

THEO 280: Religion and Interdisciplinary Studies (Fulfills THEO Tier 2 Core Credit) Fall 2026 Course Descriptions

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. Sullivan-Dunbar at ssull1@luc.edu with questions about those.

THEO 280-01W: Apocalyptic Rhetoric in Politics

WRITING INTENSIVE

Tues 4:15-6:45

[Dr. Lauren O'Connell](#)

This course will explore the use of rhetoric of 'apocalypse' as it is seen in ancient religious texts and modern political movements. Language of 'good vs. evil' and portents of 'the end' have long been utilized as a political tool, especially in times of distress, precarity, or deep polarization. While many scholars agree that this rhetoric largely functioned as a source of comfort in ancient religious texts, to promote the promise of God's eventual justice for oppressed or struggling communities, its modern political use has been critiqued as a source of potential danger and for being ethically reductive. Drawing on examples from 2nd Temple Jewish Literature, the Bible, and other non-canonical Christian texts, as well as examples from modern political movements, we will examine the cultural events that lead to the popularity of such language in political contexts and the real-world consequences of its persistent and pervasive use.

THEO 280-02E: Faith, Science and the Common Good

ENGAGED LEARNING (Service Learning)

MWF 9:20-10:10

[Dr. Hans Svebakken](#)

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: Capitalism as Religion

Tues-Thurs 2:30-3:45

[Dr. Colby Dickinson](#)

Capitalism is the most successful modern belief system, with its myriad accompanying ritualistic consumerist practices, that we rarely stop to analyze from a religious point of view. Yet, just how does capitalism function as a religion in its own right and what are the theological implications

of such a claim? Why do people place their hopes and dreams in financial accumulation and expansion? Readings will range from Max Weber on the 'Protestant work ethic' and Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' guiding market forces to contemporary historical critiques of capitalism as religion (W. Benjamin, E. McCarragher) and theological responses (K. Tanner, A. Kotsko).

THEO 280-004: Religion, War, and Ecology

Thursday 4:15-6:45

[Dr. Bill French](#)

Combined with PAX 201

Advances in technology, industry, and military weapons confront us with unprecedented capacities in warfare and for degrading Earth's ecosystems. We will examine Christian and Hindu traditions on war and peacemaking during the first section of the course. We will explore the history of Western thinking on pacifism, the just war theory and also crusader war. In the second section of the course we will examine the growing concern about mounting ecological threats especially climate disruption. We will examine some of the resources that different religious traditions of the world offer for promoting efforts at peacemaking and ecological responsibility. We will look at how these traditions understand humanity's relationship to the rest of the natural world.

THEO 280-05E: Religion, Alchemy and the History of Science

ENGAGED LEARNING (Undergraduate Research)

MWF 10:25-11:15

[Dr. Josefrayn Sanchez-Perry](#)

Welcome to Religion, Alchemy, and the History of Science!! THEO 280 fulfills the Theological & Religious Knowledge and Inquiry Tier II core requirement. This course will introduce you to the category of religion and its historical encounter in materia medica (medicinal properties of plants, animals, and materials). You will learn the entangled histories of these domains in the late medieval and early modern periods, including the rise of Islamic medicine, European herbals, and the extraction of Indigenous and African knowledge in the Americas and Caribbean. These histories are entangled, not through development, but through the circulation of ideas and practices that intellectuals and practitioners assessed, compared, appropriated, and distorted across time and space. You will also experience original historical texts and material culture from archives and museums, such as the Rare Books Collection and the Weber Ethnographic Collection on campus, and the Newberry Library and Art Institute of Chicago in the downtown Chicago area.

This is an engaged learning course in the Undergraduate Research category. You will complete a research project based on an archival or material object from any one of our student development visits.

THEO 280-006: Fresh Waters in Science, Religion, and Ethics

Tues-Thurs 1:00-2:15 pm

Dr. Christiana Zenner

Instructor is Visiting Teilhard Chair in Catholic Studies

This course studies fresh waters as a topic of empiric and ethical concern in science and religion, in a range of cultures and with attention to contemporary case studies, including the Catholic Church's work for the human right to water and advocacy for water, sanitation, and hygiene in international contexts since the turn of the 21st century.

Engaging key methodologies and data from the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, we will explore questions like: What kind of thing is water, and how do we know? How should fresh waters be valued in contemporary society, and why? How do history, geopolitics, technology, economics, social norms, and local hydrogeologies shape waters' flows – and who benefits or bears the burdens? What is illuminated ethically by religious-cultural meanings and movements for water justice?

By the end of the course, students will gain facility with critical apparatus for the study of religion; interdisciplinary paradigms for ways of knowing water, from science to history to cultural studies and ecotheology; and frameworks for how ecological ethics can be seen as a dimension of religion-and-science discourse – all through the lively lens of fresh waters