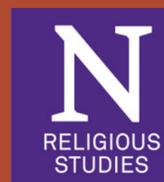


REL 240 - 20

Intro to Christianity



Spring 2026

Professor Richard Kieckhefer

TTH 3:30-4:50pm

This class will focus on the making and remaking of Christianity. In its origins Christianity drew upon Jewish tradition and the Hebrew Scriptures, but also on other traditions circulating in the Mediterranean world. It brought together the themes of kingship, spirit indwelling, acting righteously and being justified, the present and future dimensions of God's reign, connections between the world above and the world below. The New Testament combines all this and more in ways that later writers sorted and worked through. But over time Christianity was also remade: its relationship with Judaism changed, its views of Christ became more formally developed and explicit, it wrestled with its own earlier demands for perfection, it splintered in ever new ways, and it adjusted to new cultural environments, including what we call modernity. We will look at all these developments and ask about their implications.

REL 265-28 / HISTORY 200-28

American Religious History from WWII to Present

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STUDIES

Spring 2026

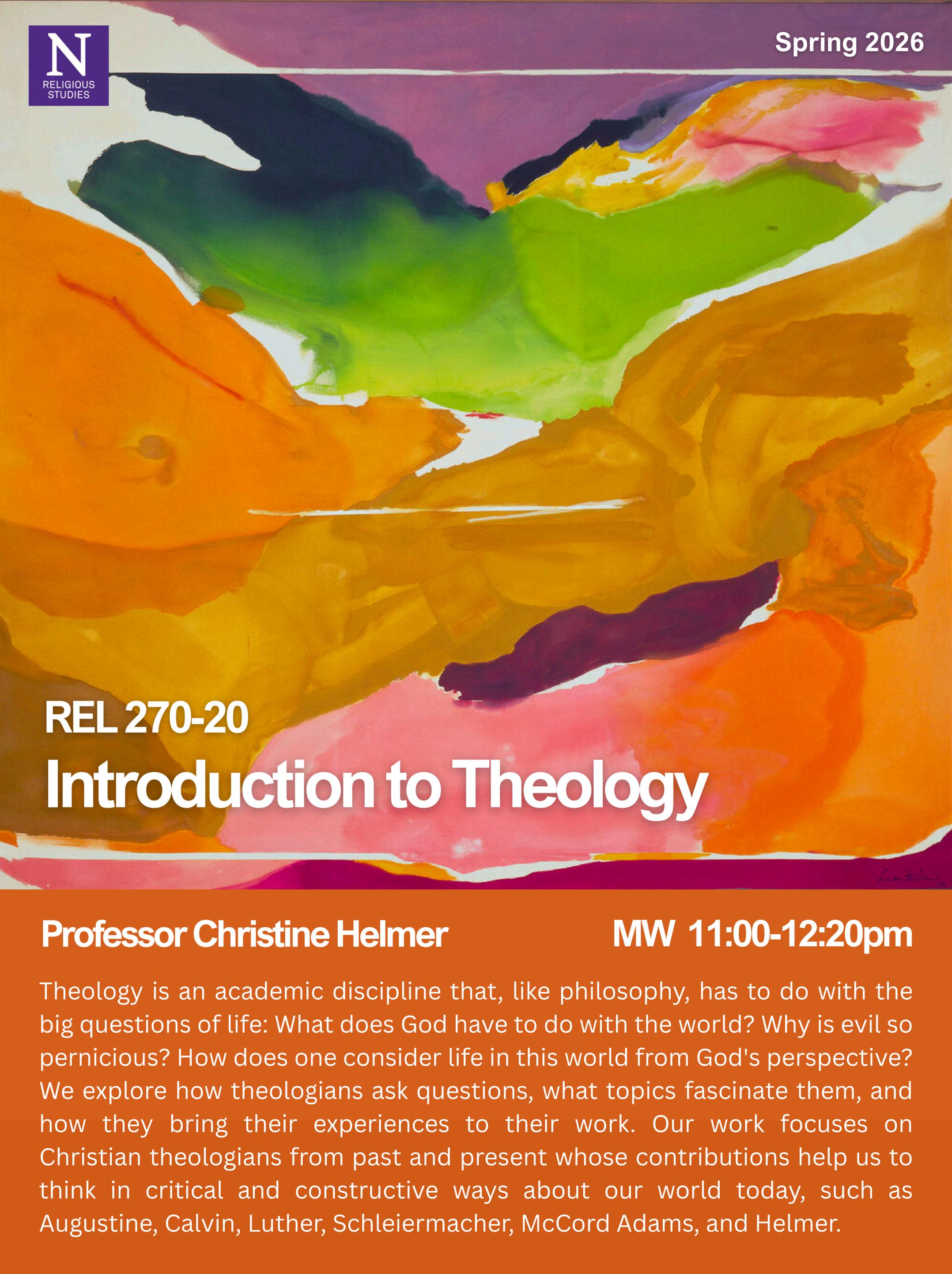


Professor Robert Orsi

MW 12:30-1:50pm

This course examines major developments, movements, controversies and figures in American religious history from the 1920s, the era of excess and disillusionment, to the 1980s, which saw the revival of conservative Christianity in a nation becoming increasingly religiously diverse. Topics include the liberalism/fundamentalism controversy of the 1920s; the rise of Christian realism in the wake of the carnage of World War I; the making of the "tri-faith nation" (Protestant/Catholic/Jew); the supernatural Cold War; the Civil Rights Movement; the revolution in American Catholicism following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the rise of Catholic political radicalism in the 1960s; religion and the post-1965 immigration act; the religious politics of abortion; and the realignment of American religion and politics in the 1970s and 1980s.

****The course counts towards the Religion, Law, and Politics (RLP) major concentration.***

The background is an abstract watercolor painting with vibrant, overlapping colors including orange, yellow, green, pink, and purple, creating a sense of depth and movement.

REL 270-20

Introduction to Theology

Professor Christine Helmer

MW 11:00-12:20pm

Theology is an academic discipline that, like philosophy, has to do with the big questions of life: What does God have to do with the world? Why is evil so pernicious? How does one consider life in this world from God's perspective? We explore how theologians ask questions, what topics fascinate them, and how they bring their experiences to their work. Our work focuses on Christian theologians from past and present whose contributions help us to think in critical and constructive ways about our world today, such as Augustine, Calvin, Luther, Schleiermacher, McCord Adams, and Helmer.

