

AREA III: HISTORICAL STUDIES

The intent of Historical Studies is to foster and demand serious consideration by students of the essential historical substance of Christian faith and tradition. Two aspects of inquiry merge in this area of the curriculum: (1) the development of analytic capacities for the understanding of religious thought and practice in their cultural context, and (2) special studies in the cultural context itself that are deemed essential to competent ministry. Work in this area includes social and cultural analysis often focusing on issues that arise at the intersection of established disciplines. Area III thus includes subjects falling outside the domain of explicitly Christian thought.

REL 701a, The Theology of Martin Luther Volker Leppin

Martin Luther, a towering figure in the European history of theology, gave a decisive impulse to the Protestant Reformation and shaped Protestant thought—in particular Lutheran—for centuries. This course examines his roots in medieval mystical spirituality and the ways in which he struggled with the Church of his time. Because Luther never wrote a systematic theology, we instead follow several other avenues, including his development and his engagement with other thinkers of his time, as well as his antisemitism and rejection of other ways of Christianity. This course presents a more inclusive, ecumenical approach to the core of Lutheran theology. Area III.

3 Course cr

REL 703a, Methods and Sources of Religious History Kenneth Minkema

This course introduces students to the study of sources, primary and secondary, relating to the history of Christianity. Students work with visiting scholars on materials from antiquity to our contemporary world. Students develop their projects over the course of the term under the guidance of their adviser and in workshops. The course prepares students to proceed toward thesis research. The course is not, however, limited to those intending to write a thesis. Prerequisites: Some background in history and permission of the instructor. 3 Course cr

REL 709b, Augustine's Confessions: Autobiography and Biography Bruce Gordon

This course is a close reading of Augustine's *Confessions* together with Peter Brown's classic biography, *Augustine of Hippo*. We examine Augustine's account of his life through the lens of self-writing and the question of how to write the life of an ancient figure. What constitutes the self and can it be accessed by the author, the historian, and readers? We explore Augustine's approach to self-writing as a work of theological, historical, and literary interpretation. Close attention is paid to themes of divine love, friendship, patria, pilgrimage, classical and Christian rhetoric, and Augustine's approach to creation and time. While reading Augustine on his own terms, we consider a range of contemporary scholarship that raises questions of genre, psychology, gender, sexuality, environment, and race in the *Confessions*. This more recent scholarship is also put in discussion with Brown's biography. The reading of Brown's *Augustine of Hippo* alongside the *Confessions* enables us to explore themes of self-writing together with the craft of biography, with attention the instabilities of both. The seminar discusses the possibilities and limitations of both autobiography and biography, thinking about the problematic relations of the author to the self/subject, the development of narrative, as well as the role of the reader in the text. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 710a, Pentecostalism Erika Helgen

Pentecostalism is one of the fastest-growing religions in the world. This course examines the history and contemporary resonance of Pentecostalism in the United States and the world, paying special attention to how Pentecostals are renegotiating the relationship between religion, culture, and identity in the global South. Throughout the term, we address questions such as: How has Pentecostalism evolved and changed throughout history? How should we understand the experience of religious conversion? What is the impact of Pentecostalism on political and social movements? How does Pentecostalism address issues of race and gender? How do transnational networks affect the growth and impact of Pentecostalism? What does it mean to say that Pentecostalism is a “global religion”? Area III and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 712a, History of Early Christianity: Origins and Growth Teresa Morgan

This course introduces students to early Christianity from the first to the eighth century. This is an introductory course that does not assume any prior knowledge of the topic. We examine the social, political, religious, and cultural contexts in which early Christianity (or Christianities) emerged, and how “the faith” grew, was shaped by, and helped shape the world around it. We explore practices of corporate worship and devotion; the development of doctrine and the idea of orthodoxy; the evolution of Church institutions; the formation of Christian scriptures; the impact of persecution and imperial patronage; the development of Christian material culture, art, and architecture; and what it meant for people in different roles and situations to live as “the faithful” in everyday life. In dialogue with influential theologians of the period, we explore how Christian identities are formed and articulated and the role of power, conflict, and resistance in that process. Students encounter a wide range of primary sources, secondary literature, and historical methods and approaches, giving them the opportunity to sharpen their critical and historiographical skills. In many ways, this is the most formative and influential period of Christian history, and getting to grips with its broad outlines and key themes is both fascinating in itself and gives students vital contextual knowledge for understanding later developments in Christian history and thought. This course serves as essential preparation for the study of Christian history and theology in later historical periods. Above all, it provides an opportunity to consider early Christianity on its own terms and to discover how it continues to shape the lives of Christians today. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 713b, History of Medieval Christianity: Learning, Faith, and Conflict Volker Leppin

