

Theology Department Undergraduate Courses
Loyola University Chicago
Spring 2025

THEO 203 – 700N: Social Justice & Injustice

Online

Instructor: Timothy Sever, tsever@luc.edu

This course will focus directly and in depth on racial-ethnic and socio-economic inequalities that various communities experience specifically wealth-poverty disparities, gender/sex inequalities, policing, healthcare, immigration, and systemic discrimination against religious and other minorities. Successful completion of the course will satisfy the Tier II Knowledge Area: Theological and Religious Knowledge component of the core curriculum.

THEO 204 – 001: Religious Ethics and the Ecological Crisis

Mondays, 4:15 – 6:45 pm

Instructor: Michael Schuck, mschuck@luc.edu

This course explores what a fully human, integral response to the current ecological crisis looks like--a response that is objective and pragmatic but also moral and meaningful. Each of these responses--the objective (science), the pragmatic (action), the moral (ethics), and the meaningful (spirituality)--are constitutive aspects of human life. The more we are aware of these dimensions of our lives (and the entire natural world), the better we can respond to the current ecological crisis with effectiveness and hope.

Many religions support and enrich the scientific, ethical, spiritual, and action-oriented guidance people need to become integral ecologists. Examples of such support are works by Indigenous botanist Robin Kimmerer and Roman Catholic Pope Francis. Significant, too, are insights by 'non-religious' environmentalists who nevertheless identify a spirituality in their lives and the natural world that is essential to their work. Examples of their writings include Aldo Leopold, Evelyn Tucker, and Brian Swimme.

The works of the above five authors are centerpieces for the course. Class procedure varies between instructor lectures, student discussions, video screenings, and guest presentations. In all, the purpose is to educate and encourage each of us to pursue a fully human, integral response to today's ecological crisis.

THEO 231 - 001: Hebrew Bible / Old Testament

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 – 9:45 am

THEO 231 - 002: Hebrew Bible / Old Testament

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 – 2:15 pm

Instructor: Mark Lester, mlester2@luc.edu

This course introduces students to the Hebrew Bible, also known as the TaNaKh or the Christian Old Testament. The diverse texts in this collection tell the story of the Jewish people, offer compelling portraits of human love, violence, and loss, and ruminate on the deepest existential questions of life. But what kind of book is the Bible? How do we in the 21st century make sense of it? How have individuals and communities made sense of it in the over two-thousand years since it was compiled? The areas of focus will include: (1) genre; (2) background; (3) interpretation.

Genre: What are the literary norms that shape these texts? How do these patterns shape our expectations as readers?

Background: Where do these texts come from? How do they relate to history? Is it possible to discover the circumstances in which they were written? What about the cultures which shaped them?

Interpretation: What assumptions do we (and others) bring to the Bible? How do these assumptions influence the meanings we find in the Biblical text? How have assumptions and approaches changed in the history of Biblical interpretation in Jewish, Christian, and contemporary critical scholarship?

THEO 231 – 003: Hebrew Bible / Old Testament

Mondays, 4:15 – 6:45 pm

THEO 231 – 004: Hebrew Bible / Old Testament

Thursdays, 4:15 – 6:45 pm

Instructor, Thomas Wetzels, twetzels@luc.edu

THEO 232 – 001: New Testament

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 12:35 to 1:25 pm

Instructor: Olegs Andrejevs, oandrei@luc.edu

This course is designed to acquaint students with the basic facts about the New Testament and introduce them to the fundamentals of contemporary New Testament research. We will analyze the books of the New Testament in historically grounded fashion, following the mainstream conclusions reached over the last two centuries and currently held by the majority of New Testament specialists on any given subject (while also engaging with the dissenting views). The students can expect to gain a good understanding of the basic points of discussion in contemporary New Testament studies; a working knowledge of 1st-century CE Roman Palestine in all of its complexity; a proficiency in navigating the canonical New Testament; and an awareness of its key themes and passages.

THEO 232 – 002: New Testament

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 – 2:15 pm

THEO 232 – 003: New Testament

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30 – 3:45 pm

Instructor: Lauren O'Connell, loconnell1@luc.edu

This course introduces students to the New Testament, including the gospels, the letters of Paul, the letters of other early Christian leaders, and the book of Revelation. We will situate these texts in their own historical moment, considering them within both Hellenistic Judaism and the larger Greco-Roman world. Diverse portrayals of the life and teaching of Jesus will emerge, and we will mark the ways that rich variety extends into the teachings of his followers. This course will also introduce students to modern methods of interpreting the Bible, including reading the New Testament in terms of postcolonialism, race, gender, sexuality, disability, and ecology, in addition to historical and literary approaches. This course considers the different questions each scholarly method asks of a New Testament text, and the tools it uses to answer them. This course will familiarize students with the history and contents of New Testament texts, as well as different approaches to interpreting them, in the interest of equipping students for knowledgeable and respectful dialogue about the Bible in their individual communities and our shared public life.

