

**Theology Department**  
**300-Level Course Descriptions**  
**Fall 2026**

**THEO 393-01W: Jesus Outside the New Testament**

WRITING INTENSIVE

[Dr. Chris Skinner](#)

MWF 1:40-2:30

In the New Testament there are 27 “canonical” texts consisting of gospels, letters, and other writings. However, these works represent only a tiny fraction of the many volumes written about the life of Jesus. This alternative body of literature falls under the category of “apocrypha,” (which means “hidden” or “secret,”) and it offers fascinating insights into the early Christian world. But these early Christian apocryphal works are more than historical curiosities. From pseudepigraphic letters to newly discovered but previously unknown gospels, early Christian authors generated a wealth of literature about Jesus, his family, and the apostles. Understanding this literature can provide us with fresh insights and new angles on well-known figures from the Bible, along with information that is not found anywhere in the New Testament. In this class, we will examine a representative sample of this ancient literature with emphasis on the ways Jesus and those in his world were understood by different groups of early Christians.

**THEO 393-002: Cognitive and Evolutionary Approaches to Religion**

Combined with PSYCH 386, THEO 420-002

[Dr. Hugh Nicholson](#)

T-Th 2:30-3:45

This course aims to understand why it is that virtually all known human societies have had some form of religion, this despite the fact that religious belief and practice serve no obvious practical function and indeed are costly in terms of time, material resources, and cognitive effort. From a cognitive scientific perspective we will ask what is it about the human mind that makes counterfactual beliefs in nonphysical agents (gods, spirits, demons, and the like) and some form of postmortem existence not only plausible but natural, even self-evident, for most people. From a cultural evolutionary perspective we will ask what vital functions religious beliefs and practices likely served in ancestral human societies, how religions acquired new functions as human societies underwent radical changes, and why it is that religion has persisted even in contemporary societies where a scientific worldview has established itself.

## **THEO 393-03W: Biblical Commentary Through History**

WRITING INTENSIVE

[Dr. Olivia Stewart-Lester](#)

MWF 9:20-10:10 am

This seminar will analyze the history of biblical commentary, tracing the ways that commentary on scripture predates “the Bible” and contributes to its creation. We will survey commentary internal to scripture, the category of ancient texts formerly known as “rewritten Bible,” including Jewish Greek literature and texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and conclude with an examination of medieval Bible commentaries. In-class discussions will also integrate artistic and musical commentary on scripture. The course will explore the blurred boundaries between scripture and commentary, tracing the ways that each makes and sustains the other.

## **THEO 393-004: Feminist and Womanist Theo-Ethics**

Combined with THEO 477-001

Also counts toward WSGS major or minor

[Dr. Aana Vigen](#)

Monday 4:15-6:45 pm

This seminar course engages central themes in Christian theologies and ethics, focusing on perspectives found especially in white feminist and black feminist/womanist thought along with select authors from Latina/*mujerista*, Asian American, and other feminist sources. We will read both classic texts and more recent works as we observe the difference that sex, gender, race, socio-economic class, global location, etc. make to the theological and ethical enterprise. In short, this course introduces students to the history of feminist theological and ethical thought while also exploring pressing contemporary issues in theology and ethics by listening to distinct, at times contrasting, voices.

This course is intended not only for formal students of theology, but for *anyone* who is eager to explore this content in the context of an upper-level elective. Students do need a keen interest in both theological and ethical concepts/issues to appreciate, and learn from, the course.

## **THEO 344-01E: Outdoor Spiritualities: Hiking, Nature, Prayer**

ENGAGED LEARNING

[Dr. Colby Dickinson](#)

Tues-Thurs 1:00-2:15pm

This course will focus on the study and personal development of spiritualities focused on the human being as a spiritual being immersed in the natural world. Through exploring readings and activities centered on hiking, camping, the natural environment and ecology, this course investigates what exactly a holistically and naturally conceived spirituality might look like today, especially as formed in dialogue with various Christian traditions (e.g. the Desert Fathers, mystical theologies, feminist and eco-spiritual theologies) and indigenous spiritualities. In addition, we will be focusing on how these aforementioned topics relate to other concepts, such

as technology, wilderness/wild-ness, landscape, mysticism, Gaia, prayer, solitude and spiritual retreat.

## **THEO 353-001: Religion and Nationalism**

[Dr. Tracy Pintchman](#)

Tuesdays, 4:15-6:45 PM

Combined with GLST 398, THEO 420-001, and PLSC 300C

This course explores the relationship between religion and nationalism in the modern world. The course will begin with theoretical issues: what is a nation/nationalism? What is religion? How is religious nationalism different from other kinds of nationalisms? How does nationalism emerge and then take on new forms in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries? The course will then consider several case studies. Examples of possible case studies include Christian nationalism in the contemporary US, Hindu nationalism in India, Southeast Asian Buddhist nationalism (in Thailand, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka), Islamism in the Middle East, and Christian Nationalism in Brazil.

## **THEO 393-005: Intermediate Biblical Hebrew**

[Dr. Tom Wetzel](#)

T-Th 2:30-3:45

This course will continue the study of Biblical Hebrew begun in THEO 308 and THEO 309. Students will read select texts from the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible in Hebrew.

### **AND HERE IS WHAT IS ON TAP FOR SPRING 2027:**

Prophetic Literature

History of Christian Thought: Reformation to Modern

Indigenous Science and Religion in Mexico (Engaged Learning)

Magic, Medicine and Miracles (Capstone)

Evil, Sin and Suffering (Writing Intensive)

Spirituality, Health and Medicine (Engaged Learning)

Vatican II and Synodality

Intermediate Hebrew II

Tom Wetzel

Colby Dickinson

Josefrayn Sanchez-Perry

Emily Cain

Tisha Rajendra

Hans Svebakken

Brian Flanagan

Tom Wetzel