The Middle Ages, defined by European culture as the period between 500 and 1500, is a period that witnesses the transformation of European Christianity into a Latin-speaking religious community under the Pope. It became increasingly separate from the developments in the Near East and Asia. For all too long this epoch has served in legitimating discourses of confessions, nations, and ethnic groups, such as in the nationalistic construction of the Germanic tribes. The course aims to draw a new image of these thousand years in terms of time, geography, ethnicity, gender, and culture. Medieval Christianity offers multiple possibilities for understanding both the perils and development of Christianity in an age of rapid change. On the one hand, the course examines processes of establishing power by exclusion, mainly of Jewish and Muslim believers, and of building strong hierarchies almost exclusively male. On the other hand, we find fascinating debates within Scholasticism about how to combine

philosophical reason with Christian faith. Further, we explore the evolution of deep, inner spiritual practices among mystics, with special regard to female nuns, who were prolific writers. From this perspective we see how medieval Christianity is part of what we now experience as global Christianity, making a distinctive contribution to the emergence of a widely shared faith. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 714a, History of Early Modern Christianity: Reformation to Enlightenment

Bruce Gordon

This course introduces students to the rapidly changing world of early modern Christianity, a period that ranges from the Reformation to the Enlightenment and the transatlantic worlds of the eighteenth century. This age saw the dramatic expansion of Christianity beyond Europe to Africa, Asia, and the Americas, and the course explores the global nature of the early modern world. Themes such as colonization, slavery, and the diversities of religious experience are examined. Students are exposed to a range of primary sources and historical methods to examine rival interpretations and perspectives. The course focuses on the reading of a wide variety of primary sources from the period. Above all, it challenges students to consider the past both on its own terms and how it continues to shape our present. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 715b, History of Modern Christianity: American Encounters, Postmodern Transformations

Erika Helgen

This class focuses on critical encounters among peoples who have contributed to the development of modern Christian cultures in the Americas from the eighteenth century to the present. It does not aim to provide an exhaustive history of religion (or even of Christianity) in North America and Latin America, but rather highlights key topics such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and the dynamics of imperialism, modernity, and postmodernity in religious history. Students are challenged to consider various methods for interpreting the past, to develop their own skills of historical interpretation, and to locate their own communities as products of the histories we consider. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 723a, The Liberation Theology Movement in Latin America: History and Sources

Erika Helgen

This course explores the history of liberation theology and liberationist Christian movements in Latin America, paying particular attention to the political, economic, social, and cultural ramifications of the emergence of the “Church(es) of the People.” The majority of assigned readings are primary sources that document a wide variety of liberationist experiences and actors. Students read about activists in peasant leagues, priests resisting authoritarian regimes, bishops coming together to outline new paths for the Latin American Catholic Church, women promoting feminist liberation theologies, laypeople leading ecclesial base communities, and more. The seminar examines and discusses a number of questions, including: How did the liberation theology movement change over time? What was the relationship between religion and politics in Latin America during times of war and dictatorship? How did the liberation theology movement subvert traditional notions of political and religious authority? What does it mean to build a “Church of the People,” and how did the liberation theology movement succeed and/or fail to build such a church? Area III and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 733b, The Passion in Late Antique and Byzantine Art Vasileios Marinis

