think in new and creative ways about pursuing their passions and dreams for the good of others. (Prerequisites: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206).

THL 351  Jesus and Muhammad 4 credits
This course explores the lives, contributions, teachings, and significance of Jesus and Muhammad through selected reading of the Christian Scriptures, pagan and Jewish sources, the Quran, Ibn Hisham, Al-Waqidi, and some later writers. Students will gain skill and confidence in reading ancient texts and understanding the historical, social, and religious trends that shaped the ancient world. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206 or THL 215)

THL 352  Is God Green? 4 credits
Drawing on the resources of Christianity and other religions, this course examines issues of ecology, sustainability and human health (broadly conceived). Students will explore the significance of Biblical themes of creation and new creation as they consider 21st century ethical choices for the care of the cosmos and the human community. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 206 or THL 215)

THL 353  Christianity and World Religions 4 credits
From a Christian perspective, this course explores the varieties of human religious beliefs. Major religions are surveyed in terms of artifacts, behaviors, emotions, beliefs, values, world views, and histories. The course will cover Animism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, with special attention in the latter case devoted to the Christian denominations of North America. Prerequisites: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206 or THL 215

THL 354  Christian - Muslim Relations 4 credits
This course offers a comprehensive study of the dynamics of relations between Christianity and Islam with sensitivity to the character of the Christian - Muslim encounter. It places the emphasis on the historical context within which perceptions and attitudes were worked out and provides a depth of historical insight to the complexities of current Christian - Muslim interactions on different continents. (Prerequisites: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206).

THL 356  One Nation under God? Christianity and Politics in America 4 credits
The claim that the United States is a Christian nation will be examined from the Puritan settlers through the rise of the religious right in the late twentieth century, with particular emphasis on the notion of covenant and the influence of Christian leaders in various reform movements (abolitionist, temperance, women's suffrage, civil rights). The question of “one nation under God” will be tested against the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206 or THL 215)

THL 357  Christianity and the Media in Contemporary Culture 4 credits
Christianity has an unmistakable interplay with various forms of the media. This course explores subtle and overt Christian themes in movies, music, magazines/newspapers, theater, the World Wide Web, and television. Students locate, watch, and critically analyze numerous media resources and discuss them in correlation to Christian themes in the Bible. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206 or THL 215)

THL 359  Theology and Art 4 credits
A study of representative samples of written texts, art, architecture, and worship life in order to understand the relationship among intellectual pursuits, artistic developments, political/societal changes, and the spiritual life of Christians. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206)

THL 365  Christianity thru Symbol/Ritual 4 credits
THL 371 Mission of God 4 credits
This course traces the mission of God through the Old and New Testaments. It explores God’s intent for his mission people in the past, present and future and discloses that intent in biblical narratives and texts and in Lutheran theology and Lutheran confessions. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206 or THL 215)

THL 377 Faith and Justice in the City 4 credits
Students will apply the Christian scriptures and Lutheran theology to today’s multicultural, global, urban context with close attention to the Christian concepts of vocation, justice, and service toward one’s neighbor. Through thoughtful evaluation of theology, philosophy, and the humanities, students will evaluate Christian ethics and habits for living in today’s global society as thoughtful men and women of faith and conviction.

THL 409 Studies in Biblical Theology 2 credits
An exploration of sections, books, or major topics of the Old and New Testaments, as determined by the instructor and announced by the division. This course is recommended for the major in theology. It does not fulfill the general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL203, Old Testament Narrative; THL206, New Testament)

THL 431 Lutheran Doctrine I 3 credits
A study of the content and effective application of the Christian understanding of doctrine itself, God, creation, theological anthropology, and the person and work of Christ, with an exploration of the biblical basis, conceptual framework, and the contemporary significance of the historic doctrine of the Lutheran church. Particular attention will be given to the contributions of C.F.W. Walther to the Lutheran understanding of Law and Gospel. Prerequisites: THL 201 and (THL 206 or THL 215)

THL 432 Lutheran Doctrine II 3 credits
A study of the content and effective application of the Christian understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, sanctification, the means of grace, the Christian church, public ministry, and eschatology with an exploration of the biblical basis, conceptual framework, and the contemporary significance of the historic doctrine of the Lutheran church. Particular attention will be given to the contributions of C.F.W. Walther to the Lutheran understanding of church and ministry. Prerequisite: THL 431

THL 441 Lutheran Confessional Writings 3 credits
A survey and analysis of the gospel-centered doctrinal content of the Book of Concord in its 16th century historical and theological context. The eleven confessional documents are studied and interpreted as the church’s normative exposition of Holy Scripture, to which exposition the evangelical Lutheran church is committed in terms of both theological method and doctrinal substance.

THL 459 Studies in Religion & Society 2 credits
A study of the interaction between the essential tenets of Lutheran Christianity and the structures of democratic society. Among the topics considered are Christian vocation, the nature of culture and the ways Christianity has historically related to culture (with a special emphasis on the interplay of religion, church and race in North American cultural experience), the functions of Law and Gospel, the Lutheran understanding of the “two governments,” and the role of Christians in society at large. This course is an elective for the major in theology. It does not fulfill the general education requirement for Theology.