

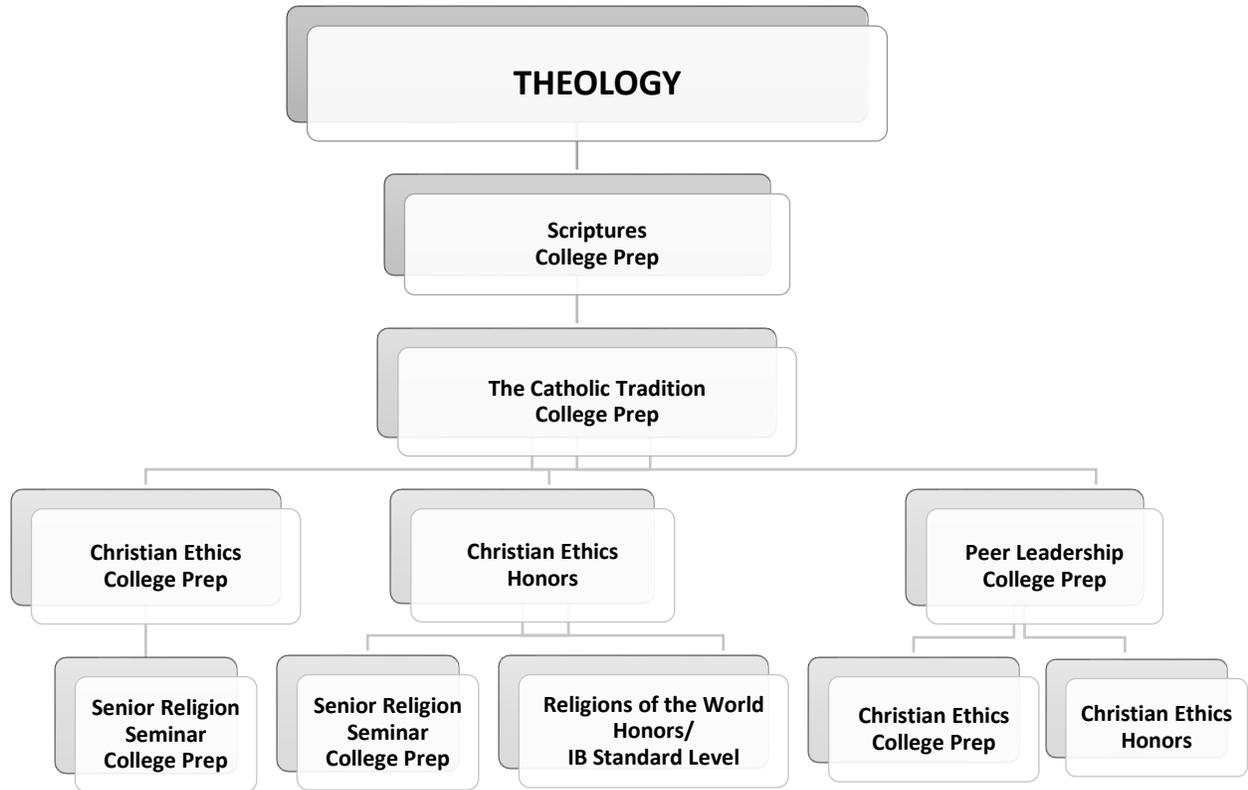
THEOLOGY

I planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.
1 Cor 3:6

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

Opportunities for daily prayer, written reflection, sacramental experience, liturgical celebration, and community service are offered as ways of validating through experience what is learned in the classroom.

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, chemical 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, Christianity in Popular Culture, Christian Spirituality, Gospel Nonviolence, Atom and Eve, Single or Married Life, Holy Orders and the Consecrated Religious Life, Death & Dying

SCRIPTURES – COLLEGE PREP

#0001

Freshman

1.00 credit

Yearlong

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.

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.

THE CATHOLIC TRADITION – COLLEGE PREP

#0003

Sophomore

1.00 credit

Yearlong

We need ... to ensure that every Catholic understands how the Gospel and church teaching call us to choose life, to serve the least among us, to hunger and thirst for justice, and to be peacemakers. The sharing of our social traditions is a defining measure of Catholic education and formation (U.S. Catholic Bishops, Sharing Catholic Social Teaching).

In the beginning...we learned how to help others. Take a peek into the past to discover the answers to how we are to embrace those less fortunate than us. Don't just talk about making a difference, make one!

Sophomore year theology class will focus primarily on the history of the Church after the resurrection of Jesus and will flow from the student's understanding of the Acts of the Apostles. It will take seriously the role that Tradition has played in the development of the Church from its infancy to modern day. Some major themes to be addressed are the New Testament Church, the early Church Fathers and the early Church Councils, the study of Jesus the Christ (Christology), Constantine and the growth of Christianity, Monasticism, the Schism between East and West, the Papacy and its role, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, the Missions, the Enlightenment, with particular attention paid to Vatican II.

Based upon the components of Catholic social teachings and the Sisters of Mercy Critical Concerns, this course also calls the students to assess their culture according to the criterion of justice and to move toward a posture of compassion that will lead each to work toward a just society.

