

Course Descriptions

MTS, MPS, MA

For each course, the equivalent undergraduate course number is given in parentheses and the course category is indicated by the appropriate letter(s): B, H, M, P, S or E.

LEVEL 1 COURSES:

THL 502 (343). Theology of Sacrament (3) S/H A study of the history and theology of individual sacraments and of sacraments in general. This course examines both classic views (Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine, Aquinas, Trent) and recent developments, especially the teaching and reforms of Vatican II.

THL 503 (232). The Synoptic Gospels (3) B A study of the literary development that culminated in the written Gospels. An exposition of the historical-critical and literary tools for studying the Gospels and an in-depth study of each Gospel's unique context, style and themes.

THL 504 (431). Pentateuch (3) B The course first examines the sources that were eventually combined to form the narratives we now have. The characteristics and historical settings of each source will be studied. Then various narratives will be studied in view of the place of the Pentateuch in the canon.

THL 505 (331). Prophets (3) B The course examines the historical context, literary style, and theological themes of the major prophets from both the Assyrian and Babylonian periods. Questions about the nature of revelation and prophecy as well as the fulfillment of the prophets in the New Testament will be addressed.

THL 506 (351). Foundations of Christian Ethics (3) M The course analyzes the fundamental themes of contemporary ethical theory, especially as expressed within the Christian theological tradition. Also, dialogue/conflict between the Roman Catholic Church's traditional teaching and contemporary ethical perspectives are examined. With appropriate adjustments in readings and assignments, the course is also available for philosophy (PHL 550).

THL 507 (352). Christian Social Ethics: Contemporary Issues (3) M The course examines issues which arise from a pluralistic society in the social arena, viewed from a Christian context; e.g., duty of government as perceived by both classical and contemporary thinkers, the duties of citizens, social justice, war and peace, ecological responsibility, foundations of human rights. With appropriate adjustments in readings and assignments, also available for philosophy (PHL 551).

THL 508 (363). American Religious History (3) H The course is an introduction to the principal developments of religious experience and religious thought in the history of America and a consideration of their impact on American culture.

THL 509 (261). Comparative Religions (3) H The course provides an academic and cross-cultural study of religion in the human experience, introducing major world religions with emphasis on breadth, systematic depth and experiential sympathy.

THL 510. Introduction to Practical Theology (3) P Required for the Master of Pastoral Ministry (MPS), the course provides an introduction to theological praxis: the intentional movement from pastoral practice and engagement in ministry, as currently experienced, to reflection upon theory and back again to practice.

REQUIRED CORE COURSE:

THL 520. Theological Research Methods (3) A graduate-level introduction to the nature, tasks, and methods of theology, with practical preparation for theological research and writing. It will explore the foundations of critical theological study, the relationship between faith and reason, the sources of theology (including the relationship between scripture, tradition, and experience) and the development and interpretation of doctrine. This course is offered once a year in an online format and is required for all students in the MTS and MPS programs after completing at least 3 Level 1 courses and before taking any Level 2 course.

LEVEL 2 COURSES:

THL 521 (441). Eucharist (3) P/S/H The course examines the Eucharist as the central sacrament in the life of the Church, considered from its biblical, ritual, historical, and theological dimensions. It will offer an analysis of the structural elements of the rite and a survey of the interplay of liturgical traditions, popular piety, and theological reflections at critical moments in church history.

THL 522 (425). Christian Initiation (3) P/H The course studies the history, theology and practice of the sacraments of Christian initiation (Baptism, confirmation and Eucharist). It will examine the historical evolution and contemporary understanding of Christian initiation, including a pastoral commentary on the renewed rites (RCIA/RCIC).

THL 523 (451). Christian Spirituality (3) P The course intends to provide an understanding, both intellectual and experiential, of the spiritual life from a Christian perspective. The course will focus on major themes of contemporary Christian spirituality as well as investigate selected classics from the history of spirituality.

THL 525 (455). History of Spirituality (3) P/H The course studies the development of major traditions or particular authors of spirituality throughout the history of Christianity: e.g., Desert Monks; Spanish Mysticism; Julian of Norwich or Thomas Merton.

THL 526 (440). Reconciliation (3) P/S As an expression of the atoning work of Jesus Christ, reconciliation stands at the center of Christian belief and practice. The course explores the

sacrament of reconciliation in its broader theological context from a variety of angles: historical, systematic, liturgical, and pastoral.

THL 528 (421). Religious Education (3) P A study of the theory and practice of religious education, with emphasis on curriculum study, writing lesson plans, teaching practices, and classroom management strategies. The course is designed for educators who will work either in Catholic schools or in parish programs. The laboratory experience (teaching component) is an important part of this course.

