Master of Arts in Theology and Society

This program is in moratorium effective Fall 2014 through Fall 2015. The Department of Theology and Religious Studies is, therefore, not considering applications or admission to the program during this period.

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Program Description
The Master of Arts in Theology and Society is an academically-oriented thirty-six credit curriculum which aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to interrelate with the Catholic tradition and the issues and concerns of contemporary society. This program is designed especially, but not exclusively, for students who are interested in informing their professional or personal activity in the church or world through the Christian, particularly Catholic, tradition and in turn, enriching that tradition through their reflection and living. This program will, therefore, appeal to those who serve in professional or volunteer capacities in local parishes or congregations, those who work in religiously-affiliated school systems as teachers or administrators, or persons involved in a variety of careers that could be enhanced by greater familiarity with theological and ethical studies.

The mission of SJU to “foster a lived awareness of the challenging and mutually enriching interaction between Christian faith and diverse contemporary culture" is the reason for and the guiding principle of the M.A. In keeping with SJU’s Jesuit character, the program aims to prepare “men and women with and for others” by integrating the study of theology with contemporary issues in and features of American and global society. As a curriculum in service to the church and the world, the program puts into practice Pope John Paul II’s understanding of the specific mission of Catholic universities:

By its very nature, a University develops culture through its research, helps to transmit the local culture to each succeeding generation through its teaching, and assists cultural activities through its educational services. It is open to all human experience and is ready to dialogue with and learn from any culture. A Catholic University shares in this, offering the rich experience of the Church's own culture. In addition, a Catholic University, aware that human culture is open to Revelation and transcendence, is also a primary and privileged place for a fruitful dialogue between the Gospel and culture.

- Ex Corde Ecclesiae, Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities (1990), B.

The Master of Arts in Theology and Society offers an integrative approach to the study of both the content and method of the various theological disciplines as well as theology’s necessary engagement with society and culture. All courses in the program will be designed to foster an interdisciplinary grasp of the study of theology, whatever their primary discipline and focus. At the same time, the courses will explicitly relate their theological activities to the twenty-first century United States and global contexts. In other words, the integrative design of the program is both “intrinsic” and “extrinsic”. That is, each individual course (whether in biblical studies, systematics, historical theology, ethics, or interreligious relations) will consciously demonstrate its relationship to the content and methods of the other disciplines (intrinsic integration), and all courses will in varying degrees relate their subjects to issues in today’s society and culture (extrinsic integration). It is, in part, this integrative approach that differentiates this degree from other regional programs. It also allows students to enter into the program at any point in the proposed rotation of courses.

Learning Goals and Objectives for the M. A. in Theology and Society

Goal 1: Students will be well-informed in the classic areas of Catholic Christianity: biblical studies, church history, doctrine, ethics, and interreligious dialogue.

Objective 1.1: Students will demonstrate knowledge of key concepts in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible.

Objective 1.2: Students will demonstrate knowledge of key aspects of the New Testament.

Objective 1.3: Students will demonstrate knowledge of at least one major period in church history.
Objective 1.4: Students will demonstrate knowledge of key issues in one of the following two doctrines: Doctrine of God or Christology.

Objective 1.5: Students will demonstrate knowledge of key issues in Theological Anthropology.

Objective 1.6: Students will demonstrate knowledge of key issues in one of the following two doctrines: Ecclesiology or Sacraments.

Objective 1.7: Students will demonstrate knowledge of key principles in Christian social ethics.

Objective 1.8: Students will demonstrate the ability to engage in appropriate dialogue between Christianity and at least one additional major religious tradition: Judaism, Islam, or Hinduism, Chinese religion.

Goal 2: Students will interrelate Catholic tradition and contemporary culture and/or society.

Objective 2.1: Students will identify theological questions arising from particular cultural arenas and/or social situations.

Objective 2.2: Students will articulate social and/or cultural implications of their studies in bible, history, doctrine, ethics and interreligious dialogue.

Objective 2.3: Students will reflect theologically on a situation arising from their current or prospective paid or volunteer work.

