

RELIGIOUS AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

Department Chair: Daniel M. Cowdin, M.Phil., Ph.D.

The academic study of religion is a unique and exciting field. Those engaged in its pursuits ask the "big questions" of life, relying on reason and revelation to wrestle with perennial questions of meaning and value. At Salve Regina, the Department of Religious and Theological Studies pursues a path in which religious faith and critical thinking are mutually enlightening. This kind of dialogue—across disciplines, cultures, and religious traditions—is at the heart of the Catholic intellectual tradition. The faculty embraces this tradition and considers the study of religion itself to be important in two distinct yet interrelated ways.

First, seeking a deeper understanding of the world's religions is crucial to a liberal arts education in a global context. Studying religions, whether Christianity or other traditions, helps us explore who we are as human beings, both as individuals and as persons within cultures. Increased religious literacy leads to understanding, understanding leads to respect, and respect can lead to the sort of conversation that transmits wisdom.

Second, as has been true from the beginning of the great Catholic medieval universities, faith itself seeks understanding, which leads to theology. The Catholic tradition has a long history of intellectual engagement with other disciplines in a shared commitment to pursue truth. This remains as true today as it ever was, and hence the great conversation of academic theology continues.

The Religious and Theological Studies Department helps students bring their critical and creative intelligence to bear on religious practices and beliefs, particularly as they intersect with daily life. This requires the study of information and ideas, but also engagement with the images, symbols, and spiritual experiences at the heart of religions themselves. Majors and minors have the opportunity to explore both the more broadly religious and more specifically theological courses offered. The focus areas outlined on the following pages can help students choose a path of study that is appropriate for their interests and needs.

Majors in Religious and Theological Studies earn a versatile, strong liberal arts degree, valuable in multiple contexts. Many students find that an RTS major or minor enhances their chosen career path and thus add RTS to complement a second major. RTS students frequently enroll in graduate schools, not only in religion but also in business, history, and law. Others enter directly into the working world, whether in church-related contexts, social services, education, or corporate life.

Religious and Theological Studies Student Learning Outcomes

At the completion of the program, Majors will be able to:

1. **Comprehend** the breadth of the human religious experience, including:
 - a. An awareness of pluralism both among and within religions;
 - b. A competent knowledge of the ideas, symbols and practices of at least one tradition other than Christianity.
2. **Understand** the basics of Christian theological discourse, being able to **demonstrate** literacy in scripture, theology, spirituality, and ethics, including the virtue of mercy.

3. **Develop** strong liberal arts skills, by:

- a. Using appropriate scholarly methods and resources to research a topic in religious studies and/or theology;
- b. Critically analyzing a topic (idea, practice, history, symbol, etc.) in religious studies and/or theology;
- c. Writing clearly, coherently, and effectively;
- d. Speaking articulately using language appropriate to the subject, field, and/or discipline.

Bachelor's

- Religious and Theological Studies (B.A.) (<https://catalog.salve.edu/undergraduate/academic-programs/religious-theological-studies/religious-theological-studies-ba/>)

Minors

- Religious and Theological Studies Minor (<https://catalog.salve.edu/undergraduate/academic-programs/religious-theological-studies/religious-theological-studies-minor/>)

RTS-093: Religion and Global Security Issues (1 Credits)

In recent times, political events have created significant peace-keeping security concerns for religion in many parts of the globe, whether the Middle East, Africa, Asia or Europe. In this workshop, we will examine a number of political developments and their implications for religious groupings. We will explore how religion and global politics interact and intersect. We will examine the character of religiously-inspired conflicts and the role which conflict resolution can play in solving them.

RTS-098: Non Violence Training (1 Credits)

This workshop provides an in depth experience of the Kingian principles of nonviolence. Working in collaboration with the Institute for nonviolence in Providence, participants will develop practical and spiritual tools to participate in the work of nonviolence in everyday life.

RTS-105: Faith, Mercy, Justice in the 21st Century (3 Credits)

Today, we often find ourselves caught in a tension between apathy and anxiety. The 21st century is characterized by artificial intelligence, economic competition, mass polarization, and technological and scientific advancements. But, while the world has become infinitely more complex, it can be challenging to trust the cultural, religious, and ethical resources that we have received from generations past to help address these pressing issues and critical concerns. Where do we turn for wisdom to live up to the challenges at the level of our times? How do we discern our own answers to the perennial human questions: What does it mean to be human? Is there a God, and what does that even mean? Who, if anyone, do we encounter when we reach beyond ourselves? How do we live for something bigger than ourselves? What do we owe to each other? How can we reconcile our divisions and live harmoniously? In this course, we will explore the values and practices of faith, mercy, and justice in conversation with great thinkers, writers, spiritual figures, and religious traditions, including our University's Catholic and Mercy tradition. We will seek to cultivate practices of attentiveness, reflection, and understanding and through these practices develop our own spiritual lives and search for meaning.