THL 529 (425). Special Topics in Church and Ministry (1-4) P The course explores topics of current interest such as the new rites of Reconciliation, the revised Code of Canon Law, the diaconate, and the role of women will be examined in an historical perspective.

THL 532 (332). The Johannine Gospel and Epistles (3) B The course presents two complementary aspects of the Johannine writings. First, an understanding of this “spiritual” gospel through an analysis of its structure, symbolism, distinct literary traits and theological vision. Second, the Johannine Community of the late first century as reflected in John’s Gospel and Epistles.

THL 533 (333). The Pauline Letters and Theology (3) B The course studies the actual settings of the Pauline Epistles, examining questions of authenticity, basic structure, integrity, life situation, chief problems, and distinctive traits. The course also analyzes the major themes of Pauline theology, such as faith, law, justification, atonement, Christian anthropology and Christology.

THL 538 (431). Wisdom Literature (3) B Concentrating especially on the Psalms and Job, the course examines the literary style and themes of these books and will examine their historical, theological and liturgical settings.

THL 540 (345). Philosophy of Religion (3) S The course examines the critical problems involved in concepts of God; e.g., God and human freedom, rational proofs of the existence of God, God and the problem of evil, God and the possibility of change, faith and human knowledge, and the objectivity of religious experience. The course is also available for philosophy credit (PHL 540).

THL 541. Philosophy for Understanding Theology (3) S The course provides a general survey of Western philosophical thought and how it has been used in Christianity, such as in the ecumenical councils, Christology, Trinitarian theology and sacraments.

THL 542 (242). The Catholic Tradition: History & Development of Doctrine (3) S/H An historical overview of the major areas of Catholic teaching: trinity, church, grace, eschatology, etc., the course examines the underlying connections that integrate the various domains of Christian theology. It also focuses on those turning points in church history (e.g., the ecumenical councils) which have shaped the development of doctrine.

THL 543 (344). Christology and Trinity (3) S/H In the course a major “modern” Christological text is examined as a focus for the historical and doctrinal development of the material. Concepts of Christian anthropology and the Trinitarian understanding of God are also included.

THL 544 (342). Theology of Church (3) S/H The course provides an historical and systematic study of the Christian community: its structure, its nature, and its mission. The course focuses especially on the path-breaking work of Vatican II.

THL 549 (469). Major Theologian (3) S/H The course provides an in-depth study of the life and works of an eminent theologian: e.g., Origen, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Teilhard de Chardin, Rahner. In appropriate cases, available also for philosophy credit (PHL 549).

THL 552 (353). Human Sexuality and Marriage (3) M The course analyzes contemporary issues in sexual ethics in the light of the Roman Catholic tradition. The historical development of that tradition is examined and critically evaluated. Issues addressed in the course are: Christian marriage as a communion of love characterized by fruitfulness, fidelity and permanence; current problems; issues of canon law.

THL 553 (354). Religion & International Politics (3) M Religion has been a source of many of the world’s deadliest conflicts, but has also led to powerful acts of forgiveness, peacemaking, and conflict resolution. A major theme of the course is the ambivalent role religion plays in global affairs, with particular focus on Islam, human rights discourse, and United States foreign policy.

THL 554 (350). Catholic Social Thought (3) M One of the ongoing tasks of the Church is the effort to positively engage the larger world. In the modern era Christians face developments such as the Industrial Revolution, laissez faire capitalism, Marxism, consumerism, and modern warfare. The course offers a critical study of the Church’s official response to these developments, known collectively as Catholic Social Teaching.

THL 560 (461). Early Christianity: The Church Fathers (3) H The course explores the history and theology of the early Church by focusing on the careers and contributions of the major Fathers of the Church: Origen, Cyprian, Athanasius, the Cappadocians, and Augustine.

THL 561 (461). Medieval Christianity (3) H The course examines the history and major theologians of the medieval Church. Topics include: monasticism, developments in the papacy, the rise of the mendicants, scholasticism, and mysticism.

THL 562 (462). Reformation (3) H The causes, history and theological shifts of the Protestant Reformation are the focus of the course. After considering the state of European Christianity at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the course analyzes various movements and leading theologians of the Reformation, especially Martin Luther and John Calvin.

THL 563 (462). Christianity in the Modern Era (3) H The course examines religious, ecclesial, and theological movements which shape and influence contemporary Christianity from the eighteenth century to the present. Special consideration is given to the political and intellectual currents which have shaped contemporary Christian faith.