Goal 3: Students will advance in the Jesuit tradition of “being men and women for others.”

Objective 3.1: Students will demonstrate the use of theology to interpret and act in relation to the needs of others in the larger society.

Objective 3.2: Students will identify ways in which the needs of others in society challenge and/or transform some theological traditions.

Admission Requirements
Students who apply to the M.A. in Theology and Society will be required to submit:

- A completed Saint Joseph’s University graduate application.
- Official sealed transcript(s) of undergraduate/graduate coursework with a G.P.A. of 3.0 (on a scale of 4) from an accredited institution of higher education.
- Personal statement – a letter of intention outlining the candidate’s professional goals and educational objectives in pursuing the Master of Arts in Theology and Society.
- Two letters of recommendation.
- A current resume or curriculum vitae.[Correct website to reflect this spelling.
- $35 application fee—waived if applicant attended a Graduate Studies Open House or is an SJU graduate.
- Requirements for international students and regarding English proficiency may be found at: http://www.sju.edu/admissions/graduate/applicationinstr.html.

Students will also be expected to be familiar with basic principles and methods of biblical, theological, and ethical studies. This may be demonstrated in the following ways:

- Undergraduate coursework
- Undergraduate-level study in non-credit programs such as diocesan ministerial certification programs. Course descriptions and syllabi should be submitted.
- Directed reading and assessment.

Students with an undergraduate GPA below 3.0 or no discernible theological preparation for coursework may be admitted on a provisional basis.

Note: The Master of Arts in Theology and Society program is a cohort-based program. This program does not offer new cohort starts each semester. Students admitted to the program will be added to a cohort wait list. When the start list reaches 10 admitted students, the program director will notify accepted students of the next cohort term start.

Degree Requirements and Course Distribution

Students earn 36-credits by participating in 12 courses according to the following rubric:

- Biblical Studies: 2 courses (1 course in each Testament)
- Systematic Theology: 3 courses (1 in each of 3 areas: God, Theological
Anthropology, and Ecclesiology and Sacraments)
- Historical Theology: 1 course
- Christian Ethics: 3 courses
- Interreligious Relations: 1 course
- Electives: 2 courses

Full-time students will be taking two courses per term. Courses will be offered during Fall, Spring, and Summer I terms and will generally meet from 4:30 to 6 p.m. on the SJU campus. We expect, however, that some students will attend part time, taking one course per term. Courses will be offered in such a sequence that students will be able to finish their programs in the minimum possible time, no matter at which point in the sequence they matriculate. Students can complete their distributional requirements in 6 terms (2 years) by taking 2 courses per term in their first 6 terms. Students can also complete their distributional requirements in 12 terms (4 years) by taking 1 course per term.

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Undergraduate Student Enrollment
Undergraduates who are juniors or seniors may participate in these graduate classes. They must have the permission of the department chair and will complete level-appropriate course requirements and assessments that differ from those assigned to graduate students. The percentage of undergraduate students in a graduate course will not exceed 30%. Undergraduates must have a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Preference will be given in descending order to:

- Undergraduate theology or religious studies majors
- Undergraduate theology or religious studies double majors.
- Undergraduate theology or religious studies minors.
- Undergraduate honors students.
- Students whose lab requirements or student teaching requirements make taking courses during the day difficult.

Biblical Studies

THE 511 Law and Ethics in the Hebrew Bible
This course examines the legal traditions of the Torah (Pentateuch) and what they reveal about the practice of law and ethics in ancient Israel and the wider biblical world. It then explores the reuse of these traditions in other portions of the Hebrew Bible and the growth of related traditions in prophetic and wisdom literature. The course acquaints students with how various biblical traditions developed over time to form the foundation for later rabbinic and Christian ethical thought.

