

# THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

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Theology is the science of God, the discipline that seeks knowledge of God's being and all of God's works. Theology synthesizes and interprets Christian beliefs and applies them to today's world. Theology leads to wisdom. Living in light of wisdom from God shapes and motivates a passionate love for God and growth in maturity.

## Objectives for Students

- Acquire orderly understandings of the major doctrinal and biblical themes of the Christian worldview;
- Gain awareness of contemporary intellectual movements and proper Christian response;
- Form reasons for faith and ability to offer reasoned defenses of Christian truth;
- Develop the habit of interpreting all of life through the practice of theological reflection;
- Uncover the connections of Christian truth with the living of life and the practice of leadership in ministry; and
- Find guidance and motivation for pursuing personal spiritual growth by encountering the transforming power of divine truth.

## Systematic Theology

Systematic theology synthesizes Christian beliefs and applies them to today's world. Building chiefly on a foundation of biblical data, it also interacts with other areas of knowledge such as philosophy, historical and contemporary theology, and the sciences, using them to illuminate and confirm essential biblical teachings. A primary goal of coursework in systematic theology is to help students work toward developing an intelligible system of Christian thought that is at once biblically sound, rationally coherent, and culturally relevant. Systematic theology courses should normally be taken in the middle or senior years. At Bethel Seminary St. Paul, all students should plan to take TS 512 before taking upper-level electives in systematic theology.

### **TS 512 • Systematic Theology I: God the Creator** 3 Credits

Investigation into the nature of God in His Triune life and His self-revelation through the Scriptures. Study of the nature of humanity in its created and fallen condition. Evaluation of one's personal theology, in light of historical Christianity and emerging theologies. Contextualization of the gospel and integration of key learnings into one's faith.

### **TS 513 • Systematic Theology II: God the Redeemer** 3 Credits

Investigation of the person of Jesus Christ and the provision of salvation through Christ for humanity. Study of the Holy Spirit's person and redemptive and reconciling work and God's plan for the future of all creation. Evaluation of one's personal theology, in light of historical Christianity and emerging theologies. Contextualization of the gospel and integration of key learnings into one's faith.

### **TS 530 • Faith and Public Life** 3 Credits

An introduction to the public nature of Christian belief and practice, highlighting diverse expressions of faith-culture interaction. Different types and facets of culture engagement are defined and explored, including intercultural, interdisciplinary, interreligious, ethical, and apologetic concerns. Cultural agency is connected to theological reflection, spiritual formation, and vocational leadership.

### **TS 601 • History of Christian Thought: The Early Church to Scholasticism** 1.5,3 Credits

A survey of the major historical, cultural, and theological factors influencing the development of doctrine to Aquinas, with major analysis of the work of the Ante- and Post-Nicene councils and their subsequent influence on the articulation of the structure of theological thought.

*Prerequisites: HS 510. Special Notes: Crosslisted with HS 601.*

## *Theological Studies 2*

### **TS 602 • History of Christian Thought: Scholasticism to Enlightenment** 1.5,3 Credits

An analysis of theological renewal based on an inductive study from the writings of Wycliffe, Hus, Luther, Calvin, the Anabaptists, Elizabethan-American Puritans, and John Wesley.

*Prerequisites:* HS 510. *Special Notes:* Crosslisted with HS 602.

### **TS 603 • History of Christian Thought: 19th Century to the Present** 1.5,3 Credits

An analysis of the antecedents of contemporary theology as reflected in the formative periods of the 19th century to the present, with particular reference to the modern era and its significance in contemporary church life.

*Prerequisites:* HS 510. *Special Notes:* Crosslisted with HS 603.

### **TS 605 • Theology and Contemporary Culture** 1.5,3 Credits

An engagement with current, popular forms of cultural expression - movies, music, television, sports, social media, etc. - and their relevance to Christian thought and practice. This course emphasizes cultural hermeneutics: how interpretations of culture can shape and inform theological reflection, public action, vocational identity, and missional engagement.

*Prerequisites:* TS 512 or TS 513.

### **TS 615 • Forgiveness and Restorative Justice** 1.5,3 Credits

Taking into account related concepts such as grace, mercy, restorative justice, and love, this course is a theological exploration of what it means to live our lives as both the forgiven and the forgivers in Christ. Practical assignments allow the opportunity to connect course topics to personal contexts and areas of interest.

### **TS 630 • Eschatology and Hope** 1.5,3 Credits

This course explores the themes of eschatology, or the doctrine of the "last things," with particular attention to the ways in which it contributes hope for humanity and for the purpose of creation. While engaging the thought of major contemporary theologians, this course focuses on the relation between eschatology and Christology, soteriology, and political and practical/pastoral theology. Attention is also given to the relation between eschatology and theodicy, Christian spirituality and ecological ethics.

*Prerequisites:* TS 512 or TS 513 are recommended.

### **TS 632 • World Religions** 1.5,3 Credits

This course is a study of the world religions that provide structures of belief and meaning for vast numbers of people in America and globally. A primary goal is to develop the understanding and sensitivities necessary to represent Christ attractively, and communicate His Gospel intelligibly, to adherents of these faiths. It is also an opportunity to develop an informed Christian theology of religions.