THL 572. Pastoral Guided Reading (3) P

THL 573. Biblical Guided Reading (3) B

THL 574. Moral Guided Reading (3) M

THL 575. Historical Guided Reading (3) H

THL 580. Graduate Seminar (1) The Graduate Seminar is a one-credit, weekend course focused on a particular topic and led by an individual faculty member. Readings prior to the weekend course and a writing assignment following the course will be required. Seminars will be offered in both Mobile and Atlanta at least once a year. The final Graduate Seminar will serve as the oral component of the Comprehensive Experience. Three Graduate Seminars are required for the MTS and MPS degrees (no more than three count for credit toward the degree).

THL 589 (499). Special Projects in Theological Reflection (1-4) The course offers specialized topics and interdisciplinary themes which broaden or deepen the scope of theological studies, such as Psychology and Religion, Myth and Ritual, Religion and Literature. In appropriate cases the course is available for credit in related areas.

THL 590 (490). Intensive Reading Seminar (3) The course is a seminar-style, in-depth study of the writings of a particular theologian or theological school. Prerequisites: eighteen hours graduate theology or permission of chair of theology. Primarily for students in the MA program.

THL 597. Thesis Project Extension (0) Exclusively for students registered for the Master of Arts thesis (THL 598/599), who have not completed their thesis within the limit of two years. The course grants six additional months for completion of the thesis; it is non-credit but is charged a tuition fee equivalent to three credit hours.

THL 598/599. Thesis Project I/II (3) Exclusively for students formally admitted to the Master of Arts thesis; equivalent to a total of six credit hours. As their final requirement, all MA candidates must register for both THL 598 (first semester of their thesis project) and 599 (covering up to three additional semesters).

MINISTRY PRACTICUM AND WORKSHOPS (MPS)

Workshops focusing on the practical dimensions of the different areas of ministry (religious education, liturgical, family, social outreach), offering further training in methodology, planning and leadership, will be offered in collaboration with the local diocesan offices, according to

demand and availability of instructors, generally drawn from qualified ministry professionals living or working in the diocese. These workshops may be taken through the “Easy Listening” option for personal enrichment or as continuing education for undergraduate credit (see Certificate of Ministry, Theology section) or for graduate credit as part of the Master of Pastoral Studies degree (see above).

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

MIN 590 (390/392). Field Education (1-4) This ministry practicum offers a work/learning experience at an approved placement, under the supervision of a mentor and including a weekly reflection meeting, journaling and final paper. Designed to offer students practical ministry experience and opportunities for theological reflection in a seminar setting, one credit of the practicum will require approximately 30 hours at the placement site. (MPS program)

MIN 595 (395). Special Topics in Ministry (1-4) These workshops or seminars address particular, applied aspects of various areas in pastoral ministry. Workshops (single-session events) or seminars (multiple sessions) focus on particular issues related to ministry; one credit will require a minimum of 5 contact hours, along with readings and a paper. When taken for graduate credit, they include additional reading requirements and a research paper or project. (MPS program)

SUMMER INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

For each course, the equivalent undergraduate course number is given in parentheses. The following listings are all “generic” course titles and descriptions. Specific titles and descriptions are announced in the annual brochure and will vary from year to year, according to the course numbers given below (e.g., Parables & Story Spirituality would be offered as SPT 531).

SPT 521 (421). Liturgical Spirituality (1-3) The course offers a study of the structure and theology of various facets of liturgy, in its function as a source of Christian spirituality, focusing for example on the Eucharistic Prayer, the Divine Office, Rites of Initiation.

SPT 523 (423). Liberation Spirituality (1-3) The course examines the spirituality which provides the driving force at the center of various exponents of Liberation Theology, in its application of the Christian message to concerns of fundamental human rights and dignity.

SPT 524 (424). Contemporary Movements (1-3) The course examines one of the several movements which strive to translate the search for God into a particular way of life, dedicated to a particular goal, for example: the L’Arche communities for the handicapped, the Taize ecumenical community, feminist or male spirituality.

SPT 525/526 (425/426). Prayer & Discernment I/II (1-3) Some aspect of the theory and practice of personal prayer and/or discernment in the Christian tradition through the centuries is studied. The course is ordinarily taught in two consecutive parts, for one credit each.

SPT 527 (427). Ascetical Traditions (1-3) From the time of the ancient desert monks, such ascetical practices as fasting and penance have been a part of Christian spirituality. The course focuses on some aspect of abnegation and mortification as related to growth in holiness.