THE 512 The Hebrew Bible and Its Inner "Re-readings"
Far from being a single book that speaks with a single voice, the Hebrew Bible contains many voices that speak to a wide range of issues. This course looks at those voices and how they interact with one another. In particular, it examines how a number of later texts in the Hebrew Bible comment on, reinterpret, and even call into question earlier texts in a process that the Pontifical Biblical Commission calls "re-readings" ["The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," III,A,1]. The course considers how this phenomenon of reinterpretation within biblical texts influenced ancient Israel's understanding of social institutions such as law and the family as well as important theological concepts such as God, sin, worship, and justice. It also explores how the process of reinterpreting older traditions continued beyond the texts of the Hebrew Bible and still continues today.

THE 513 The Psalms
Perhaps the most influential of all writings from the Hebrew Bible for Christian spirituality, the Psalms...
offer a special glimpse into the religious life of ancient Israel. By placing these texts within their larger historical background, the course will study psalms of various types (laments, hymns, royal, wisdom psalms) with a view to their literary and religious character and their theological value for communities of faith today. The course will also consider the question of the Psalter’s theology as a whole.

THE 521 The Gospels and Discipleship
This course is an exploration of the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. Using the framework described in the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s “Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels,” each Gospel will be examined in turn in order to discover each evangelist’s unique understanding of the meaning of Jesus, the duties of his followers, and the nature of Jesus’ historical ministry. While coming to appreciate the unique insights of each writer, students will bring the perspectives of their four narratives into dialogue with our twenty-first century context.

THE 522 The Letters of Paul: Conversation across the Centuries
This course studies the writings of the Apostle Paul and the questions that the earliest churches grappled with in the Greco-Roman world of the first century. It also considers corresponding issues in the twenty-first century church and world. Questions concerning community membership and life, ministry, interactions with the world, expectations for the future, and relations with other religions, especially Judaism, will be seen in their original Pauline contexts and then engaged in the light of present experience.

THE 523 Biblical Interpretation: Actualizing the Bible in Today’s Church and World
This course is an investigation into the spectrum of Christian understandings of how to interpret the Bible and of the nature of biblical authority. Participants explore the renaissance in Catholic biblical scholarship that officially began in 1943 in order to develop skills in providing “easy access to the sacred Scriptures for all the faithful” [Vatican II, Dei Verbum]. Also studied is how to interrelate the two Testaments of the Christian Bible so as to bring out the distinctiveness of their “inexhaustible content and the mystery of which [each] is full” [Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church (1985)].

Historical Theology
THE 531 The Christian Tradition and Trajectory
This course introduces key elements of Christian belief and practice through the study of historical texts from the origins of Christianity to the present day. The interpretation of primary texts gives insight into the development of Christian teaching and practice, particularly within the Roman Catholic tradition. Like a snapshot, each text captures something about a certain place and time and the people who wrote it. By studying these “snapshots,” students observe how different people in different times and places spoke about central issues of Christian faith. Sometimes the class will try to make sense of expressions of the Christian faith that are quite different from those observable today. Sometimes it will see the origins of current beliefs and practices. Understanding the Christian experience as changing and dynamic inspires the search for expressions of faith that are congruent with both the tradition and contemporary society.

THE 533 Christianity Today
This course surveys the variety among the diverse Christian traditions of today, especially in the United States. It explores the distinctive theologies, liturgies, polities, and self-understandings of the major families of Christianity: Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism. The course also studies the historical circumstances that shaped each tradition’s perspectives and considers modern ecumenical movements and post-Vatican developments in Roman Catholicism. It will provide valuable insights into how different Christian communities currently interact in the United States context.

THE 535 God, Gender, and Christian Spirituality
This course examines selected spiritual classics written by both men and women of Christian faith across the span of Christian history. Attention is paid to the understandings of the human person and of God revealed in each spiritual path. The effects of culturally-constructed understandings of gender on the options open to individuals and the paths by which they appear to attain intimacy with God are also studied. Students engage the Catholic tradition of bridal mysticism, and are asked, in this context, to reflect upon contemporary perceptions of gender, spiritual virtuosity, and human eroticism. Students are also challenged by historical portrayals of deification and growth in Christlikeness to reflect upon how Christlikeness might be manifest in their own and others’ lives.
Systematic Theology

Distribution Requirement #1: GOD

THE 541 Jesus through the Centuries
This course is a historical survey of the evolving understandings of the meaning and significance of Jesus Christ in the Western Christian tradition, beginning with New Testament Christologies, moving through the debates of the fourth and fifth centuries (through which Christian creedal formulas were established), medieval atonement theories, post-Enlightenment reformulations, to the challenges presented by contemporary interpretations. Key to this course is understanding the contextual nature of theological formulations, which arise in response to specific human and planetary needs. Students will develop a Christological position in relation to particular instances of such needs as an integral part of the course.