Fulfills Core Requirement in First Year Foundational Courses.

RTS-221: The Experience of Loss: Help, Hope and Healing (3 Credits)

Though pastoral in nature, this course will examine the human experience of loss and bereavement, theoretically, theologically, personally and spiritually. We will begin by examining the anatomy of bereavement, including the dynamic of recovery, with a particular focus on the inevitable questions of theodicy. In addressing the theodicy questions, we will turn to the Bible, particularly the Book of Job, the Psalms of Lament, and the teachings of Jesus. Specific types of losses—including our own—will be explored in the context of assessing the most compassionate and comforting types of grief support. Through class discussions, large and small group practice of grief support methods, and personal reflections, the overarching goal of this course is to learn how to bear one another's burdens in times of bereavement.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Engaging Creative, Aesthetic and Spiritual Experience.

RTS-225: The Quest for the Ultimate: Dialogue with Global Religious Traditions (3 Credits)

The Catholic tradition places high value on thinking seriously about spiritual matters. It also places high value on thinking together, rather than alone. In this exciting yet dangerous time of global pluralism, religious traditions are very much in dialogue, thinking together about ultimate questions and how they impact peoples' lives. In this class, students will bring their own spiritual perspectives into dialogue with the great religions of the world, and in keeping with the Mercy tradition, consider how religious vision impacts concrete human needs.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Faith and Reason.

RTS-262: What the Bible Really Tells Us: The Essential Course for Biblical Literacy (3 Credits)

This course introduces the Bible as a foundational source of Western religious thought. Literary form, the historical and social context of scripture, and key biblical themes such as creation, revelation, covenant, conversion, miracle, liberation, justice, and judgment will be discussed as they appear in both the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and Christian Scriptures (New Testament). An introduction to hermeneutics, i.e., theories of biblical interpretation, will also be included.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.

RTS-300: Religious Diversity of Newport (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

This course examines the rich and diverse history of the many religious groups that have settled in Newport over the past 370 years. The course combines classroom presentations with visits to sites of historical and religious significance in Newport and Aquidneck Island. Particular attention is paid to Newport's colonial history, Rhode Island's reputation for religious toleration, and the "Lively Experiment" engendered by the Royal Charter of 1663.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Defining the American Experience.

Course Fee: \$50.00

RTS-305: The Spiritual Quest (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

In recent years, the term "spirituality" has grown in popularity and has been used in a variety of ways. Integral to most meanings of it, however, is a focus on our lived relationship to the transcendent, or whatever we designate as the source of ultimate meaning in our lives. It includes how we experience the transcendent, our self-understanding in relation to it, and how we live out this relationship in the world. As human beings search for truth and meaning, we find this same basic "spiritual pattern" across cultures, religious traditions, and time. This course will examine the place of spirituality as the basis for living by looking at particular manifestations the spiritual quest has taken. Students will develop the critical tools needed to evaluate different spiritualities and be able to reflect on their own spiritual searching and experience.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Engaging Creative, Aesthetic and Spiritual Experience.

RTS-315: Thomas Aquinas: Background, Thought, and Legacy (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

The topic of the course is the background, will learn how the thought of Aristotle and Augustine was appropriated and reconfigured by Aquinas. Students will read large selections from two of Aquinas's most important works, the *Summa Theologica* and *De Malo*. Students will learn about the various ways Aquinas's thought was received in the western tradition.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.

RTS-316: The Satan Seminar (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

Known for centuries as the pitchfork-toting demon and concierge of hell, Satan evokes fear and fascination among the faithful and faithless alike. This course is primarily concerned with the evolution of Satan in the Bible, but will also examine the function of monsters and the role they play in religious narratives. The culmination of this course will include student projects that explore the connection between diabolical motifs from antiquity and modern renditions of the satanic in literature, music, film, art and video games.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.

RTS-321: Superheroes, Saints and Sinners: Spiritual Themes in Contemporary Fiction (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

We live by stories: stories draw us into the quest for wisdom as we struggle with the complexities, challenges and joys of human life. Follow the quest for understanding the ultimate realities of human experience depicted in the stories of superheroes, saints and sinners who struggle with questions of good and evil, human strengths and failings, identify, happiness and meaning, life and death, and the ultimate quest for God.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Engaging Creative, Aesthetic and Spiritual Experience.

