THEOLOGY MAJOR

Learning Goals and Objectives

The Theology and Religious Studies Department offers two majors which are distinguished by virtue of both their primary content and their methodological approach. Students may choose one of these majors in conjunction with their other studies, or they may double major within the department and get a degree in Theology and Religious Studies.

Theology majors will focus primarily on Christianity. Theology, which literally means the "study of God," was described by Anselm of Canterbury as "faith seeking understanding." It entails methodical study of the faith traditions of a believing community. Christian Theology employs the methods of its sub-fields (e.g., systematic and historical theology, ethics, biblical studies) to explore the bible, Jesus Christ, the church, tradition history, doctrinal development, liturgy, personal and communal morality, and relations with other religions. It is not catechesis, which transmits knowledge about a religion to a believer without critically analyzing the tradition's beliefs. Theology requires a process of grappling with and critically examining particular expressions of faith in order to articulate them in contemporary contexts. In other words, theology seeks to address the "fears, hopes, griefs, and anxieties" (Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 1) of church and world in the present moment. As a discipline, theology converses with the academy, the church, and society. The theology faculty and their students at Saint Joseph's University aim to assist each of these communities in appreciating the meaning and implications of the tenets and practices of Roman Catholic and other Christian traditions, as well as those of other religions.

Religious Studies focuses upon the study of one or more non-Christian religions. Methodologically, Religious Studies is devoted to the study of religion as a fundamental human phenomenon. Its scope is broad, encompassing in principle all forms of religious experience, belief and practice in whatever contexts they are found. Religious Studies is non-confessional in the sense that it is not committed in advance to any religious (or indeed, non-religious) worldview or doctrine. Religious Studies as we understand it neither endorses a naïve objectivism in the study of "facts" divorced from values nor elevates a single theological, philosophical or scientific principle or program to the level of an unassailable norm. Rather, Religious Studies is intentionally eclectic and open-ended, drawing upon the full range of methods available to the academic study of things human, from philosophy or literary theory, for example, to cognitive science and evolutionary psychology. It is united only by its subject matter, religion as a fundamental, albeit contested, dimension of human experience.

Goals and Objectives for Students Majoring in Theology

Goal 1: Students will understand at least two religious traditions beyond an introductory level, including their histories, beliefs, practices and contemporary expressions.

Objective 1.1: Students will articulate the foundations, historical development, and ethical ramifications of the basic content of the Catholic faith using sources and methods appropriate to the discipline of Theology.

Objective 1.2: Students will articulate how the basic content of the Catholic faith relates to that found in other Christian and non-Christian traditions.

Objective 2.1: Students will demonstrate the theological basis for the promotion of justice and solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

Goal 2: Students will understand the implications of religious belief for moral decision making and ethical action in the world;

Goal 3: Students will be able to examine theological and religious traditions from a critical distance;

Objective 3.1: Students will analyze biblical, creedal, liturgical, and theological texts according to their particular literary genres and historical contexts.

Goal 4: Students will appreciate the diversity of method, content, and history that exists within the contemporary academic disciplines of Theology and Religious Studies

Objective 4.1: Students will utilize effective methods of research and argumentation within the multidisciplinary context of the academic study of theology and religion.

The traditional undergraduate programs include 40 courses distributed across three components: A General Education component divided into Signature Courses, Variable Courses, and an Integrative Learning requirement; a Major and Divisional component; and Free Electives. In addition to course requirements as specified in each area, students must complete one certified course in each of the following overlay areas:

1. Diversity, Globalization or Non-western Area Studies,
2. Ethics Intensive, and
3. Writing Intensive. Overlay requirements are part of the forty-course requirement.

General Education Signature Courses

See this page about Signature courses (https://academiccatalog.sju.edu/curricula/#signature). Six courses

General Education Variable Courses

See this page about Variable courses (https://academiccatalog.sju.edu/curricula/#variable). Six to Nine courses

General Education Overlays

See this page about Overlays (https://academiccatalog.sju.edu/curricula/#overlay).

Eight Variable Core courses, three integrative learning courses and three overlay requirements. These latter may or may not require students to take an additional course.

General Education Integrative Learning Component

See this page about Integrative Learning Component (https://academiccatalog.sju.edu/curricula/#integrative-learning). Three courses

Any three complementary courses in the College of Arts and Sciences in departments other than Theology and Religious Studies. Students have considerable flexibility in choosing these courses. Students must choose three courses from the following categories, with no more than 2 from any single category:

1. Any additional approved Faith and Reason course.
2. Any approved Diversity, Globalization, or Area Studies course.
3. Any approved Ethics Intensive course.
4. Any approved Faith-Justice course.
5. Any related Historical course.
6. Any related Social Science course.
7. Any related Humanities course.

Students should consult with their advisors to determine what courses are best suited to their own interests in Religious Studies when choosing the courses needed to satisfy the integrated learning requirement.

**GEP Non-Native Language**

No foreign language unique to the department is required. But it is recommended that students consult with their advisors to fulfill the GEP non-native language requirement with a language relevant to their religious or theological interest.

**GEP Electives**

Any 14-17 courses

**Major Distribution**

Ten courses distributed as described below. At least eight must be at the 200-level or above. GEP courses will be used to partially satisfy the major concentration. (For examples of specific courses in each area, see the department web site at http://www.sju.edu/int/academics/cas/theology/index.html.)

1. Faith, Justice and the Catholic Tradition, Signature Core in the GEP
2. Bible, any one course
3. History of Christianity, any one course or Systematic Theology, any one course
4. Ethics, any one course
5. THE Course, any two additional courses
6. Non-Christian Religions: two courses (including Variable Core GEP Religious Difference Course). The two courses in this area must not cover the same religious tradition.
7. REL 395 Approaches to the Study of Religion or THE 495 Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion
8. Theology Elective: Any one course in THE or REL at the 200 level or above. No one course may be counted more than once for the purposes of the overall student distribution within the major but because of the complexity of content, some courses could be chosen to fulfill the requirements of one of several distributional categories.
9. Students must consult with their advisors or the department chair to determine the best distribution of a selected course relative to their own interests and needs. Graduating seniors must demonstrate that they have completed at least one significant research paper in theology or religious studies.

**Student Organizations**

The Department sponsors a chapter of Theta Alpha Kappa, the national honor society for theology and religious studies. Students also participate in the activities of Campus Ministry and the post-graduate volunteer service programs. Faculty members advise students and alumni on career opportunities, job placements, and on professional and graduate school programs.

**Related Programs**

Theology majors are eligible to participate in such related programs as Africana Studies, Ancient Studies, Faith-Justice Studies, Gender Studies, Interdisciplinary Health Care Ethics, Latin American Studies, and Medieval-Renaissance-Reformation Studies. Study Abroad programs are also available to them. Further information may be found in the pertinent sections of this Catalog.