THE 542 The Triune God: The Relational Nature of the Divine
The Christian doctrine that the One God is Triune is often referred to as a “mystery” in the unhelpful sense of a topic escaping comprehension, rather than in the authentic theological sense of a reality that can never be exhausted (Karl Rahner). This course stresses the importance for Christian faith of a lively appreciation of God as Three-in-One. Starting with the nascent Trinitarian formulae found in the New Testament and moving forward to the creeds of Nicaea and Chalcedon, participants in this course investigate how God came to be understood as a Tri-unity of persons. They will then examine the Trinitarian doctrine itself, both in its world-relational and internal-relational forms, and how it came to be much more significant for lived faith in Eastern Christianity than in the West. In the class, students will begin to express the Christian apprehension of God as Triune in contemporary language for use in homiletic and religious educational contexts.

Distribution Requirement #2: Theological Anthropology

THE 547 Dignity, Rights, and Duties: The Many Facets of the Human Person
The Catholic Church has made a unique contribution to developing and fostering the concept of human dignity (to which nations subscribe in "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights"). This course examines the biblical and systematic-theological roots of human dignity and the many interpretations it has had since World War II. Because what we say theologically about the human person has direct implications for our interactions with others at the personal and communal levels, students in this course will, of necessity, address the relationship between systematic theology and everyday life.

THE 548 Theology with and for the World
"Theologies of hope and liberation" refers to a group of reflections about God, the church, Jesus Christ, and the Christian life in relation to human freedom and fulfillment, which have developed among the poor and oppressed in the United States, in the "two-thirds" world, and from European theologians, all of whom argue that the task of theology is necessarily entwined with the well-being (spiritual, material, psychological) of the entire community. Students in this course study the foundational texts in liberation, black, feminist, and post-colonial theologies and how these approaches have subsequently evolved, as well as to the responses, both affirmative and critical, to these theologies from the more mainstream theological community. The course seeks to understand the context in which each theological approach arose, particularly the authors' experiences of severe poverty, brutal repression, political disenfranchisement, social marginalization, or racial or gender hatred, as well as to investigate contemporary instances of massive public suffering that demand a theological response from the church and the world.

THE 549 Religion, Violence, and Terrorism
Religiously-motivated violence constitutes one of the most potent social/economic/political forces in the twenty-first century. This course probes the roots and recent instances of violence and terrorism in the name of religious convictions and traditions. Through rigorous investigation of both primary and secondary texts, it provides a thorough presentation of the theological roots of religious violence and its contemporary manifestations. The course unfolds in three parts: 1) the roots of religious violence: scripture, sacrifice and ancient conquest; 2) cosmic struggle: the violence of apocalypticism then and now; and 3) contemporary manifestations: sexism and racism; recent religious wars and genocides; and terrorism.

Distribution Requirement #3: Ecclesiology And Sacraments

THE 554 The Church as Sacrament for the World
Drawing upon the insights of the Second Vatican Council documents Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes, this course explores the church as the sacrament of Christ for the world. It begins by considering various biblical and creedal descriptions of the church: a sheepfold whose gate is Christ, God’s cultivated land, a flock of which Christ is the shepherd, the building of God of which Christ is the cornerstone, the spotless spouse of the spotless Lamb, a pilgrim people, the body of Christ, the temple of the Spirit, the people of God, and as one, holy, catholic and apostolic (Lumen Gentium, 6-8). The course devotes special attention to ministry in and for the church and the world, motivated by the conviction that the church “can contribute greatly toward making the human family and its history more human” [Gaudium et Spes, 40].

