

Spring 2027 Course Descriptions

THEO 280: Religion and Interdisciplinary Studies

(Fulfills THEO Tier 2 Core Credit)

Please note: THEO 280 is Religion and Interdisciplinary Studies. The sections have very different topics – each interdisciplinary in its own way. See below for specifics. We also have many other options for Tier 2 Core courses – see LOCUS or reach out to Dr. Lauren O’Connell at loconnell1@luc.edu or Dr. Sandra Sullivan-Dunbar at ssull1@luc.edu with questions about other Tier 2 courses.

If you are interested in one of these courses and it is full, please join the waitlist! Spots almost always open up.

THEO 280-001, 002

Faith, Science and the Common Good

Dr. Hans Svebakken

Section 001: MWF 12:35-1:25

Section 002: MWF 10:25-11:15

Science denial threatens the common good by undermining public confidence in the ability of science to comprehend our world and create effective solutions for urgent social problems. This course explores the threat of science denial through a series of three questions. First, what is science denial? Second, what motivates science denial? Third, what mitigates science denial? Insofar as *some* science denial stems from the presumption of an inevitable conflict between faith and science, this course considers the merits of models presuming their peaceful co-existence.

THEO 280-003

Theologies and Spiritualities of Resistance

Dr. Derrick Witherington

T-Th 8:30-9:45

The Christian life consists of love of God and love of neighbor, and this requires that Christians adopt certain postures and practices which places the love of God and others at the center of their lives. While this mindset and set of practices should inform Christian practice at all times, during times of persecution, unrest, or upheaval, circumstances have called and continue to call for heroic and even risky expressions of Christian love which themselves resist ideologies which divide, exclude, and separate people from God and others. In this course, we will be examining a set of Christian spiritual practices through the ages which can be read as “spiritualities of resistance” and so gain an appreciation for how Christian spirituality can be seen as a means of resisting harmful ideologies. The course will present a thematic survey of the history of Christian spirituality, including a focus on the role of the prophet, martyrdom, mysticism, and

public/political theologies. Figures we will explore include Ignatius of Antioch, Augustine, Martin Luther, Simone Weil, Edith Stein, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, James Cone, René Girard, Gustavo Gutierrez, and Pope Francis, along with others. By the end of the course, students will be able to articulate the shape and themes of a Christian Theology of Resistance theologically and philosophically and also be able to explain how various historical and cultural pressures have shaped this spirituality in the past and present.

THEO 280-004, 005

Queer and Trans Studies in Religion Through Film

Dr. Leigh Greening

Section 004: T-Th 10:00-11:15

Section 005: T-Th 11:30-12:45

This course will be taught through the lens of queer and trans studies in religion with a heavy emphasis on film as a medium for critical reflection. Using Melissa Wilcox's *Queer Religiosities* as our textbook, we will reflect on themes like stories, conversations, practices, identities, communities, and politics and power throughout the semester. Students will gain literacy in the disciplines of religious studies and gender studies through in-depth exploration of course content, interactive class discussion, and films mostly available through Loyola's libraries. They will be challenged to understand the real-world application of these concepts by keeping up with news stories that highlight current events concerning gender and religion. Students will gain confidence in their ability to have discussions about LGBTQIA+ issues and religion while critically engaging multiple theoretical frameworks from the disciplines of religious studies, queer theory, and trans studies.

THEO 280-006, 007

Christianity, Race, Prisons and Policing

Dr. Sandra Sullivan-Dunbar

Section 006: MWF 12:35-1:25

Section 007: MWF 1:40-2:30

This course will explore how Christianity has been used both as a tool of colonizing power and as a source of liberating resistance, with specific reference to the construction of race and white supremacy in the United States context. We will ask how Christianity in the United States has been entangled with both slavery and abolitionism, with policing and calls for the reform or the abolition of policing, with mass incarceration and with movements to disrupt the carceral state. We will learn about the long history of Christian thought about whether and when Christians can participate in violence or the use of force on behalf of the state. We will see how the Christian just-war tradition has been applied to the ethics of policing in recent years, and how it may critique incidents of excessive force in policing. We'll also hear from voices espousing pacifism, non-violent resistance, and alternative approaches to public safety.

THEO 280-008

Crossing the Rainbow Bridge: Religion, Mortality, and Animal Afterlives

(Intended instructor: Sarah Levanstam)

Tues 4:15-6:45

What do religious traditions teach us about the lives and deaths of nonhuman animals? How does our shared mortality shape religious thought, ritual practice, and ethical life? How do religious traditions influence how we relate to nonhuman animals—as deities and symbols, laborers and food, companions and pests, sacred lives and disposable “others”?

This course introduces students to the study of more-than-human cosmologies across various religious, spiritual, and secular traditions, including (but not limited to) transnational animal-welfarist, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and New Age contexts. Together, we will learn from texts, art and performance, film, podcasts, and site visits with religious communities and animal-welfare organizations.

At the center of this course is the understanding that human and nonhuman animals alike are mortal, and the question of what religious traditions make of this shared condition. We will examine what is at stake in various interpretations of animal lives and deaths—across social hierarchies, gendered labor, colonial and postcolonial governance, social and political movements, animal welfare activism, and imperial and nationalist discourses.

THEO 280-009

Encountering Buddhism Through Women Writers, Artists, and Musicians

(Intended Instructor: Dr. Darcie Price-Wallace)

Tues-Thurs 10 am – 11:15 am

The course broadens the ways of understanding of Buddhism by bringing attention to the much neglected voices of women through the lens of art and its intersections with religion and gender. This course asks what is emphasized when women’s voices narrate Buddhist hagiographies, philosophy, and traditions. Drawing from women’s writings within and outside the Buddhist canon as well as film, music, and art, this course emphasizes women’s experiences on the Buddhist path as they navigate suffering and its alleviation across cultures over 2600 years. This course is reading intensive, incorporating two novels in addition to an autobiography, memoir, essays, poetry, film, music, and art. The first novel centers, Yaśodhara, the Buddha’s wife as she retells her experience of the Buddha’s path to awakening; and the second describes a Japanese teen’s reliance on a Zen nun as she navigates trauma, grief, selfhood, and time. The final work of literature is the autobiography of an eighth century princess, Yeshe Tsogyal, who is one of the most-loved and revered Buddhist masters in Tibetan Buddhism. In addition, this course engages with the collection of poems by the earliest Chinese nuns as they recount the path to awakening, explores Zen nuns writing on non-duality and emptiness, and contemporary Tibetan writers, artists, singers, and poets on Buddhist thought, generational displacement in the face of colonialism, feminism, and the movement of the Tibetan diaspora. The class includes

exploring Buddhist ideas together with their exposition in literature, film, art, and music while accounting for paradoxes such as: inclusion/exclusion, unity/diversity, ultimate/relative, self/selflessness.