

Theology 300 Level Course Descriptions

Spring 2024

THEO 280-01E: Theology & Interdisciplinary Study

Svebakken, Hans

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:25AM – 11:15AM

Science denial threatens the common good by undermining public confidence in the ability of science to comprehend our world and create effective solutions to urgent social problems. This course explores the threat of science denial through a series of three questions. **First, what is science denial?** This first phase will analyze science denial as *the unwarranted rejection of scientific consensus* on a range of issues (e.g., evolution), identifying some of the faulty rationales used for rejecting consensus. **Second, what motivates science denial?** The presumption of conflict between science and faith motivates much (but not all) science denial, so this second phase explores what analysts call the "Conflict Model," using detailed case studies of "creationism" and "scientism" to illustrate how the assumptions, methods, and rhetoric of these two views work to perpetuate conflict and facilitate science denial. **Third, what mitigates science denial?** If conflict facilitates science denial, then peaceful co-existence between science and faith can mitigate the problem. So the final phase of the course will propose the late Stephen Jay Gould's model of "Non-Overlapping Magisteria" (NOMA) as the only viable public model available to students, educators, and science communicators for framing a relation between science and faith that all civic stakeholders can endorse and support for the common good. The "Undergraduate Research" Engaged-Learning designation of this course aims (1) to understand, analyze, and evaluate Gould's original NOMA model and its reception and (2) to revise Gould's NOMA into a more effective analytical tool. Ultimately, this revised NOMA envisions Gould's Magisterium of Science complemented by a "Magisterium of Meaning" (not his "Magisterium of Religion"), each with its own proper scope of competence to consider and adjudicate its own distinct sorts of claims. According to this model, all conflict stems from unwarranted and polemical efforts to force the claims of one Magisterium onto the legitimate deliberations of the other, so broad public support for magisterial boundaries will guard *both* the unique authority of science to determine the facts of our physical universe *and* the unique right of citizens to determine the meaning of their own existence within that universe.

Theology 300 Level Course Descriptions

Spring 2024

THEO 317-001: Christian Thought: Ancient-Medieval

Witherington, Derrick

Tuesday, Thursday 8:30AM – 9:45AM

Combined with

THEO 460-001: Sem Hist of Theo

Combined with THEO 317

Witherington, Derrick

Tuesday, Thursday 8:30AM – 9:45AM

In this course we will examine a selection of theological issues, topics, and debates which

characterized Christian Theology from the Patristic through the Medieval Period. This course is

designed neither as a primer in Christian doctrine, nor as a historical survey of the Church, but

is rather intended as an engaged, critical, and experiential attempt to enter into the thought

world of Ancient and Medieval Christianity. In order to do this, the course will be focused on an

examination of particular spiritual practices – including prayer, asceticism, monastic life,

pilgrimage, liturgy, sacraments, etc. – which are seen as embodying and growing out of the

theological assumptions, worldviews, and debates of the periods in which they are embedded.

In the course of our survey, we will selectively encounter a variety of authors including

Perpetua, Athanasius, Augustine of Hippo, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, John

Chrysostom, Gregory the Great, Hildegard of Bingen, Hadewijch of Brabant, Bonaventure,

Thomas Aquinas, and Benedict of Nursia. At the conclusion of the course, students will be able

to not only describe these periods' major topics and themes, but also be able to understand

how these topics and themes emerged out of and gave continual expression to concrete

spiritual practices (*lex orandi, lex credendi*: the law of prayer is the law of belief).

Theology 300 Level Course Descriptions

Spring 2024

THEO 350-01W: Topics in Islam

Masterpieces in Translation: Sufi Literature

Mozaffar, Omer

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:20AM – 10:10AM

Crossed listed with **LITR 280**

The goal of this class is to explore the writings of the Sufis. The Sufis are a variegated group of Muslims whose contemplative and mystical traditions find similar practitioners across other religious traditions. In this course, we will explore samples of works -- originally in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and English -- through the intellectual lineage of the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad, and writers across the world and across time. We will explore writings from the Arab World, North and Subsaharan Africa, Iran, Central Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, as well as Europe and the United States. We will have an even mix of modern and premodern literature, including writings from men and women. While Islamic scholarly and prescriptive discourse spans languages across history and across the world, the foundational language is and has been Arabic. As we will see, Arabic Islamic literature provides the core of vocabulary, categories, and concepts for the various works of Sufi literature. We will explore our texts through close readings involving theological, philosophical, anthropological, and political lenses, all within the umbrella of literature. Thus, our pathways through which we engage our texts will be character attributes and arcs, sentence and paragraph expressions, metaphors, and themes and lessons. As a Writing Intensive class, we will develop our writing skills with focus on critical analysis and compositional skills, different techniques of narratives, claims, and analytical expressions, and receiving and incorporating literary feedback.

Theology 300 Level Course Descriptions

Spring 2024

THEO 353-001: Religious Traditions

Combined with

THEO 373-002: Theology Capstone

Creation & the Fall in Popular Culture

Combined with

O'Connell, Lauren

Tuesday, Thursday 4:15PM - 5:30PM

Questions about existence, the 'Creator', humanity's relationship to its 'Creator', and the nature of human beings have been posed by nearly every culture and religious community throughout human history, and exploration of these questions has not been confined to religious texts and traditions. In this course, we will look at the various ways that these questions have been answered by religious communities, comparing them to the ways in which the creators of popular narratives (including John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, HBO's *Westworld*, and its adaptation of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, just to name a few) continue to do so up to the modern day. Comparisons will include not only the content of these narratives but also the hermeneutics of their interpreters. Through these comparisons, we will endeavor to understand the different methods of interpretation that religious communities use to address issues of creation and theological anthropology, making use of hermeneutics from Jewish Midrash, Christian Patristics, Islam, and other modern Biblical interpreters. The goal of this course is to explore with students different approaches to the topics of creation and theological anthropology, as well as a variety of interpretive methods, using materials from popular culture (literature, television, and film). Genesis 1-3, non-canonical Jewish literature, and other religious texts will serve as 'test cases', in an effort to make studying hermeneutics a bit more appealing and memorable.

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Spring 2024

THEO 393-001: Seminar Issues in Medical Ethics

Combined with

THEO 478-001: Issues in Medical Ethics

Haker, Hille

Tuesday, Thursday 1:00PM – 2:15PM

This seminar will examine ethical issues of suffering, health, and disability. We will examine different understandings and traditions of suffering, from the Stoic disavowal of suffering to the experiences and narratives of suffering from medical trauma (accidents, illness) and chronic illnesses, and the theological and ethical interpretations of suffering. We will analyze different medical and medical-ethical understandings of health as well as medicine's role in inflicting suffering on persons and communities. Finally, the understanding of disability has changed considerably over the last decades, and we will survey some recent publications regarding the history of disability policies, and disability studies. Designed for students with interests in Bioethics and Christian Ethics, this course is part of a year-long examination of suffering, health, and disability. All students are welcome to take this course as a stand-alone semester, or as a follow-up course of the Fall 2023 course (Suffering, Health, Disability, and the Bible). In this course, the group from the College of Arts and Sciences will regularly discuss the bioethical questions with a parallel course offered to students enrolled in the MA and Doctoral programs in Bioethics and Healthcare Mission Leadership in the Neiswanger Institute for Bioethics.