THE 555 The Eucharist: A Vision of Solidarity
Against the backdrop of two sacraments of initiation, Baptism and Confirmation, which constitute Christians as God’s “priestly, kingly and prophetic people,” this course examines the inseparable relationship between the Eucharist and social justice, between liturgy and life. Through the study of the Eucharistic texts, it offers a deeper understanding of how the Mass speaks to the social issues of today and their wider implications. The course provides a theological basis for the social doctrine of the church and a spirituality to accompany a commitment to work for justice. It introduces students to the “adventure” of the Eucharist, enabling them to discover how the Mass opens our eyes to the plight of the poor and energizing them to engage the structures of injustice that impact their lives. This is a course for those who wish to live out the Jesuit ideal of being “men and women for others.”

Christian Ethics

THE 561 Social Ethics
Since it explores Christian social ethics, this course is particularly designed to equip students with analytic tools to reflect on the question, “What does it mean to live responsibly as a member of a family, society and humanity in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?” It will present the ways in which numerous sources of wisdom and insight—such as scripture, theological tradition, social analysis and experience—contribute to reflection about life in society. Major philosophical strands of ethics will be treated at the outset of the course. Students will delve deeply into the Christian tradition, with special emphasis on Catholic social teaching, in order to consider such complex social issues as poverty and economic justice, the moral justifiability of the use of force, racism/racial justice, sexism/gender justice, and capital punishment in the light of the ethical foundations treated earlier.

THE 562 Ethics and Economics
This course examines socioeconomic phenomena through the lens of ethical concepts and traditions. Students will consider the nature of capitalism, the socialist critique of capitalism, poverty, the link between race, gender, and poverty, worker justice, globalization, consumerism, environmental concerns, and sustainable development and economic rights. The course utilizes ancient and contemporary sources from the Christian tradition, with particular emphasis on Catholic social thought, to examine issue of economic justice. However, resources from economics, sociology, and political economy comprise a major component of the course. This course incorporates historical arguments and contemporary critiques and includes both local and global perspectives.

THE 563 Technology Ethics
Over the past 2000 years, Christians of every age have worked to discover what it means to live faithfully and justly in their particular places and times. This course focuses on one of the most prominent features of our place and time: technology. In the course, students critically reflect on technology, its role in human lives, and its impact on society. The course will examine various theories of the nature of technology. It will also investigate particular resources available within the discipline of Christian social ethics that are central to understanding and evaluating the moral worth of various technologies, such as common good, justice, human dignity, development, and solidarity. These conceptual tools will then be used to explore the ethical implications of technology through the assessment of a variety of particular cases of technologies that are common or likely will be soon (e.g., cell phones, the mobile internet, the digital divide, data insecurity, digital media and intellectual property, cosmetic surgery, and the post-human movement).

THE 564 Mediator, Mediation, and the Media
Our culture is characterized by the mass media, yet Christians are often suspicious of it and its effects on communities. This course studies the phenomenon of media within the Christian life, using it as a framework to explore some central theological and moral issues of our times. It begins
with Jesus as the “Word,” an event of God’s self-communication, and Jesus as a mediator between God and humankind. It will then move on to explore how Christianity experiences and uses communications media within its life, focusing on scripture and liturgy. It will conclude by evaluating the ways in which Christians use and are used by contemporary popular media, and its relevance for Christian communities. There may well be more connections between God and YouTube than one might suspect.

THE 565/HCE 552 Theological Issues in Bioethics [course offered by SJU’s Institute of Catholic Bioethics]
This course introduces students to the basic theological concepts, models, and analyses that both Catholic and certain Protestant traditions use in discussing bioethical questions. The various relations between faith in God and medical care presuppose a shared understanding of the human person. Thus, theological reflection has a unique role to play in bioethical issues, as it ponders the interaction between understanding and volition, dignity and foster care, the rights to life and the demands on life. Specific topics will be discussed and analyzed in depth touching on the beginning (genetic control, abortion, care of severely handicapped neonates, and assisted reproductive technologies) and end of human life (death and dying, and the meaning of “quality of life” and its application to contemporary issues).