Spring 2026

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STUDIES



REL 278-1 / SLAVIC 278-1 / COMP_LIT 211-1

Visual Art in the Context of Russian Culture: Icons

Professor Nina Gurianova

MW 2:00-3:20pm

This year we focus on the phenomena of Christian Orthodox icons, from Byzantine through contemporary era, in the dual contexts of Russian and European cultures; topics directly related to iconography and iconology, as well as interconnections among visual arts, literature, religion, and political history.

Spring 2026

REL 309-20

Rivers, Groves, and Gods



Professor Mark McClish

TTH 11-12:20pm

This course explores the relationship between and among beings and their natural environment as reflected in the cultures and practices of different South Asian religious traditions. In doing so, we will look both at shared, institutional traditions as reflected in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Islam as well as different local, tribal, and indigenous traditions. In each instance, we will ask how relationships between beings, place, the cosmos, and the sacred exist within and through nature and natural environments, and how these relationships form bonds of community between them. A key goal of this course is the cultivation among class participants of environmental consciousness, our everyday awareness of and participation in, the local natural world around us. Hence, as we pursue a widescale understanding of religion and ecology in South Asia, we will also use the opportunity afforded by our readings and discussions to cultivate our own everyday sense of relatedness with our natural environment.

Spring 2026

REL 318-21

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Religion and Culture in the People's Republic of China

Professor Antonio Terrone

TTH 2-3:20pm

This course will examine the role of religion in post-1980's China with an emphasis on the political implications of the practice of religion in the People's Republic of China. Students will read various forms of literature and policy documents to assess the extent to which Marxist theory is central to the interpretation of "religion" in Communist China. Primary sources will include Chinese constitutional articles, white papers, and editorials in English translation. Secondary sources will cover a wide range of interpretations and perspectives on the position of religious institutions and religious practices in the PRC. The first part of this course will investigate the expression of religiosity under Communism in China; the rehabilitation of Confucian values; the constitutional protection of religion and religious belief in China; the relationship between ethnicity and religious policies; the Sinicization of religion; and the administration of the five officially accepted religious traditions in the People's Republic of China (Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Islam).

