**Religion Department**

**Fall 2015**

**BTS-T Course Offerings**

All BTS-T courses acquaint students with ongoing efforts to understand the essential content of Christian belief in a critical and coherent manner, and engage students in theological reflection.  Each course approaches these common goals distinctively.  Some are topical, perhaps focused on a particular Christian teaching; some are dialogical, putting Christian theology in conversation with other modes of thought or religious traditions; still others take a historical approach or begin with biblical texts.  All St. Olaf students must take at least one BTS-T course.  Many find that they want to take more.

**202: Classics and Moderns:  Theology and Film - Instructor: Wilson**

"Theology and Film:  What Ever Happened to Religion?"  In Religion 202 we will consider the main lines of Christian theology in the context of examining changes in contemporary culture which affect the business of religion.  What has happened to religion and what is this "spirituality" that everyone seems to want? What has become of Christianity in our world?  Who is enthusiastic about religion these days and who are indifferent?  Who are the "nones" and what do they do with what was once a place for religious attachment in earlier generations?  In addition to classic theological texts and studies of culture, we will use a series of thoughtful films.  Seminar style classes; discussion; WRI; film geekhood not required; open only to students who can attend Wednesday evening showings of films on most weeks of the term.

**208: Christian Theology and Human Existence - Instructor: Jothen**

This course traces the significance of essential Christian theological doctrines (e.g., God, Christ, sin, salvation) for contemporary understandings of human beings and human behavior. Selected comparisons with alternative and/or complementary views of human nature (for example, philosophical, psychological, sociological, literary) are also included.

**209: Introduction to Feminist Theology - Instructor: Booth**

Students examine traditional Christian doctrines in light of feminist critiques and reformulations. The course focuses especially upon language and images of God, the person of Christ and the work of redemption and understandings of human nature. Students evaluate arguments for and against the compatibility of Christianity and feminism. Counts toward women's and gender studies major and concentration.

**212: Christian Theology in Historical Context - Instructor: Bateza**

This course offers an overview of the development of Christian thought and practice in the ancient, medieval and modern periods and analyzes the way Christian beliefs have evolved in response to changing historical situations. Special consideration is given to how different theological perspectives have influenced the activities of religious communities and lives of notable individuals.

**218: Political and Liberation Theology - Instructor: Schillinger**

This course examines the rise of political and liberation theology movements, the situations and issues to which they respond, theological formulations of political/liberation theologies, and the relationship of these theologies to traditional Christian doctrines. Special focus on the relationship between the theological and political, nature of christology and redemption, images and role of God, and understandings of human nature.

**221: Jesus in Scripture and Tradition - Instructor: Hanson**

"Who do people say that I am?" Jesus asked his disciples; and he followed that question with another: "And who do *you* say that I am?"  This course will address both of these questions that make up the task of "Christology" - the study of the identity and significance of Jesus.  That is, it will explore what *has been* believed about Jesus, focusing especially on the New Testament (that is, Scripture), but also on later developments (that is, Tradition - e.g., the creeds and councils). And it will explore the *contemporary*significance of Jesus, both for the task of Christology generally, and to help you develop and/or examine your own personal perspective.  Issues explored will include the historical setting of early Christianity; the various New Testament perspectives on Jesus; the quest of the "historical Jesus;" the divinity and humanity of Jesus; and major understandings of the saving significance of Jesus' death. A typical class session will involve close and critical readings and discussions of biblical texts and accompanying secondary readings.  Assignments will include a paper analyzing some aspect of the Jesus tradition, a group presentation and a paper on a film version of Jesus' life (as a way of getting at contemporary understanding of Jesus), a mid-term, and a final.

**230: Theology of Creation - Instructor: Erickson**

Creator, creatures, and creativity. These theological metaphors for the ebbs and flows of existence hold much promise and just as much controversy in our postmodern moment. Imagine questions spanning the origin of the universe to the rise of modern evolutionary science; from our climate crises to important concerns of ecojustice; from the everyday processes of earthly life to the rich and diverse production of art. In wrestling with these ecological questions, theologies of creation are undergoing a contemporary renaissance. This course will explore ecological theologies as they wrestle with the creation myths in Genesis, cosmology, evolutionary science, justice, and creativity.

