The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, ¶ 25*

The Theology Department offers an integrated and sequential approach to faith development. A thorough understanding of Sacred Scripture is the foundation upon which all other theological inquiry is built.

Each grade level also provides a forum where students can engage in guided classroom discussions involving their personal growth and development. Identity, healthy relationships, communication skills, human sexuality, drug/alcohol use and abuse, and the quest for spiritual integrity are issues which surface and are dealt with throughout this four-year course of study.

Please note: There is mobility among College Prep, Honors, and IB Levels based on teacher and/or department recommendations.

Term Electives: Love and Evil, Christian Spirituality, Atom and Eve, MARVELous Justice, and Death & Dying
Theology has been described as “faith seeking understanding,” and this course begins the first steps of that journey. Because students arrive at MPS from various grade school experiences, many without a background in theological studies, we begin with an introduction to both philosophy and theology itself. We look at the major questions to which all human beings seek answers. Students are introduced to the elements of the Mercy charism, so important to the Sisters of Mercy whose vision animates our school. And then the Bible becomes our main text and focus of inquiry. The power and beauty of God’s word leads us into the mysteries of both the Old and New Testaments. We look to discover God’s plan of salvation and his love for humanity made manifest by Christ in his Paschal Mystery. Prayer, reflection, and the application of biblical principles to student life are encouraged. Hopefully, the student leaves this course prepared for further theological study and more ready to spiritually engage the challenges of life. This course follows Core Curriculum I. The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture and Option A: Sacred Scripture from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age.

INTRO TO THEOLOGY – COLLEGE PREP
#0020 Freshman, Sophomore, Junior 1.00 credit Yearlong

This class is designed for international students who have had little or no exposure to Christianity. We use the Bible as our principal text and learn the stories of the people of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and of the Christian Scriptures (New Testament). We will attempt to discover why the Bible is called sacred literature and why it has had such a profound influence on the lives of so many people. Studying the Bible will help us to know better the God who is revealed in the story of salvation, especially emphasizing the person of Jesus Christ. In addition to this, attention will be given to life skills and character building with a focus on the Charism of Mercy instituted by Catherine McAuley, the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy. The process of discovery in this course will be based on experiential learning techniques such as journal writing, learning teams, prayer, projects, use of technology, and activities that develop awareness of our responsibilities to God, self, and others.

CATHOLIC TRADITION – COLLEGE PREP
#0003 Sophomore 1.00 credit Yearlong

The purpose of this course is to help students understand that in and through the Church they encounter the living Jesus Christ. They will be introduced to the fact that the Church was founded by Christ through the Apostles and is sustained by him through the Holy Spirit. The students will come to know that the Church is the living Body of Christ today. This Body has both divine and human elements. In this course, students will learn not so much about events in the life of the Church but about the sacred nature of the Church. Finally, this course is to introduce students to the Church’s social teaching. Students are to learn how Christ’s concern for others, especially the poor and needy, is present today in the Church’s social teaching and mission. As a Mercy school, we will focus on the Sisters’ Critical Concerns: women, nonviolence, responding to racism, the environment, and immigration.

This course follows Core Curriculum IV. Jesus Christ’s Mission Continues in the Church, V. Sacraments as Privileged Encounters with Jesus Christ, and Elective Option C. Living as a Disciple of Jesus Christ in Society from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age.

JUNIOR THEOLOGY

CHRISTIAN ETHICS – COLLEGE PREP
#0007 Junior, Senior 1.00 credit Yearlong

Have you been faced with some serious consequences in your life because you neglected to make a good moral decision? This class will assist you in mastering the process of making sound moral decisions. The method employed in the course's decision-making process is critical reflection centered on Christian moral values. Students will delve into some possible future life decisions by means of small group and class discussions, as well as individual reflection. Students will be encouraged to search for personal answers to such questions as use and abuse of alcohol, premarital sex, the right to live and the right to die, and a host of equally critical contemporary ethical conflicts. There will be an extensive unit on beginning and end of life issues. Throughout this course of study the process is one of discovery; the end sought is moral commitment, which leads from awareness to action.

This course follows Core Curriculum VI. Life in Jesus Christ from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age.
CHRISTIAN ETHICS – HONORS
#0008    Junior, Senior  1.00 credit Yearlong
Prerequisite: Junior English IB or Honors and teacher recommendation

The purpose of this course is to help students understand that it is only through Christ that they can fully live out God’s plans for their lives. Students are to learn the moral concepts and precepts that govern the lives of Christ’s disciples. Students will engage complex issues, often taken straight from contemporary news headlines, addressing topics of our day with the timeless truth of Christ and his Church.

This course follows Core Curriculum VI. Life in Jesus Christ from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age.*

PEER LEADERSHIP – COLLEGE PREP
#0009    Junior  1.00 credit Yearlong
Prerequisite: Application process second term of sophomore year

The Peer Leadership student has been selected to participate in the class and is presumed to be in and/or moving toward an active role of leadership whether in the academic, athletic, social, or parish realms. As the student matures, this course aims to equip the individual with greater understanding and better technique for leadership at Mercyhurst Preparatory School and beyond.