THE 566/HAD 600 Ethics of Health Care [course offered by SJU’s Institute of Catholic Bioethics]
Since at least the seventeenth century, Catholic ethicists regularly composed major texts on issues in biomedical ethics. Recently, however, several Protestant authors have made significant contributions. This course studies selected Catholic and Protestant philosophers and theologians who have made lasting contributions to this field of study. In addition, the course focuses on several concrete issues: abortion, reproductive technologies/cloning, stem cell research, treatment decisions for handicapped newborns, active and passive euthanasia, HIV/AIDS, organ transplantation, and human experimentation.

THE 567 The Greening of Catholic Understanding
Across the centuries, the Catholic Church has fostered respect and love of the environment. The monastic orders, Francis of Assisi, and the Jesuit Reductions have played major roles. Since environmental awareness came of age in the 1960s, it has challenged the way in which modernity and—at times—the Catholic ethos have been turning to the Bible to justify an unlimited use of the earth’s resources, something that contradicts Genesis and Revelation. The course invites participants to outline and reflect on the contribution Catholics can and should offer to the twenty-first century’s self-understanding of humanity and its environment.

THE 568 Politics and Religious Traditions in the USA
Religious beliefs have historically played an important role in American political, economic, and social realities. This course studies several key aspects of the relationship between religion and society, as well as between the institutions of church and state. It also examines the wisdom and teaching of the Catholic tradition on responsible politics and the role of religion in contemporary American public life. Sources will include sociological, political, ethical, and theological analyses, as well as Roman Catholic teaching such as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ document, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship.

Interreligious Relations

THE 581 The Church in Relation to Judaism
Interreligious relations are an increasingly important concern in the twenty-first century world and church. For Christian theology the Church’s relationship to Jews and Judaism, which is not “extrinsic” but in a certain way is “intrinsic” to Christianity [John Paul II, April 13, 1986], is particularly significant. This course studies the Christian relationship with Judaism both historically and in terms of the mutual understanding and esteem that have begun to grow in the past five decades. Of special interest are relevant developments in Christian theology, such as Cardinal Walter Kasper’s insight that “Judaism is as a sacrament of every otherness that as such the Church must learn to discern, recognize and celebrate” [Oct. 28, 2002]. In addition, the course discusses practical interreligious activities on the local level that will assist Christians “to learn by what essential traits Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience” [Vatican Guidelines to Implement Nostra Aetate, 4 (1974)].

THE 583 Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations
Globally, Christianity and Islam have the greatest number of adherents. This course examines the theological, historical, and current contexts in
which Christianity and Islam encounter each other. Students will explore: 1) the emergence of Islam in seventh century Arabia, its major sacred texts, its key beliefs and practices, and Islamic law, theology and mysticism; 2) the distinctive interactions between Islam and Eastern and Western Christianity, including peaceful coexistence, political confrontation, and theological discussions, 3) modern interactions, such as common challenges (skepticism, secularization of public sphere, interpreting sacred texts for a modern age, relation between religion and science) and sources of tension (colonialism, terrorism, nationalism, and media caricatures). The course will also look at actual and potential avenues for reconciliation and cooperation for the sake of God and for the common good of the common humanity.

THE 585 The Religions of Asia
As immigration from and economic relations with Asian nations increases, this course introduces the major religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism and Shinto. The course will also consider the interactions among these traditions, bearing in mind the words of the Second Vatican Council declaration, Nostra Aetate: “[The church] regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men and women.”

Other Courses

THE 694 Integrative Concluding Project (Elective)
As one of their elective courses and following the successful completion of 30 credits (10 courses), students may prepare with a faculty advisor and a local mentor a 40-page research paper that brings a real world experience related to their career or ministerial activity or goal into interaction with theological reflection. Three credits are earned upon completion of the paper.