SPT 528 (428). Consecrated Life (1-3) A particular way of life, chosen as a permanent and vowed commitment, is studied as a path to holiness: whether marriage, priestly or religious life.

SPT 531 (431). Spirituality of the Gospels (1-3) The course explores a particular section or genre of the Gospels, such as the parables or the beatitudes, as a journey of spiritual discovery.

SPT 532 (432). New Testament Spirituality (1-3) The course studies some aspect of New Testament writings, beyond the Gospels, such as Pauline spirituality or the letters of John.

SPT 535 (435). Spirituality of the Prophets (1-3) The course studies the language and images of the prophets, as a pathway to God.

SPT 536 (436). Old Testament Spirituality (1-3) The course examines some aspect of Old Testament writings, outside of the prophetic books, such as the Psalms, which are the biblical hymnody and prayer book, or the Song of Songs, which inspired so many Christian mystics.

SPT 541 (441). Spiritual Classics (1-3) The course focuses on one of the great works of Christian spirituality, such as the Confessions of Augustine, the Rule of Benedict, or the Imitation of Christ.

SPT 542 (442). Great Masters (1-3) The course offers a study of the life and writings of one of the great teachers of Christian spirituality, such as Francis de Sales, Alphonsus Liguori or Jean-Pierre de Caussade.

SPT 543 (443). Christian Mystics (1-3) The course examines the life and writings of one of the classic mystics in the Christian tradition: John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Marie of the Incarnation.

SPT 551/552 (451/452). The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius I/II (1-3) The course explores different aspects of the rich tradition of spirituality found in or derived from the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. This course is ordinarily taught in two consecutive parts, for one credit each.

SPT 553 (453). Ethics and Holiness (1-3) The course examines the implications of some ethical issue or some area of moral theology for personal spiritual growth and challenge.

SPT 561 (461). Early Christian Spirituality (1-3) The course explores a variety of expressions of spirituality in the early Church, such as the lives and writings of the Desert Fathers, of Irenaeus of Lyons, or of Clement of Alexandria.

SPT 562 (462). Medieval Spirituality (1-3) The course focuses on selected charismatic figures in the Middle Ages, examining their lives, the religious orders they created, and/or the mystical traditions they founded.

SPT 565 (465). Modern Search for God (1-3) The course examines the spiritual quest as revealed in the life and works of a major modern author.

SPT 568 (468). Religion in America (1-3) The Course studies a particular person or movement in spirituality in the history of American Christianity, such as Jonathan Edwards, Elizabeth Seton, Orestes Brownson, the Great Awakening, Utopian communities.

SPT 571 (471). Christianity and the World Religions (1-3) The course explores, from the perspective of the Christian tradition, some expression of spirituality as found in the non-Christian religions of the world, such as Zen Buddhism or Islamic Sufism.

SPT 581 (481). Religion and Psychology (1-3) The course studies some aspect of the relation between religion and psychology, as applied to spiritual growth, such as: twelve-step programs, Jungian analysis, or the challenge of aging.

SPT 582 (482). Religion and Literature (1-3) The course provides an exploration of the search for God as expressed and experienced in various works of literature.

SPT 583 (483). Religion and the Arts (1-3) The intersection of religion and the arts is found in a great variety of media, from film to painting and architecture. The course explores the expression of the sacred as revealed in some aspect of the arts.

CERTIFICATE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION OR FAITH COMPANIONING

The Following courses are offered outside of the Summer Institute of Christian Spirituality exclusively for students admitted to the Certificate of Spiritual Direction Program.

SPT 591 (491). Spiritual Direction Seminar (3) The course is limited to students in the Certificate of Spiritual Direction or Faith Companionship programs. It provides an in-depth exploration of the history and the practice of spiritual direction, with particular emphasis on the Jesuit tradition, rooted in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

SPT 592 (492). Spirituality & Psychology Seminar (3) The course is limited to students in the Certificate of Spiritual Direction or Faith Companionship programs. It will explore issues of psychological pathology, human developmental dynamics and therapeutic relationships, insofar as they might affect the practice of spiritual direction. The course includes an intensive workshop by a psychological professional.

SPT 595 (495). Special Topics in Spirituality (1-4) Seminars and workshops offered under this heading focus on particular issues of spirituality, especially those aspects concerned with the practical application of spirituality in pastoral ministry.

SPT 598/599 (498/499). Spiritual Direction Practicum I/II (2) The course is limited to senior students in the Certificate of Spiritual Direction program. It includes case studies, verbatims and shared experience of the students' own practice of spiritual direction.