The course depends on various student experiences while affording a variety of possibilities to implement the learned peer facilitator skills in practical ways. The Peer Leadership course will concentrate on four aims:

1. **Understanding self**: We will look at the students’ own growth and stages of development and their giftedness. What is hereditary, innate, and developed?
2. **Relating to others**: We will concentrate on skills in group dynamics, listening, communication, confrontation, and intervention.
3. **Nonviolent conflict resolution**: Rooted in the Gospel and the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy, we will explore nonviolent methods of resolving conflict on personal, social, and institutional levels.
4. **Responding to God**: We will grow in the understanding that our faith is the living out of our daily life in a Christian way. We are all part of the shared ministry of helping one another.

Several members of the peer leadership class will serve the school as peer mediators during their senior year. Faculty members and the administration will monitor the peer mediation process.

SENIOR THEOLOGY

SENIOR RELIGION SEMINAR - COLLEGE PREP
#0013      Senior  1.00 credit Yearlong
The purpose of this course is to help students to understand the vocations of life: how Christ calls us to live. In this course, students will learn how all vocations are similar and how they differ. The course is structured around married life, single life, priestly life, and consecrated life. Students will learn what it means to live life for the benefit of others and the value in considering a vocation in service to the Christian community. The course concludes with Death and Dying in Term III (see description below.)

This course follows Option D: Responding to the Call of Jesus Christ from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age.*

DEATH AND DYING - COLLEGE PREP
#0507      Senior  .33 credits Term course
This course will focus on the realities of death and the dying process. It will also examine the grieving process as it applies to all forms of human loss. Through lectures, group discussions, guest speakers, video presentations and field trips, the students will examine the practical, philosophical and theological aspects of death in our time and in our culture and cultures from the past. Final emphasis will be placed on the hope fostered by the Christian belief in resurrection.
RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD – HONORS/IB STANDARD LEVEL
#0012 Senior 1.00 credit Yearlong
Prerequisite: Teacher recommendation

Are you curious, focused, intelligent, and an in-depth learner? Would you like to explore five of the world’s religions in a way that will help you better understand other cultures and world views? Would you like to expand your own world view? Then Religions of the World-IB is one vehicle through which you can do just that! Religions of the World-IB will explore the origin and development of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Taoism, and Christianity, with particular in-depth emphasis on Buddhism and Judaism. During the course of the year you will enjoy movies, scriptures, articles, speakers, and field trips to holy places that will challenge your mind and your present knowledge of the said religions. IB students will be required to research and write a 1500-1800 word Investigative Study and will sit for a two-part final exam in May. The course directly corresponds to the IB syllabus, but daily connections are made to Option E: Ecumenical and Interreligious Issues from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age.

THEOLOGY ELECTIVES

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY – COLLEGE PREP
#0521 Sophomore, Junior, Senior .33 credits Term course
Prerequisite: Sacred Scripture

You’re accustomed to learning about God in Theology class. Have you ever wanted to experience God? This course will help you to come to or deepen a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We will survey the breadth of Christian tradition, exploring the many dimensions of prayer that have nourished us over the centuries - from the love feasts of the earliest followers of the Way, to monks and medieval mystics, to the devotional and liturgical prayers of the modern Church. We will pray together the Liturgy of the Hours, explore the Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet, as well as delve into meditation and contemplative prayer.

ATOM & EVE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY LOOK AT THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE – COLLEGE PREP
#4121 Junior, Senior .33 credit Term course

From the very first pages of Genesis, we see that God has charged humanity with being stewards of creation. Drawing deeply from both the theological and scientific disciplines we will explore exactly what that means. What is our role in creation? How do we live in our world in a way that is as sustainable as it is holy? This course will explore the ways we can answer those questions and many others as we look how best to embrace and honor God’s call.

LOVE AND EVIL – COLLEGE PREP
#0527 Junior, Senior .33 credits Term course

From its inception, religion has attempted to help humanity connect with the divine and, in so doing, address the most pressing questions of existence. Chief among those questions are the nature of love and the problems of evil and suffering. Utilizing a broad approach, reaching though history, this course will explore the answers humanity has offered to these questions through theology, art, and philosophy. All avenues of human thought and expression - from Scripture and St. Augustine to Shakespeare and The Beatles - will be considered.

MARVELous JUSTICE: EXPLORING THE CRITICAL CONCERNS WITH A COMIC BOOK LENS-COLLEGE PREP
#0533 Sophomore, Junior, Senior .33 credits Term course

In an age when comic book characters continue to fill more of our cultural landscape – from the comics to movies to TV shows to cartoons to novels – this course will utilize them to explore the Sisters of Mercy’s Critical Concerns. Close readings of the comic books themselves as well as comic book films and TV shows will provide the lens through which we will discuss the Earth, Immigration, Nonviolence, Racism, and Women. As we examine the works we will consider whether or not characters like Squirrel Girl and Spider-Man can do more than entertain us. Can they in fact challenge us to make our world more just?