RTS-324: Women Mystics & Social Justice (3 Credits)**Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

Throughout Christian history, women have broken through societal, educational, psychological and theological barriers, empowered by a spiritual awakening, inspiration, and vocation. This course will give an overview of Christian women mystics, beginning with biblical women (In particular, Mary of Nazareth and Mary Magdalene), then proceeding chronologically through early Christian Saints Perpetua and Felicitas, and the Desert Mothers. It will continue throughout Christian history, highlighting the lives and works of several creative, powerful mystics, writers, artists, leaders, and social justice activists. Special emphasis will be on the mystical giants: Hildegard of Bingen, Clare of Assisi, Juliana of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, and Teresa of Avila. It will also explore the often times controversial relationship between spirituality and active Christian service. It will discuss how these women mystics throughout history have continued to influence and empower women and men, and are still doing so today.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.***RTS-325: Who Is My Neighbor? Mercy in the Christian Life (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

Since ancient times, the Christian tradition has identified with a Christ-centered ethics of love characterized by the practice of mercy. This course will critically reflect on the presentation and preservation of that ethos in the New Testament Story, the tradition of the community, and in the spiritual practices of the Christian faith. In this study of mercy, we will discuss the writings of both early and contemporary theologians, and reflect critically on the art, images, stories and films that inspire persons to become neighbor to those in need, thereby practicing the ethics of mercy in a fractured world.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.***RTS-326: Learning Theology with C.S. Lewis (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

In this course students will encounter a broad and representative range of C.S. Lewis's works. By way of close reading, reflection, and discussion, students will be introduced to topics and themes that are central to the Christian theological and moral outlook. The goal of this course is twofold: First, to identify and think through the central loci of Christian theology and ethics through the reading of pertinent texts written by C.S. Lewis; and second, to offer an immersion into one of the most imaginative and influential Christian writers of the 20th century.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.***RTS-327: Technohuman? Technology, Genetics, God and the Future of Humanity (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

The course will ask "What does it mean to be human in a world which is using technology to enable human beings to transcend their humanity?" It will explore developments in technology and genetics which alter the human being and which pose significant ethical questions for the future of humanity.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: Engaging Creative, Aesthetic and Spiritual Experience.***RTS-328: Disability, Vulnerability and Human Flourishing (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

This course introduces students to Christian theological reflection on human flourishing and our common vulnerability to impairment, illness, and disability. The topic will be considered from the perspective of the Catholic theological tradition, with a special emphasis on the theological outlook of St. Thomas Aquinas. Students will be familiarized with contemporary theological work on disability and cognitive impairment.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.***RTS-332: Care for Creation: Religion, Spirituality and the Environment (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

One of the great questions confronting human beings in the present world is their relationship to the environment. This course explores the human relationship to non-human nature from moral and religious perspectives, engaging the following sorts of questions along the way: Do humans have any moral obligations with respect to non-humans, such as animals or ecosystems? If so, how strong are they and how are they best described? Is there something inherently spiritual about the natural world, as many poets and nature writers suggest? Moreover, how does religion impact the question? Is Christianity positive or negative in its relationship to the earth? Does it lack a sensitivity that Native American and Eastern religions seem to have? Or can Christianity generate a constructive earth-human relationship? These issues are crucial as humankind attempts to understand and control its newfound power on this planet.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.***RTS-334: Global Ethics (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

This course explores the ethical dimensions of one or more ethical issues with global implications and helps students develop an informed Christian response. It addresses the sources of moral wisdom and the centrality of the common good in ethical discernment. Issues that students might examine include human development (economic, cultural, social), war and peace, poverty, refugees and migration, the situation of women around the world, food security, etc.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: Building Global Awareness.***RTS-335: Social Ethics in a Volatile World (3 Credits)**

This course explores the ethical dimensions of one or more contemporary social issues and helps students develop an informed Christian response. It addresses the sources of moral wisdom and the centrality of the common good in ethical discernment. Issues which students might examine include social and economic justice, race and racism, violence, consumerism, technology, immigration, and ecology. The social science research, the Judeo-Christian tradition and principles of Catholic social teaching provide the framework for this consideration.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: Defining the American Experience.*

RTS-336: Marriage and Family Life (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