The English word “passion” refers to the redemptive sufferings of Jesus and to the narrative of events leading up to and including his death, particularly as recorded in the four canonical gospels. The story of the Passion seems perfectly suited to illustration in view of the narrative structure of the gospel accounts, along with the broader theological significance attributed to the death of Jesus in the early church, and certainly this is the case from the eighth century on, when illustrated passion narratives came to form the bedrock of Christian visual culture. This seminar begins by examining these four accounts and then examines the earliest evidence for their representation and interpretation in visual art, hymnography, liturgy, and homiletic literature. Focusing on specific themes – such as the Betrayal, Crucifixion, and Resurrection – it then explores the ways that the Passion was imagined, exploited, and appropriated in Late Antiquity and Byzantium, when it motivated the creation of consequential works of art in conjunction with the composition and performance of hymns, complex liturgies, and homiletic literature that came to define personal piety as well as theology. The seminar includes a site visit to the Yale University Art Gallery and the viewing of Byzantine manuscripts in the form of facsimiles. Area III. and Area V. Prerequisite: A basic knowledge of Christian history. 3 Course cr

REL 738b, Jonathan Edwards’s Life and Thought as Seen in His Manuscripts

Kenneth Minkema

This course, held at Beinecke Library, offers students an opportunity for intensive reading in and reflections upon the significance of early America’s premier philosophical theologian through a close engagement with Edwards’s manuscripts, published writings, and artifacts. Each session engages a selection of sources that highlights early modern social and material practices of intellectual production, Edwards’s particular practices, and the overlapping networks of relationships in which they were embedded. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 740a, Battle for the Soul of America: Christianity and the Culture Wars Jamil

Drake

This course surveys the religious and moral frameworks used to define “America” in the culture wars of the long twentieth century. Beginning with the Roaring Twenties, students critically examine national controversies on alcohol, biological evolutionism, birth control, and Communism to shed light on different and conflicting religious and moral frameworks used to define American identity and regulate human conduct. Our exploration of the long culture wars helps us engage the place of Christianity in the debates around music and art, education, abortion, HIV/AIDS, and 9/11 in the latter twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the end, this course helps us understand the culture wars in American Christianity and politics today. Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 745b, Byzantine Art and Architecture Vasileios Marinis

This lecture course explores the art, architecture, and material culture of the Byzantine Empire from the foundation of its capital, Constantinople, in the fourth century to the fifteenth century. Centered around the Eastern Mediterranean, Byzantium was a dominant political power in Europe for several centuries and fostered a highly sophisticated artistic culture. This course aims to familiarize students with key objects and monuments from various media – mosaic, frescoes, wooden panels, metalwork, ivory carvings – and from a variety of contexts – public and private, lay and monastic, imperial and political. We give special attention to issues of patronage, propaganda,

reception, and theological milieux, as well as the interaction of architecture and ritual. More generally, students become acquainted with the methodological tools and vocabulary that art historians employ to describe, understand, and interpret works of art. Area III and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 746b, Religion and Rebellion in Latin America Erika Helgen

The 2013 election of Pope Francis and the pontiff's subsequent emphasis on the Catholic Church's preferential option for the poor has brought the "rebellious" history of liberation theology into the global spotlight. The media frequently portrays liberation theology as a simple fusion of religious beliefs and political ideologies, particularly Marxist ideologies, and observers often assume that the movement represented an abrupt break with the region's conservative religious past. However, Latin America has a long and complex history of religious "rebellion" or "resistance" (terms whose very meaning will be interrogated in this seminar), especially among marginalized members of Latin American society, such as indigenous persons, Afro-Latin Americans, women, and the poor. In the more than 500 years since Christopher Columbus first arrived in Caribbean waters, indigenous religious leaders spearheaded rebellions against colonial authorities, enslaved Muslim Africans coordinated revolts against their enslavers, a Brazilian "holy man" convinced the impoverished inhabitants of rural Brazil to confront the armed forces of an entire nation, and Mexican Catholics shouted *¡Viva Cristo Rey!* as they rose up against what they believed to be an oppressive and godless regime. The history of religious rebellion in Latin America is as diverse as it is extensive. Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, Vodou, and indigenous religions all played parts in rebellions that could be progressive, conservative, nationalist, or separatist in nature. This seminar draws upon this diverse religious history to examine and discuss a number of questions, including: How do we identify and define religious resistance? When and why do we declare a religious rebellion successful? How has the notion of a Latin American utopia changed over time, and how has this affected the nature of religious rebellion? Has the growth of religious pluralism in Latin America intensified or diluted efforts of religious resistance? Area III and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 747b, Islamic Art and Architecture in the Mediterranean Orgu Dalgic