****This course counts towards the Religion, Law, and Politics (RLP) major concentration.***



an-tique
an-tiqui-ty
ancient times.
2 (plural) built
ancient times: The
Roman antiquities.
an-ti-Sem-i-tis-m
anti-sep-tic adj, nc (of) a
to prevent disease, espec

REL 339-21 / JWSH_ST 339-1

Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism

Professor Barry Wimpfheimer TTH 9:30-10:50am

For over two thousand years, Jews have engendered antagonism and hatred from some of their neighbors and erstwhile friends. This course will overview the history of anti-Jewish ideologies and episodes seeking to taxonomize and analyze this metahistorical phenomenon. The course will engage both primary and secondary sources covering over two millennia of world history while attending to diversity in time, place, political reality, and majority religion. Much of the course will be devoted to theorizing anti-Judaism and antisemitism, engaging different paradigms that look to history, theology, psychoanalysis, race and power to consider and reconsider this long-lasting set of hatreds.

**This course counts towards the Religion, Law, and Politics (RLP) major concentration*

Spring 2026

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REL 339-22 / JWISH_ST 339-2

Kabbalah

Professor Barry Wimpfheimer

TTH 2-3:20pm

Kabbalah, or Jewish mysticism, is an esoteric (secret) tradition of deliberating about and experiencing the mysteries of those spaces that are inaccessible to the five senses. Though for much of its history Jewish mysticism has been the province of a select few devotees, at times Kabbalah has flourished as a popular religious movement. Recent years have seen a rise in the popularity of Kabbalah as various celebrities (including Madonna and Ariana Grande) have become affiliated with The Kabbalah Center. This course will introduce the discourse of Kabbalah, think about mysticism as both an experiential and an intellectual tradition and consider why Kabbalah has become so popular today.



Spring 2026

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REL 345-20

The Ambiguity of the Undead: Saints in Byzantium and Russia

Professor Sergey Ivanov

TTH 11-12:20pm

This course explores the historical, cultural, and theological construction of sainthood in Christianity from antiquity to the modern period. Contrary to popular belief, neither Jesus nor the apostles defined saints as a special spiritual elite. Rather, sainthood emerged gradually as a social, literary, and institutional phenomenon, while the Church has never actually provided a definition of what a saint truly is. Saints embody a paradox: they represent an immediate, personal relationship with the divine, while the Church functions as an institution that regulates, formalizes, and mediates access to the sacred. This tension—between charisma and bureaucracy, spontaneity and control—lies at the heart of Christian history.



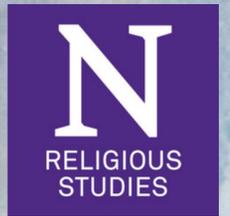
Professor Richard Kieckhefer

MW 3:30–4:50pm

The concept of miracles is fully developed in Christianity, beginning with the miracles of Christ himself and extending to the miracles associated with saints and their shrines, as well as faith-healing in religious revivals. How the category of “miracle” applies in other religious traditions is subject for discussion, but spontaneous cures and other exceptional phenomena are reported in nearly all religious traditions. This class will explore the different forms and conceptions of these phenomena in cross-cultural perspective. It will also ask about the implications of miracle reports for an understanding of disease, health, and experience of the supernatural.

Spring 2026

REL 468-20



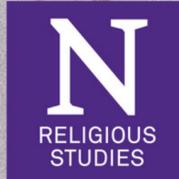
Textual Ethnography

Professor Shira E. Schwartz

W 2:30-5:30pm

This seminar explores theoretical and methodological links between textual and ethnographic research. As an interdisciplinary and topic-motivated field, religious studies pursues research questions that can cross multiple disciplines and periods. This seminar takes up one of those crossings—text and ethnography—as a site of rich potential for methodological innovation and theoretical exchange. Responding to recent calls to decenter “the human” within the (post)humanities and social sciences, we will investigate what gets lost by dividing meaning from materiality, the natural from the cultural, the archival and literary from the ethnographic. Troubling disciplinary boundaries and categorical binaries, students will be encouraged to explore what text and ethnography share as entangled sites of human and nonhuman production and what we stand to gain by linking them. What are the textual practices inscribed by our ethnographic fields and scholarly productions? How do we locate the sites in which textual projects emerge and include the bodies in which they come to live?

Spring 2026



REL 481-1-20

Classical Theories of Religion

Professor Christine Helmer
Professor Robert Orsi

M 3-5:30pm

This course explores the writings of well-known European and American philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and historians who wrote between the late eighteenth and mid-twentieth centuries and who have shaped the foundations of scholarly and public perceptions of religion over approximately the past 150 years.