Long regarded as fundamental building blocks of society, marriage and the family have been the focus of an unprecedented degree of questioning and analysis over the past fifty years as the institutions themselves have undergone significant evolution. This course examines a number of critical areas associated with marriage and family life today, viewed from the perspective of history, contemporary social sciences, and Christian faith. Particular emphasis will be placed on exploring the religious, spiritual, and psychological dimensions of marital and parental commitment. Specific topics of study will include technology and its impact on family life, divorce and its effects on children, attachment styles and their impact on children and adults, the sacramental and vocational character of Christian marriage, sex and intimacy, the Christian social mission of families, cohabitation, and the cultural pressures and challenges which couples and families face today. While the course readings will be drawn from multiple disciplines, texts of the Roman Catholic religious tradition will be regularly featured.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Defining the American Experience.

RTS-337: Biomedical Ethics (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

Recent advances in medical and biotechnology have allowed humans in wealthy countries like the United States to address many problems that just a few decades ago would have been inconceivable to overcome. These advances enable us to improve the quality of our lives, overcome obstacles to procreation, replace organs, and extend our life on Earth. At the same time, they have raised many questions, particularly of an ethical nature: What is the nature of illness and health? What is necessary for a high-quality human life? What ethical values should be honored in the patient-physician relationship? Can lives be extended too long? Should life ever be terminated, and if so, under what conditions? What methods of human reproduction are legitimate and which raise moral concerns? Do medical and biotechnologies threaten to reduce some humans to mere tools for other humans? Who receives the benefits of new medical and biotechnology, who is excluded, and on what basis? Does every individual have a right to health care? These questions, in turn, sink their roots into even deeper questions. What is human nature and when do we violate it? How do moral and spiritual values relate to biological and physical values? How do religious worldviews, and in particular Christianity, understand illness and health, life and death? The goal of this course is to enable students to reflect on these and similar questions in an interdisciplinary manner.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.

RTS-338: Sexual Ethics (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

Few spaces exist today for emerging adults to engage in a mature conversation about their sexual lives and the related struggles that confront Generation Z. This course is designed to fill that gap, to help students become more self-aware and think critically about topics such as sexual practices, campus pressures, gender expectations, and a sex-infused culture that plays an oversized part in the construction of sexual desire and behavior. With the Christian and Mercy traditions as leading conversation partners, the class will consider perspectives from a variety of sources as we work towards describing what makes sex good, meaningful, and just. Recognizing that contemporary hookup culture adheres to few rules, a primary goal of the course will be to articulate ethical norms for sexual relationships that facilitate responsible and satisfying choices.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Defining the American Experience.

RTS-339: Friendship, Love & Romance: The Call to Intimacy (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

College students today are under considerable pressure to participate in a campus culture which often seems to prioritize sexual activity ahead of forming relationships of friendship and love. The art of conversation, seemingly fundamental to human existence, is becoming more of a challenge to members of Generation Z who are frequently more at ease with texting and posting to social media accounts than they are with face-to-face encounters. This course examines friendship, love, and romance in a way that reflects the Christian outlook while engaging a number of disciplinary perspectives. The overarching goal of the course is to help students better understand themselves and their relationships so that they might enjoy healthy, meaningful, and spiritually-enriching lives. To that end, students will critically reflect on their own experiences of friendship, love and interpersonal intimacy and inquire how these are shaped not only by their unique life experiences, but also by a technology-infused culture which is frequently marked by curated identities, pervasive anxiety, superficial encounters, and instant gratification. In considering distortions of friendship and mature love, students will be prompted to develop the skills, virtues, and self-knowledge needed to engage in meaningful, intimate relationships.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.

RTS-340: Church in the Twenty-First Century (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

How does the Church, founded almost 2000 years ago, stay relevant and effective? Drawing from contemporary religious and interdisciplinary literature, this course attempts to chart a course for the Church in response to the particular human needs and challenges of the present age. Students will focus on the church, a living, multi-faceted organization, as it engages the contemporary world in service and truth.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Engaging Creative, Aesthetic and Spiritual Experience.

