This course will grapple with three basic facts and one over-arching question. **The facts:** 1. Dramatic climate changes are already happening at an alarming pace. The scientific data is overwhelming even as political, societal leadership and action are gravely inadequate. 2. Human health (e.g. life span, premature death, chronic disease) is inextricably bound up with ecological health. 3. Those who have contributed the least to climate change—predominately women and children in resource-poor contexts are paying among the highest prices for it. Thus, justice questions are at the heart of this complex, game-changing crisis. Thus, various analytical dimensions and disciplines (e.g. public health, ecological, economic, social, racial, gender, religious/theological, moral) are integral to any adequate human response.

In confronting the stark realities, this course will explore a basic **question:** What does Christian ethics have to offer? How might we leverage theo-ethical resources in order to enact the kinds of fundamental and multi-dimensional changes needed to forestall the worst possible outcomes of climate change? How might faith traditions fuel and invigorate moral imagination and agency? This course is open to both upper-level undergraduates and to graduate students. Students do not need to be Theology or Religious Studies Majors/Minors, but they do need a strong interest in studying Christian theological sources/figures that relate to ecological ethics and/or climate change/the environmental sciences. Upper level undergraduate and graduate students in WSGS and IES are especially invited to join this class and conversation.

**Design:** This course is an advanced undergraduate and graduate seminar. The emphasis is on collaborative learning. While the professor will make presentations throughout the course, students are responsible for being prepared to participate actively in all class sessions. Weekly presentations and discussions will center upon the required readings, bringing in related social/economic/scientific context and news. In all, the goal is to reflect on all of the course materials and current events for the sake of personal, communal, and public theological/spiritual and moral imagination. Thus, the assignments are designed to foster critical thinking, research, presentation, and teaching skills among participants.
The early Christian Tertullian posed the question: "What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?", that is, what does 'Reason' have to do with 'Faith'? Contemporary secular academics tend to view "faith" as irrational and hence incompatible with "reason." Ironically, the modernism that dismissed religious and ethical truth claims is under attack from a post-modernity that deconstructs meaning, rejects truth, and doubts reason. The Catholic Church's position is stated in Pope John Paul's encyclical “Fides et Ratio: On the Relationship between Faith and Reason” [=FR] which defends reason, truth, and cognition, and argues for a faith-reason interdependence. Taking FR as our primary text, students will engage with the greatest minds of the Christian tradition including Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, J.H. Newman, G.K. Chesterton, Maurice Blondel, Charles Taylor, and Joseph Ratzinger who have reflected on the faith-reason relationship in diverse historical contexts. Students will write several essays in response to these readings. Guest presentations will draw on the expertise of Christian philosophers and scientists regarding how they reconcile faith and reason in their personal and professional lives.

This course will be a rigorous introduction to the Fourth Gospel in its historical, social, literary, and theological environments. Specific attention will be paid to the literary and theological distinctiveness of the gospel as well as the reception of the text by scholars. Knowledge of Greek is is not required by those registering at the 400 level.
Mary Magdalene (and Other Women around Jesus):
From the New Testament to the New Age and Beyond.

Who was Mary Magdalene, really? And who were those other women who, according to Luke, followed and supported financially Jesus and his band of itinerant disciples? Beginning with the historical memory of Mary Magdalene and the other women around Jesus, this course will examine and follow the construction of their figures and the transformations of their images through the centuries to the age of the Internet.

The first goal of the course is that of enabling the students to master historical methodology and to use the appropriate instruments for the study of both factual history and the history of ideas. Particularly we will analyze how human fantasy reworks religious ideas: a mastery of this type of reasoning, through proper methodology and research, will allow the students to develop healthy criticism of contemporary “religious barkers.” Another goal of this course is to recognize the need for figures of women in religious discourse and religious structures. We will focus on the interaction between the everyday life of the believer and the power of the (even legendary) images of women like Mary Magdalene as well as the importance of feminine presence in contexts in which women have been discarded or neglected. Finally, the course will examine the key function of a figure like that of Mary Magdalene in contemporary feminist studies.
We know more about Paul of Tarsus than we know about any other New Testament author. During his lifetime he was one of the most controversial figures in early Christianity. He was a Pharisee, a Christian missionary, a community organizer, and someone who was both deeply committed and highly opinionated. The purpose of this course is twofold: (1) to understand what Paul was saying against the backgrounds of early Christianity, early Judaism, and the Greco-Roman world (content); and (2) to understand how one goes about interpreting Paul (method). We shall try to get a sense of Paul, his faith, and his vision. We shall analyze several of his letters in detail (especially Galatians, 1 Corinthians, and Romans) in order to understand the positions he took, the arguments he made to support his positions, and the cultural and religious context in which he made those arguments. The course will involve three four-page papers, a final eighteen-page research paper, and a final examination.

Each class will consist primarily of a lecture on the material I asked you to read for that class. The class will also often involve a discussion either of texts from Paul’s letters, from other ancient texts, or from secondary readings. It is, therefore, crucial that all of the readings be done before the class and that you be prepared to discuss them during part of the class.
In this course, we will explore the implications of decolonial studies for Christian Theology and Ethics. We will begin the course with some classic works on colonialism and postcolonialism, which are the context for the newer development of decolonial studies. Students will work on their own projects with the goal of writing a publishable paper by the end of the term.

The work in this course will be in part historical, in part methodological, and in part explorative, asking the following questions, among others: What is the Christian historical contribution – and critique – of colonialism? How does the concept of dominion shape Christian theological concepts, and how has it changed over the centuries? How is it related to the rise of modern capitalism? In what way affects coloniality – as habitus – Christian ethics? What is the role of superiority and inferiority? How does the concept of natural law and natural rights change in early modernity? What are the implications for the modern theory of human rights? What role does the turn to history in the 19th century play, both for the modern philosophy of history and for the theology of history? What role does the theological concept of nature play in the dispute of religion and science in the 19th century, especially regarding the biological theory of race? What is the status of “nature” today, especially regarding the question of sex and gender? How can we envision a decolonial Christian theology and a decolonial Christian Ethics?

Literature (Selection, open to change):

ALLEN, AMY. The End of Progress, New York 2016.
MBEMBE, ACHILLE. Critique of Black reason, 2017.
MIGNOLO, WALTER. The darker side of western modernity: Global futures, decolonial options, 2011.
TAYLOR, MARK L. The theological and the political : on the weight of the world, Minneapolis 2011.
Students who have filed the dissertation paperwork and are currently writing should be enrolled in this course. You must be enrolled in some course every semester.

THEO 600 - 001 (7056): Dissertation Supervision
Dr. Christopher W. Skinner

Master’s students should enroll in this course during the semester in which they plan to take their comprehensive exams.

THEO 605 – 001 (7058): Master’s Study
Dr. Christopher W. Skinner

Students who have completed their doctoral level course work and are studying for the written and oral comprehensive exams should be enrolled in this course. You must be enrolled in some course every semester.

THEO 610 – 001 (7059): Doctoral Study
Dr. Christopher W. Skinner