THEO 232 – 004: New Testament

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 11:30 – 12:20 pm

Instructor: Brian Yong Lee, blee18@luc.edu

THEO 266 – 001, Church and Global Cultures

Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 8:15 – 9:05 am

Instructor: TBD

THEO 267 – 001: Jesus Christ

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 – 9:45 am

Instructor: Christopher Skinner, cskinner1@luc.edu

THEO 272 – 001: Judaism

Thursdays, 4:15 – 6:45 pm

Instructor: TBD

This course introduces Judaism as it is practiced in America today. Students will learn about basic Jewish theological concepts such as Monotheism and the Torah as well as ethical principles such as Tikkun Olam and core Jewish practices such as Sabbath and Holidays and develop a basic familiarity with some of the major Jewish texts and an understanding of the outlines of post-Biblical Jewish history. Because we are at a Catholic school, there will also be some discussion of Jewish-Catholic relations and the importance of the study of Judaism for Catholics. By the end of the course, students will have the ability to think about ways to find different Jewish perspectives on questions and why the answers might be different. They will know how to visit a synagogue and understand what is going on, and also why different synagogues do things differently. Students will have a sense of how to deal with religious diversity in the workplace, in particular in relation to different forms of Judaism and have practical tools for responding to antisemitism and anti-Judaism.

THEO 276 – 001: Black World Religion

Mondays, 4:15 – 6:45 pm

Instructor, Gerald Steenken, jsteenk@luc.edu

"In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). In 1890 Afro-Caribbean scholar Edward Blyden adds, "If we live and move and have our being in Him, God also lives and moves and has His being in us," suggesting that each culture, race, and ethnic group reflects an image of the divine that no one else can duplicate. This course explores the revelatory manner in which the divine comes to unique presence and expression among African peoples throughout human history. It will examine:

- the religious experiences and faith traditions of Africa's ancient Nile valley civilizations, long recognized as cradling the world's spiritual and philosophical wisdom and as influencing the formative development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam;
- the religious experiences and faith traditions of indigenous Africans before and after European colonialism;
- the religious experiences and faith traditions of African descended peoples in the Americas, especially in the United States, during their centuries long liberation struggle to emancipate democracy for all by boldly resisting, countering, and overcoming slavery, legalized segregation, racial terrorism, and all other past and current forms of white supremacist ideology and abuse.

The primary sources include the literary works of indigenous African and African descended religious writers, leaders, and theologians and various texts from the writings of the ancient Egyptians and early African Christians. The course also employs a combination of secondary sources and audio-visual materials. A packet of the assigned literary works will be made available on Sakai under Lessons.

THEO 278 – 001: Religion and Gender

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 2:45 – 3:35 pm

Instructor: Miguel Diaz, mdiaz13@luc.edu

This course introduces students to some issues and topics surrounding the interaction between religion, gender, and sexual orientation. Beyond introducing students to the main arguments, debates, and points of view involving gendered and sexual ways of being human within religious traditions, emphasis will be placed on Christian theologies. Students will explore central theological constructions of gender and sexuality, underscoring feminist and queer approaches to this human experience.

THEO 278 – 002: Religion and Gender

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 – 11:15 am

THEO 278 – 003: Religion and Gender

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 – 2:15 pm

Instructor: Devorah Schoenfeld, dschoenfeld@luc.edu

This course explores the relationship between gender and religion. Often understood as mutually exclusive categories, this course will uncover various nuances that contribute to the social construction of both of these categories. This course will engage contemporary scholarship that seeks to understand this relationship in regard to various intersecting histories. Beyond religion and gender, this course will also explore various intersecting lines of research: colonialism, law, politics, and more. Throughout the course, we will constantly ask, what is gender? what is religion? what is the context we are currently studying? how does this context impact my understanding of gender? religion? This course will begin within the US context and Christian lineages, but quickly will transition to global and inter-religious perspectives. Additionally, students will engage secondary materials that address the themes of gender and religion. While possessing capacious analytical value on their own, this course will assert that a different form of analysis is uncovered when we explore the intersections of religion and gender.

THEO 279 – 001: Roman Catholicism

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 2:45 – 3:35 pm

Instructor: TBD

THEO 279 – 002: Roman Catholicism

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 1:40 – 2:30 pm

Instructor: TBD

THEO 280 – 003: Religion and Interdisciplinary Studies: Faith, Science, and the Common Good

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 9:30 – 10:00 am

Instructor: Hans Svebakken, hsvebak@luc.edu

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 test the late Stephen Jay Gould's model of "Non-Overlapping Magisteria" (NOMA) as a 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.