RTS-341: Explorations in Christian Theology (3 Credits)**Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

What is Christian theology? This course will provide students with an introduction to some of the many facets of this question by addressing themes central to Christian theology such as: how does one "do" theology? (the question of method); the intrinsically relational nature of God as unity-in-diversity; Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah and Lord; theories of salvation; Holy Spirit in theory & spiritual experience; the Creator in relation to human and non-human creation; various models and theologies of the Church; how can/should Christianity relate to other religions and their truth claims?; how does it all end? (The Last Things & God's judgment); faith in action (discipleship & following Jesus). By completing this course students will develop a good working knowledge of some of the key themes and issues in both classical and contemporary Christian systematic theology, adequate for more advanced study. Writing assignments will provide students with opportunities to sharpen critical reading and writing skills.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: Engaging Creative, Aesthetic and Spiritual Experience.***RTS-345: Engaging the Catholic Experience (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

This course will explore the many dimensions of the living Catholic tradition. Areas of study will include liturgy, saints, devotional practices, doctrines, moral teachings, church structure and governance, history, religious orders, the priesthood and the laity. Using appropriate literature and film, students will gain a holistic and critical appreciation of the tradition. This course would be valuable for both non-Catholics who seek an introduction and Catholics who seek increased understanding of their tradition.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: Engaging Creative, Aesthetic and Spiritual Experience.***RTS-347: Symbol, Icon and Beauty in Religious Traditions (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

What is the relationship of the creation and experience of beauty to religious faith? What does seeing have to do with believing? Does beauty draw persons into an experience of the mystery of the divine? Examine these and other questions as we pursue a critical study of religious symbols and art and their role in preserving, communicating and reinforcing the beliefs of religious worlds. Although the course focuses on the theological and spiritual meaning of Christian material culture, we will also study the symbolic images of certain non-Christian religious traditions.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: Engaging Creative, Aesthetic and Spiritual Experience.***RTS-352: Religion and Genocide (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

This course studies the links connecting genocide and faith traditions. It examines doctrines, justifications, and interpretations which allow for and in some cases promote mass violence against minority religious and/or ethnic groups within a state. The course takes a comparative approach to the study of genocide and its relationship to religion. Particular attention is paid to the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust, but the course will also consider other historic genocides.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: Building Global Awareness.***RTS-355: Christian Jewish Relations: From Hostility to Hope (3 Credits)**

After 19 centuries of negative Christian attitudes toward Judaism, often expressed in policy and behavior, Christianity (both Protestant and Catholic) changed its views of Judaism to a positive affirmation. Students will explore the relatively recent changes in Christian theology regarding Judaism, Jewish reaction to those changes, and the preceding history leading up to this renewed moment of dialogue.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.***RTS-356: Contemporary Christian Spirituality (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

Contemporary Christian spirituality concerns itself with the question of how to lead a deeply committed Christian life in the world of high technology and almost constant change. We examine theories of spirituality in the past to see their influence on our present situation; the spiritualities of other traditions to see their possible contributions to our own; the question of whether a person can develop a spirituality on his or her own or whether a community or a church is helpful. Lastly, we raise the question of what moral choices we must make to seriously adopt a particular kind of spirituality.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: Engaging Creative, Aesthetic and Spiritual Experience.***RTS-358: Digging the Bible (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS 225 is required.

This course seeks to explore connections between science and religion, disciplines many assume to be mutually exclusive. Our fundamental objective is to examine the intersections between archeology and the Judeo-Christian religious traditions grounded (primarily) in the Bible. This quest will take students on an odyssey through ancient landscapes as they examine the physical evidence from archeological excavations to learn whether the science of material remains supports, negates, or interpretively shifts our understanding of the biblical text and other ancient writings. This course does not require any prior scientific or religious background and is designed for the intrepid student who would like to know more about the nexus of science and religion in these fields of study.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.***RTS-364: Understanding the Hebrew Scriptures (3 Credits)****Pre-requisite(s):** RTS-225 is required.

The Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) are some of the founding documents of Western civilization. Its answers to some of the big questions in human life have allowed Jews, Christians and Muslims to make sense of their lives and to seek justice in society. Its stories and religious poetry have permeated Western literature, music and art. As the students explore the literature of the Hebrew Scriptures, they will also focus on the process by which the scriptures evolved through the various stages of Israelite history.

*Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.**Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.*

RTS-365: The Psalms and the Prophets: A Quest for God and Justice (3 Credits)

This course will explore the Psalms as a unique form of Judeo-Christian prayer. We will examine the various classifications, forms and functions of the Psalms, with a particular eye to issues of social justice, as this is a central concern of Israel's great prophets. We will study the four major and twelve minor biblical prophets, examining similarities and differences between the Psalter and prophetic literature.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.

RTS-372: Jesus and the Gospels: "Who do you say that I am" (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

This course will explore the contents and the historical settings of the four canonical gospels, their theological emphases, and the literary relationship between them. In addition, students will be introduced to the process of critical scholarship regarding the historical investigation of Jesus and the roots of the Christian faith.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.