**239: Beyond Narnia: The Theology of C.S. Lewis – Instructor: Santurri**

Did you know that the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia* was one of the most influential Christian thinkers of the twentieth century? That he was so influential is a product of two facts: (a) he was an enormously engaging writer; (b) while he disclaimed any status as a professional theologian, he was an astute theological thinker. This course considers both Lewis’s explicitily theological writings and his fictional works as resources for theological reflection.

**304: History of Christian Thought III - Instructor: Wilson**

This course offers a critical analysis of the development of Christian thought in the modern period, from the 17th century to the end of the 20th c. Students pay special attention to the rise of modes of knowing informed by science, to modern understandings of knowledge and freedom, to philosophical outlooks which challenge traditional Christian claims, and to the appropriation and criticism of these outlooks in modern theology, with attention to many of the major figures. This term we will work our way through classic texts from the Enlightenment on to the end of the 20th c. and will focus heavily on European materials. The sub-theme will be the challenge of modern forms of atheism.

The course will be a small seminar, will focus on discussion of daily readings and will include formal opportunities for students to lead discussion. It is an unusual course in the Religion Department, in that it is a level III course, suitable for majors, but still having the GE BTS-T attribute. It is a WRI course. Some of materials of the course are conceptually challenging and may be difficult for students without a few humanities courses behind them: thus, we have located the course on level III. But for those who are not religion majors but who are ready for some classic texts, the course can serve as a General Education theology course.

**ALS-L Course Offerings**

**280: Religion and Literature - Instructor: Barbour**

Students explore the religious significance of selected works of literature and examine how literary plot, character, symbolism, and theme raise religious questions, reveal ethical concerns and imply theological convictions.

**EIN Course Offerings**

**277: Travel and Ethics - Instructor: Barbour**

This course examines ethical issues raised by travel as well as the ways that various ethical perspectives address these issues. Students consider the ethics of pilgrimage in world religions, tourism and its critics, Christian perspectives on intercultural travel, issues raised by study abroad, and theories of ethical travel in relation to ecotourism, sustainability, service, and other ideals.

**289: Buddhism, Peace, and Justice - Instructor: Reed**

Students examine contemporary Buddhist moral teachings on social issues such as violence and peacemaking, human rights and social justice, and humanity and the environment. Coursework focuses on the writings of Vietnamese monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh, Tibetan leader-in-exile Tenzin Gyatso (Fourteenth Dalai Lama), American ecologist Joanna Macy, and others. Students consider the moral paradigms of Christianity and Buddhism: Christ and the Bodhisattva.

**HWC Course Offerings**

**248: Judaism - Instructor: Benjamin**

This survey of the historical, cultural, and theological developments within Judaism pays special attention to major periods and themes in Jewish life and thought, as well as to contemporary Judaism.

**MCS-G Course Offerings**

**253: Hinduism - Instructor: Rambachan**

This course, surveying the general nature and assumptions of Hindu thought, focuses on the diversity of doctrines and practices within some of its major traditions. Students analyze selections from authoritative Sanskrit texts like the Upanishads and Bhagavad-gita, directing special attention to the central issues and developments in Hindu-Christian dialogue.

**WRI Course Offerings**

**285: What is Religion? Approaches and Methods - Instructor: Ripley**

A study of competing and complementary approaches to the study of religion prevalent in the contemporary academy, this course prepares sophomore and junior religion majors for more advanced research seminars. Paying attention to the emphases and presuppositions of each approach, students develop an improved ability to understand the way that these different approaches affect scholarship and contribute to agreements and disagreements about what religion is and should be. Especially offered for Religion Majors.

**Seminar Course Offerings**

**399: Thematic Seminar: Comparative Mysticism - Instructor: Beckman**

Visions of the divine, prayers or dances to unite with the God/s, psychedelically enhanced states of consciousness, paranormal bodily phenomena, erotically-charged experiences. Mysticism can include all of these. We will explore in-depth the field of comparative mysticism and its wonders. We will analyze major interpretive models in the field to answer such question as: Are different religions encountering the same mystical moment? Do men and women differ in their experiences?  Are mystics crazy? Is mystical experience a solution to or a contributor to world strife?  We will study the mystics themselves from a variety of religious and secularist traditions (such as Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Ecological). Students will write a seminar paper, which may focus on one mystical tradition, on one essential theoretical issue, or on a comparative project.