Seven themes of Catholic social teaching permeate this course of study: the dignity of the human person, the call to participation in the life of the community, rights and responsibilities of the individual, the preferential option for the poor, the dignity of work and the worker, the solidarity needed within the global community, and accountability for the care of God's creation. This course is ultimately meant to stimulate faith in action and enhance the modern Church as it is understood in light of Vatican II.

The Five Critical Concerns-non-violence, racism, ecology and the fundamental right to water, equality for women, dignity of immigrants-will be explored in depth during this course.

This course will also take an in-depth exploration into the seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church by unearthing the scriptural references, the symbols and the theology of each sacrament.

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.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS – HONORS

#0008 Junior, Senior 1.00 credit Yearlong

Prerequisite: Junior English IB or Honors and teacher recommendation

Who am I? Who do I want to be? Who am I supposed to be? Who says?
All of these questions and many more will be substantially explored in this year-long course.

The method employed in the course's decision-making process is critical reflection centered on Christian moral values. Strong conversations make up a majority of the class time. Students will be encouraged to search for personal answers in light of the gospel values to such questions as life, peace, sexuality, and a host of equally critical contemporary moral conflicts. There will be an extended essay entitled My Search for Meaning. Throughout this course of study the process is one of discovery; the end sought is moral commitment that leads from awareness to action. Required reading for this honors level course includes, but is not limited to, three works of fiction.

PEER LEADERSHIP – COLLEGE PREP

#0009 Junior 1.00 credit Yearlong

Prerequisite: Application process second term of sophomore year

The vision of this course is to prepare an active team of peers to serve the Mercyhurst Prep student community. All students involved in this course will become competent in the areas of active listening, empathy, confrontation, and problem solving. All will learn the skills involved in crisis prevention, intervention, and/or post-intervention. The skills developed within this course structure are both intrapersonal (knowledge of self) and interpersonal (knowledge of others).

As an added component of the course, the students will learn mediation skills and will have the opportunity to formally assist students that are experiencing conflicts. 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

Students may choose to study one, two, or three terms of this course. A three-term study would constitute a yearlong Theology course. Term I focuses on single and married life, term II will explore holy orders and religious life and term III will discuss death and dying. For more details on each term component, please see the course description below. Students who sign up for this yearlong course should not also request one of the term components as an elective.

Term Components of SENIOR RELIGION SEMINAR (#0523, #0525, #0507)

SINGLE OR MARRIED LIFE-COLLEGE PREP

#0523 Senior .33 credits Term course

Vocations, or God's individual call to us will be explored in the call to the committed single life and also in the Sacrament of Marriage. The single lay state of life can be a uniquely graced position from which one may be called and so choose to live their lives in service to Christ and others. In Marriage as a chosen vocation, students will be able to deepen their understanding of the sacred covenant of marriage. This sacrament is a sign and symbol of God's covenant with his people and promotes the salvation of family members. In this unit, we will create a mock marriage ceremony in the context of the Sacrament of Matrimony, with a particular focus on the sacredness of a covenant made. This unit will culminate with a festive celebration.

HOLY ORDERS AND THE CONSECRATED RELIGIOUS LIFE-COLLEGE PREP

#0525 Senior .33 credits Term course

In this course, we will explore the special vocations of Holy Orders and the Consecrated Religious Life. Through the vocation of Holy Orders, those who are called receive the authority to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. As well, the students will reflect on the unique role of various forms of consecrated life in the Church and how we all have the responsibility to support our brothers and sisters who have given their lives in service to Jesus Christ and His Church. In addition to text and lectures, students will gain knowledge of these vocations by means of guest speakers, video presentations and field trips.

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.

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 centering 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.

STAR WARS AND CONTEMPORARY MYTH – COLLEGE PREP

#0529

Sophomore, Junior, Senior

.33 credits

Term course

Using a complex, interdisciplinary approach, this team-taught course will explore George Lucas' seminal film series for its mythic relevance in culture, both of the 1970's and today. Drawing on the works of Joseph Campbell and the theologies of all the enduring religions, Lucas created a film, intentionally rich in theology. We will watch the film, examples from The Clone Wars and Rebels, investigate excerpts from novels and comics, and read Campbell's classic works *The Hero's Journey*, *The Power of Myth*, alongside Mike Klimo's "Star Wars and Ring Theory." Lastly, we'll invest the enhancement of myth and legend through thematic musical motifs and their ability to tell a story in and of themselves. Drawing deeply from the academic areas of theology, mythology, literary analysis, poetry, and musical scoring, we will see just how much goes into creating a galaxy far, far away.

GOSPEL NONVIOLENCE – COLLEGE PREP

#0531

Junior, Senior

.33 credits

Term course

In his message for the 2017 World Day of Peace, Pope Francis wrote “To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence.” This course will explore nonviolence as both “a style of politics for peace” (Pope Francis) and “a way of life for courageous people” (Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.). Rooted in scripture, the witness of the early church, and the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy, students will study the principles of nonviolence successfully implemented by a host of social movements during the 20th and 21st centuries. Each class day will be highly interactive as students discuss readings and films and develop their skills through role plays.