THEO 280 – 004: Religion and Interdisciplinary Studies: Capitalism as Religion

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30 am – 12:45 pm

Instructor: Colby Dickinson, cdickinson@luc.edu

Capitalism is the most successful modern belief system, with its myriad accompanying ritualistic consumerist practices, that we rarely stop to analyze from a religious point of view. Yet, just how does capitalism function as a religion in its own right and what are the theological implications of such a claim? Why do people place their hopes and dreams in financial accumulation and expansion? Readings will range from Max Weber on the 'Protestant work ethic' and Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' guiding market forces to contemporary historical critiques of capitalism as religion (W. Benjamin, E. McCarragher) and theological responses (K. Tanner, A. Kotsko).

THEO 280 – 01W : Religion and Interdisciplinary Studies: Theologies of Art, Literature, Mixed Media, and Film.

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 10:25 – 11:15 am

Instructor: Michael Murphy, mmurphy23@luc.edu

Writing Intensive

This course will survey a compelling array of artists and thinkers who practice, embody, and perform a “theological imagination” in fiction, poetry, visual art, film, mixed media, criticism and more. Some themes to be considered: the transcendent drama of existence; the nature of desire; the experience of mercy, justice, recognition; the gift and responsibility of environmental and regional care (including care of/in digital spaces); and the pilgrim journey of our lives in God—a journey characterized by both joyous and tragic realities. The course will also provide an introduction to theories in the interdisciplinary field of theology and literature and develop vocabularies for constructive engagement in theological, philosophical, and literary discourses. No specialized knowledge is presumed, and we look forward to what emerges in our lecture-seminar format.

THEO 280 – 02E: Religion and Interdisciplinary Studies

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 – 11:15 am

Instructor: Mark Lester, mlester2@luc.edu

Engaged Learning

What makes us human? To what end is human labor directed? How do we interact with the divine realm? This class explores the relationship of myth and ritual in Ancient West Asia and the Hebrew Bible. Individual units are structured around the great literary works of ancient Mesopotamia and Canaan (Gilgamesh, Atrahasis, Enuma Elish, Baal Cycle, Song of Erra and Ishum) and the monumental compositions of the Hebrew Bible (the Priestly Source and the Deuteronomic Composition). Throughout the course, students will be exposed to fundamental methods in the study of religion—particularly ancient religion—including the study of myth and ritual, approaches to orality and textuality, ancient poetics, narratology, and anthropological approaches to the study of ritual. More than anything, however, this class invites us to approach ancient literature on its own terms and to reflect on the timeless questions at the heart of ancient epic, myth, and ritual.

THEO 281 – 001: Christianity through Time

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 10:25 – 11:15 am
Instructor: TBD

THEO 281 – 002: Christianity through Time

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 12:35 – 1:25 pm
Instructor: TBD

THEO 282 – 003: Hinduism

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30 – 3:45 pm
Instructor: Hugh Nicholson, hnicolson@luc.edu

THEO 282 – 004: Hinduism

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30 am – 12:45 pm
Instructor: Tracy Pintchman, tpintch@luc.edu

THEO 293 – 001: Christian Marriage

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 11:30 am – 12:20 pm
Instructor: Michael Murphy, mmurphy23@luc.edu

THEO 295 – 001: Islam

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 8:15 – 9:05 am
Instructor: Omer Mozaffar, omozaffar@luc.edu

In this Tier 2 introductory course on Islam, we will begin with foundational concepts. From there, we will invest time into the primary sources. Next we will explore varieties of Muslim thought and practice. Students will develop a strong foundation into what Muslims regard as ʿIslamʿ as well as skills in analyzing contemporary voices related to Islam.

THEO 297 – 001: Buddhism

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 1:40 – 2:30 pm

THEO 297 – 002: Buddhism

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 2:45 – 3:35 pm
Instructor: Yarina Liston, yliston@luc.edu

This course is designed to give the student a solid introduction to the Buddhist religious tradition. The base of our study will be an examination of Indian Buddhism with the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama. This will lead us into a further exploration of Buddhism as it develops beyond India into Southeast Asia, the Far East and Tibet. We will focus on the historical and philosophic perspectives while delving into the beliefs, practices and texts associated with Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism. The primary methods of instruction will be lecture and discussion, but the ideas will be further developed through weekly discussions, group presentations, as well as meditation exercises. The primary Religious Studies methods to be used in this course are historical, philosophical, and psychological.

THEO 299 – 002: Religions of Asia

Tuesdays, 4:15 – 6:45 pm

THEO 299 – 003: Religions of Asia

Wednesdays, 4:15 – 6:45 pm

Instructor: Yarina Liston, yliston@luc.edu

This course constitutes an introduction to the seven world religious traditions of Asia through religious studies methodologies that culminate in an engaged learning project/paper. The project involves visiting a religious site, interviewing people, and presenting your findings in the Loyola Symposium. This course will cover a new religion every week and will generally cover the major points of history, doctrine, philosophy, rituals, ethics, and scripture of those traditions. Since this is a once-a-week class, each class period will have a lecture component, media, in class reflections, group presentations and discussion.