*Prerequisites:* TS 512 recommended. *Special Notes:* Crosslisted with GC 632.

### **TS 633 • The Church and Social Issues** 1.5,3 Credits

An in-depth study of contemporary social challenges and questions, particularly in North American society, but with a view to the reality of globalization. The guiding question is: How does Scripture and the Gospel apply to the most difficult and pressing issues of the day and how can the church be involved? Particular issues are at the discretion of the instructor, but they will likely include (though not be limited to): diversity and racism, human sexuality, economics and poverty, and food and agriculture.

### **TS 634 • Religious Pluralism** 1.5,3 Credits

This course explores the theological issue of religious pluralism from a Christian and evangelical perspective. Students explore the historical and contemporary expressions of pluralism as represented by such thinkers as John Hick, John Cobb, and Raimundo Panikkar, among others. Special attention is given to Christological questions posed by pluralism and appropriate theological and apologetic responses. Practical and constructive methodologies are incorporated.

*Prerequisites:* TS 512; TS 513 is recommended.

### **TS 672 • Baptist History and Theology** 1.5,3 Credits

This course surveys the history, theological convictions and distinctive practices of the Baptist tradition. Contemporary developments, special challenges and promising opportunities will receive focused attention.

**TS 686 • The Pietist Tradition** 1.5,3 Credits

Pietism, "a religion of the heart," signifies a movement launched in the 17th century to reclaim the experiential dimension of Christian faith. This course traces the Pietist impulse in Christian history, evaluates its varied manifestations, and explores the relevance of a biblically-anchored Pietism to the renewal of the contemporary church.

*Special Notes: Crosslisted with HS686 and SP 686.*

**TS 704 • Movie Theology** 1.5,3 Credits

A structured workshop in theological evaluation of the heart and mind of contemporary culture as reflected in significant motion pictures. Particular attention is paid to portrayals of the human condition and to religious themes. The goal of the course is to cultivate the art of listening and watching perceptively, with a view to learning whenever possible, and to affirmation or criticism as appropriate.

*Prerequisites: TS 512 recommended.*

**TS 733 • Theology and Science** 1.5,3 Credits

A discussion of the interface between two important models of knowledge: theology and science. Taking a history and philosophy of science approach, this course evaluates theology and science as two methods for explaining aspects of reality. It discusses whether the results of science have theological import or the axioms of theology may have scientific significance.

*Special Notes: Crosslisted with PH 733.*

**TS 735 • Spiritual Theology** 1.5,3 Credits

This course clarifies the nature of Christian spirituality, makes a case for studying it, examines its biblical, doctrinal and psychological foundations, and then, finally, explores its three Spirit-directed dynamics of relating (to God, others and creation), becoming (holy and whole), and doing (finding our place in the larger purposes of God). Practical assignments and directed experiences provide opportunities to move beyond theory to personal formation.

**TS 739 • Theology in a Global Context** 1.5,3 Credits

This course addresses key intersections between theology and culture and explores questions and issues related to contextuality in theologizing. It does so by close readings, discussions, and analysis of contemporary theologies coming from beyond the traditional Euro-American context, including African, Asian, Latin American and other non-Western contexts. Themes of focus include Christology, anthropology, and the doctrine of salvation.

*Prerequisites: TS 512 or TS 513. Special Notes: Crosslisted with GC 739.*

**TS 751 • Seminar in Theology** 1.5,3 Credits

An in-depth study of a particular contemporary theological issue.

*Prerequisites: TS 512 and TS 513 are recommended.*

**TS 754 • Perspectives on Evil and Suffering** 1.5,3 Credits

This course explores two distinct approaches to suffering and evil. Theologians, philosophers, and apologists try to explain why evil exists in a world created by a good God. Pastoral theologians and counselors attempt to help people who are suffering. Course participants attempt integration of the categories, resources, and responses typical of these two areas as they seek answers to the question, "What can theologians and caregivers learn from each other? .

*Prerequisites: TS 512 recommended. Special Notes: Crosslisted with PC 754 and PH 754.*

**TS 774 • Theology of Leadership and Vocation** 1.5,3 Credits

This course will enable students to articulate a theology of leadership in an increasingly post-Christendom context and will also explore the nature of vocation as understood historically and in the present. The course explores the theological nature and biblical rationale for effective leadership and also explores, more broadly, vocation as a gift and responsibility, but does so in the context of reflection on the nature of the kingdom of God. The course culminates in in-depth communal and personal reflection on the question of vocation.

## Philosophy of Religion

### **PH 620 • Methods and Themes in Christian Thought** 1.5,3 Credits

An introduction to key concepts, figures, themes, and methodological approaches within the history of Christian thought. It involves an overview study of the history of the complex relationship between philosophy and theology from Plato to postmodernism. Key philosophical themes are drawn from metaphysics, ontology, phenomenology, and the question of religious language. Key theological themes are drawn from the doctrines of God, revelation, and the nature of humanity. Methods include historical, philosophical, systematic, and contextual theologies. Special attention is given to points of intersection among these approaches.

