

# RELIGION AND THEOLOGY (THL)

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## **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. (THL100 is not open to students enrolled in or having taken THL 200 or THL 206)

## **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 interpretative approaches, including Lutheran perspectives from African, African-American, Asian, and Hispanic communities. (THL 200 is not open to students enrolled in or who have taken THL 100 or THL 206).

## **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 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 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, THL 200, 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. Prerequisites: THL 201 and THL 206.

## **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 backdrop.

## **THL 270 Our Living Faith 3 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.

## **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).

## **THL 316 The Death of Jesus 4 credits**

This course examines the accounts of the death and burial of Jesus in their historical, archaeological, literary, and theological contexts. Topics include: the editorial emphases of the gospel writers; implications of the death of Jesus in early Christian writers, especially noting their assertions that he was rose from the dead; Roman and Jewish judicial procedures; crucifixion and burial in the ancient world. In addition, the course explores the remembering and interpretation of the death of Jesus in a range of artistic, media, cultural, and religious expressions through the centuries.

## **THL 320 Christianity and the Global South 3 credits**

This course will trace the global expansion of Christianity from its beginnings to the present era. Emphasis will be paid to the theological and cultural dimensions of the worldwide Christian movement as it developed and spread throughout history. The course will also investigate varieties of Lutheran traditions in African, which are currently the fastest growing Lutheran churches in the world. (Prerequisite THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206)

## **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 200 or THL 206)

**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)

**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)

**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. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement. (Prerequisites: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206).

**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 200 or THL 206)

**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. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisites: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206).

**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. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (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)

**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)

**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. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206)

**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)

**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. This course fulfills the intermediate general education requirement for Theology. (Prerequisite: THL 100 or THL 200 or THL 206).

**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)

**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 488 Independent Study 1-4 credits**

Independent study offers students an opportunity to do research and complete a major project in an area of theology of their own choosing.

**THL 496 Senior Thesis 2 credits**

The Senior Thesis is the culminating work of a student majoring in Theology. The purpose of the thesis is to utilize the perspective, understanding, research skills, and writing abilities students have developed in their studies to investigate a substantial topic. The goal is for students to produce a paper of high quality and distinction. The work is normally done in one semester in the senior year under the guidance of a faculty mentor. The paper will be read by a second faculty member and proposed to the annual undergraduate Research Symposium. This course is required for the major in theology. It does not fulfill the general education requirement for Theology.