RTS-374: The Life and Letters of St. Paul (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

Why is Saul (later Paul) of Tarsus considered to be one of the most influential persons in the history of Christianity, right next to Jesus himself? This course will examine the emergence of Christian thought and practice through critical study of the seven authentic letters of Paul. The historical context of the letters, Paul's theological vision, and the wide-ranging impact of his thought will be the primary focus areas of the course.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.

RTS-375: Good Girls, Bad Girls: Women of the Bible (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

This course will examine the role of women in the Bible, reclaiming and celebrating the feminine voice of scripture. The historical, cultural, and social aspects of biblical themes will serve as the backdrop for discussion.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: What is Western Heritage?-Ancient and Modern.

RTS-381: Engaging the Jewish Experience (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

The Jewish people and tradition have profoundly influenced Western cultural and religious traditions. In tracing this influence, the course examines the origins of Judaism, its codification in some of its great works, such as the Mishnah and the Talmud, and its different manifestations in various times and cultures. Finally, the course will investigate contemporary forms of Judaism.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Building Global Awareness.

RTS-382: Engaging the Muslim Experience (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

This class will explore the basic dimensions of Islam, including the Muslim understanding of God, The Qur'an, prayer life, the status of women, concern for the poor, and the role of the State in Islamic societies. This class will also explore theological and cultural pluralism within Islam.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Building Global Awareness.

RTS-383: Engaging the Hindu Experience (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest religions with scriptural roots linking back more than a millennium before the birth of Jesus. This course will explore the historical, cultural and spiritual roots of Hinduism. Emphasis will be placed on the evolution of religion in India and on the diverse views of the relationship between humans and the divine.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Building Global Awareness.

RTS-384: Engaging the Buddhist Experience (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

Why do we suffer? How can we escape suffering? Siddhartha Gautama pursued these questions thousands of years ago, and after a long quest he "woke up," becoming the "Buddha," the enlightened one. This course will explore the roots of Buddhism, its four noble truths and eightfold path, its key ideas concerning impermanence and the self, the role of meditation, and its ethical commitment to compassion. The spread of Buddhism and Buddhist schools of thought, including contemporary forms represented by such figures as the Dalai Lama, will also be examined.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Building Global Awareness.

RTS-385: Utopia and Dystopia: Exploring the Roots of Religious Terror (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

The course will explore, using religious, philosophical and political texts and theories, the links between religion and violence, the use of terror to achieve utopian (and also dystopian) ideals and will examine real-life case studies which will research attempts to create utopias using the means of terror.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Defining the American Experience.

RTS-386: New Religious Movements and Alternative Spiritualities (3 Credits)

Pre-requisite(s): RTS-225 is required.

This course will explore the "shift to self" as expounded by many theorists of secularization and sacralization and will examine non-traditional religions in the 21st century. It will look at the role of the period of the 1960s in fostering a new approach to believe, based not on an appeal to authority, but an appeal to the independent self and the centrality of the individual. It will look at the rise of new religious movements, trace their spiritual roots and examine their core beliefs and philosophies.

Fulfills Core Requirement in Religious and Theological Studies.

Theme: Building Global Awareness.

RTS-399: Special Topics (3 Credits)

Special Topics courses are offered to supplement the educational experience with unique courses that are not part of the normal course offerings.

RTS-451: The Capstone Experience (3 Credits)

The overall purpose of the course is to offer students a culminating experience of what it is to be an undergraduate scholar of Religious and Theological Studies at a Mercy, Catholic, liberal arts University. The course will have four key goals: 1) to connect explicitly and intentionally to RTS SLOS for the Major; 2) to connect explicitly and intentionally to at least two of the four themes of the Core Curriculum; 3) to enable students to demonstrate the Core liberal arts skills of inquiry, analysis and communication through a research project of their own; 4) to explore the theology of mercy within the Catholic tradition and reflect on one or more of the critical concerns of the Sisters of Mercy. As a seminar, these goals will be pursued, ideally, as part of a small community of scholars, sharing their work in constructive, critical conversation with one another. Senior academic standing is required.

RTS-495: Guided Research (3 Credits)

Senior Religious and Theological Studies majors may, under the direction of a member of the department, engage in scholarly research and the development of a major thesis paper.

RTS-499: Independent Study (1-3 Credits)

Course work arranged for Religious and Theological Studies majors seeking to pursue avenues of learning outside of the existing offerings of the department.