### **PH 655 • Integrative Hermeneutics** 1.5,3 Credits

An in-depth look at the human experience of interpretation, through the grid of philosophical hermeneutics and its intersections to theology.

*Prerequisites:* BT 510 *Special Notes:* Crosslisted with BT 655.

### **PH 665 • History of Philosophy of Religion** 1.5,3 Credits

This course explores the discourse of philosophical hermeneutics, discussing questions of how we interpret and how language functions in both communication and understanding. It studies significant philosophers and theologians in the field of hermeneutics, and also pays particular attention to the discourses of postmodernism as a philosophical outlook as well as to diverse, marginalized voices regarding their contribution to interpretation of the Bible. The course considers the interpretation of written, sacred texts, but also considers the phenomena of text and “textuality” more broadly, from an integrated theological and philosophical lens.

*Prerequisites:* TS 512.

### **PH 733 • Theology and Science** 1.5,3 Credits

A discussion of the interface between two important modes of knowledge: theology and science. Taking a history and philosophy of science approach, this course evaluates theology and science as two methods for explaining aspects of reality. It discusses whether the results of science have theological import or the axioms of theology may have scientific significance.

*Prerequisites:* PH606. *Special Notes:* Crosslisted with TS 733.

### **PH 754 • Perspectives on Evil and Suffering** 1.5,3 Credits

This course explores two distinct approaches to suffering and evil. Theologians, philosophers, and apologists try to explain why evil exists in a world created by a good God. Pastoral theologians and counselors attempt to help people who are suffering. Course participants attempt integration of the categories, resources, and responses typical of these two areas as they seek answers to the question, “What can theologians and caregivers learn from each other? .

*Prerequisites:* TS 512 *recommended. Special Notes:* Crosslisted with PC 754 and TS 754.

### **PH 780 • Senior Integrative Seminar: Missional Apologetics** 3 Credits

This course involves the strategic application of theology and Christian thought to the practical tasks of evangelism and mission—with special emphasis on postmodern, pluralist, and post-Christian contexts. It begins from the starting point that successful evangelism and mission today requires a holistic combination of intellectual, social, and spiritual engagement. The course is explicitly integrative, drawing on theology, philosophy, culture studies, leadership, and spiritual formation.

*Prerequisite:* Must be taken in the student’s final year.

*Prerequisites:* TS 512.

## Ethical Studies

### **TS 516 • Christian Social Ethics** 3 Credits

Exploration of the ethical vision of the Christian faith, grounded upon God's character and revealed will, and aimed toward moral transformation of persons and society. Integration of ethical theory, methods, biblical interpretation, spiritual resources, and the distinct motivation supporting Christian ethical concern. Demonstration of how a Christian ethical vision shapes identity and personal holiness and leads to service to the community and church. Evaluation of personal and cultural frameworks in ethical decision-making.

*Prerequisites:* TS 512, TS 513.

### **TS 517 • Christian Social Ethics for the Workplace** 3 Credits

A study of the ethical dimensions of Christian theology for leadership and workplace contexts. The class begins with an overview and analysis of ethical theory, terminology, approaches, and biblical bases, and then brings this ethical reflection into conversation with leadership theory and an emerging theology of faith, work, and economics. Application of ethical theory will focus on leadership and workplace issues facing Christian leaders today.

*Special Notes:* Crosslisted with ML 517.

### **TS 742 • Sexual Ethics** 1.5,3 Credits

A study of human sexual character and sexual expression from the perspectives of Scripture, theology, history, and contemporary thought and practice. Focuses on prevalent misunderstandings and abuses of sexuality, as well as the goodness of sexuality as designed by our Creator, in the lives of both married and single persons. Fornication, adultery, pornography, homosexuality, solo sex, celibacy, marriage, divorce, and remarriage are some of the topics we examine to learn how we may live godly and satisfying lives in an increasingly perverse society.

*Prerequisites:* TS 512.

### **TS 752 • Seminar in Ethics** 1.5,3 Credits

The seminar provides opportunity for skill development in Christian ethics methodology through advanced-level study of a particular ethical issue. Seminar topics are chosen on the basis of contemporary relevance and significance.

*Prerequisites:* TS 512, TS 516. *Special Notes:* This course fulfills Doctor of Ministry concentration requirements for the Biblical Theological Engagement concentration.

## Thesis and Research Courses

### **TS 670 • Directed Study in Theology** 1-9 Credits

Research focused on a particular theological issue or topic may be pursued under independent arrangement with the professor involved.

*Prerequisites:* TS 512. *Special Notes:* Permission is required.

### **TS 795A • Thesis Proposal** 1.5 Credits

Development of a thesis proposal and prospectus. Survey of existing research and delineation of tentative argument and preliminary bibliography. To be developed in consultation and under supervision of a faculty member as thesis advisor.

*Special Notes:* Approval of faculty member in relevant discipline is required.

### **TS 795B • Thesis Writing** 3 Credits

Implementation of research plan, under the supervision of thesis advisor and with input from a second reader. To include survey of existing research and thesis that is well argued and supported by the literature.

*Prerequisites:* TS 795A.