This course surveys the history of Islamic cultures through their rich material expressions beginning from the time of the Prophet Muhammed in the seventh century to the present and extending across the Mediterranean from Spain to Syria. The course aims to familiarize students with the major periods, regions, monuments, and media of the Islamic cultures around the Mediterranean and with basic principles of Islam as they pertain to the visual arts and, in particular, their interactions with the Christian world. We discuss architecture (mosques, madrasas, mausolea, etc.) as well as works of art in various media (calligraphy, illuminated manuscripts, textiles, ceramics, etc.) within both the Islamic and the larger, universal, and cross-cultural contexts. Area III and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 756a, The Cult of Mary: Early Christian and Byzantine Art Felicity Harley and Vasileios Marinis

This course examines the origins and development of the veneration of Mary as the Mother of God, focusing specifically on the treatment of Mary in the visual and material culture of early Christianity and Byzantium. Its aim is to introduce students to key points in the history of the cult through the close study of images preserved on a range

of objects in different media (including frescoes, glassware, sculpture, coins, textiles, mosaic), made for a variety of purposes. This visual material is analyzed in conjunction with relevant literary, theological, and liturgical evidence for the development of the cult. It is designed as a seminar for students who have interest or background in the material, textual, and religious culture of early Christianity. Area III and Area V.

3 Course cr

REL 759a, Land, Ecology, and Religion in U.S. History Tisa Wenger

This course explores the varied intersections among land, ecology, and religion in U.S. history and situates American religion within a broader history of the Anthropocene. How have religious ideologies and institutions worked to shape American spaces, places, and landscapes? In an age of accelerating ecological crisis, how have diverse religious groups interacted with, participated in, or reacted against the environmental movement? How have race, gender, settler colonialism, and other intersectional social formations shaped these histories? How are the social formations we call religions implicated in and reinvented by the climactic transformations of the Anthropocene? Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 766a, Reading Calvin's *Institutes* Bruce Gordon

This course is a close reading of almost the whole of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559). Seminar discussion focuses on the structure, arguments, and contexts of the text. Particular attention is given to the analysis of the theological, literary, and historical aspects of the book, and students are challenged to formulate their analysis of Calvin's methods and intentions. Area II and Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 783a, Ideas of Salvation in Early Christianity Teresa Morgan and Hannah Black

Salvation stands at the heart of the “good news” of Jesus Christ. The first followers of Jesus shared a life-changing experience that, through Jesus Christ, they had been reconciled with God, and it had been made possible for them to live in their right relationship with God as humanity had not done since before the Fall. That conviction still frames Christians’ understanding of God, Jesus Christ, human existence, and all human relationships. Although Christians have always been convinced that Jesus Christ saves, however, they have debated endlessly *how* Christ saves. From the earliest writings on, Christians have understood salvation as a form of sacrifice, ransom, rescue, redemption, reconciliation, supplicatory offering, exemplarity, and more. No one image or model has ever been regarded as orthodox at the expense of others, and each contributes something distinctive to the way Christians understand God’s action through Christ. This course combines history and theology to explore the rich diversity of early Christian images, stories, and models of how Christ saves that developed between the first and fifth centuries. We locate different ideas in their Jewish and gentile contexts, investigating where they come from and why they are powerful for different writers and communities. We consider the theological strengths and weaknesses of different ideas and ask why some are more popular than others now. We excavate one long-forgotten model from the New Testament and discuss whether it should be revived. We draw on some modern theologians to ask which ancient models best meet the needs of all those – both sinful and suffering – who need to be reconciled with God. Area I, Area II, and Area III. Prerequisite: at least one course in New Testament or early Christianity. 3 Course cr