

St Vladimir's Seminary

Elective Course Descriptions – Fall 2025

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION 304

Credits: 3 credits

THE VERY REV. DR J. SERGIUS HALVORSEN

Christian Education and Discipleship. The work of the Church is to make disciples of all nations, teaching all that Jesus commanded (Mt 28:19-20). This course explores the relationship between discipleship and education through critical reflection on applied practice. Topics covered in the course include, but are not limited: to college ministry; adult education; inquirers classes; preparing catechumens for reception into the Church; the dynamics of religious conversion; volunteer management; and cultivating a spirit of discipleship within an Orthodox Christian Community. To the extent possible, students will integrate class work with work in parish settings during the course. *Prerequisite: None.*

Tuesdays, 2:00-4:45pm

LITURGICAL THEOLOGY 365

Credits: 3 credits

THE REV. DR VARGHESE M. DANIEL

The Sacraments of the West Syriac Tradition. This course offers instruction and theology of the Sacraments in West Syriac Tradition. The course treats the in-depth historical and theological insights of the Sacraments based on the Bible, Patristics, and worship. It also illustrates each tread of all sacraments, elements, preparations, roles of priest, deacon and the congregation. While seminary practice is covered, parish practices and the parish setting are reviewed. *Jurisdictional requirement for M.Div. candidates of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. Prerequisite: None.*

Mondays, 2:00-4:45pm

OLD TESTAMENT 421

Credits: 3 credits

DR. MICHAEL LEGASPI

Understanding the Psalms: Traditional and Critical Approaches. Few parts of Scripture are as prominent in Christian tradition as the Psalms. Though it is beyond the scope or ambition of an academic course to understand all that this involves, close and formal study of the Psalms can nevertheless deepen and enhance our experience of them. In this course, we will examine scholarly efforts to understand the historical, linguistic, and literary dimensions of the book of Psalms. We will also consider the Psalms within the context of the liturgical life of the Church and turn, in the second half of the course, to patristic homilies and commentaries. Each student will write an extensive research paper on a particular psalm, integrating knowledge of scriptural languages, biblical scholarship, liturgical backgrounds, and patristic interpretation into a coherent and original synthesis. *Proficiency in Greek required; knowledge of Hebrew desirable. Prerequisite for M.Div. and M.A. students: Second-year standing, minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5, and permission of the Academic Dean.*

Thursdays, 2:00-4:45pm

SACRED ARTS 315

Credits: 3 credits

THE REV. LUCAS CHRISTENSEN

The Sacred Arts as Liturgical Hermeneutic. In the earliest centuries of Christianity, the meanings of the Church's worship, its environment and ritual practice, were conveyed to adult converts through mystagogical catechesis. Over time, as initiates were typically received in infancy, mystagogy had to be taught through other means. In this course, we will look at ways the Church in the Early and Middle Byzantine periods incorporated liturgical hermeneutics inter-medially through the system of iconography, architecture, hymnography, and homiletics. The class will explore these developments, from the mystagogical texts of (ps.) Dionysios the Areopagite and St. Maximos the Confessor, through

elaborations in sacred architecture and the development of the historical kontakion with its influence on preaching, to the iconographic programs of Middle Byzantine architecture following the defeat of iconoclasm. Students will engage texts and material culture alongside one another, analyzing their exegetical content and their vision of Orthodox Christian worship. *Prerequisite: Second-year standing in the Master of Divinity or Master of Arts program.*

Mondays, 2:00-4:45pm

SACRED ARTS 340

Credits: 3 credits

DR ANI SHAHINIAN

Biblical Exegesis in Word and Image according to Armenian Art and Theology. This course explores the intersection of biblical exegesis and visual theology by examining key passages from the Gospels that narrate the life of Christ—from the Annunciation to the Ascension—alongside three distinct schools of Armenian manuscript illumination from late antiquity and the medieval period. Through close textual analysis, students will engage with the theological, historical, and literary dimensions of these biblical narratives, while simultaneously investigating how Armenian illuminators translated these sacred events into visual form. Focusing on the theological and exegetical traditions embedded in both word and image, the course will consider the ways in which Armenian artists and scribes interpreted scripture through compositional choices, symbolism, and stylistic variations. Students will explore how these illuminations functioned as exegetical commentaries, engaging with broader traditions of Eastern Christian theological aesthetics, including Gospel illuminations and church frescos. The course will incorporate comparative analysis of different Armenian manuscript schools, contextualizing their artistic developments within theological discourse, liturgical practice, and cultural exchange. *Prerequisites: None.*

Thursdays, 2:00-4:45pm

SPIRITUALITY 316

Credits: 3 credits

DR PETER BOUTENEFF

Prayer and Sanctity. The Church's Tradition features rich resources on the meaning and practice of prayer, primarily through the ascetical writings. Additionally, through the lives of the saints and their liturgical hymnography, the Church teaches about what it means to live a holy life in a broken world. Rather than see prayer as a means to the "end" of sanctity, both are simultaneously process and goal, mutually nourishing each other. Through thoughtful exploration of the Church's teaching, we will seek to gain insight that will nourish our own lives as well as the people to whom we minister to the glory of God. *Prerequisite: None*

Tuesdays, 2:00-4:45pm

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY 442

Credits: 3 credits

THE REV. DR MARK ROOSIEN

Orthodox Social Thought. The twenty-first century has seen the publication of two major documents of Orthodox social thought: *The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* (2000) (and its 2008 addendum, *Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights*), and the Ecumenical Patriarchate's *For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church* (2020). While these two documents share major points in common, they diverge in a number of respects, evincing two paths for Orthodox social teaching. This class investigates these two documents and their modern sources. In addition to close readings of the two documents themselves, this class will read major works in modern Orthodox social thought by Alexei Khomiakov, Nicholas Berdyaev, George Fedotov, Mother Maria Skobtsova, and Christos Yannaras. Major topics of discussion will include the topics of freedom and human rights, church-state relations, and war and peace. *Prerequisite for M.Div. and M.A. students: Second-year standing, minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5, and permission of Academic Dean.*

Wednesdays, 2:00-4:45pm