

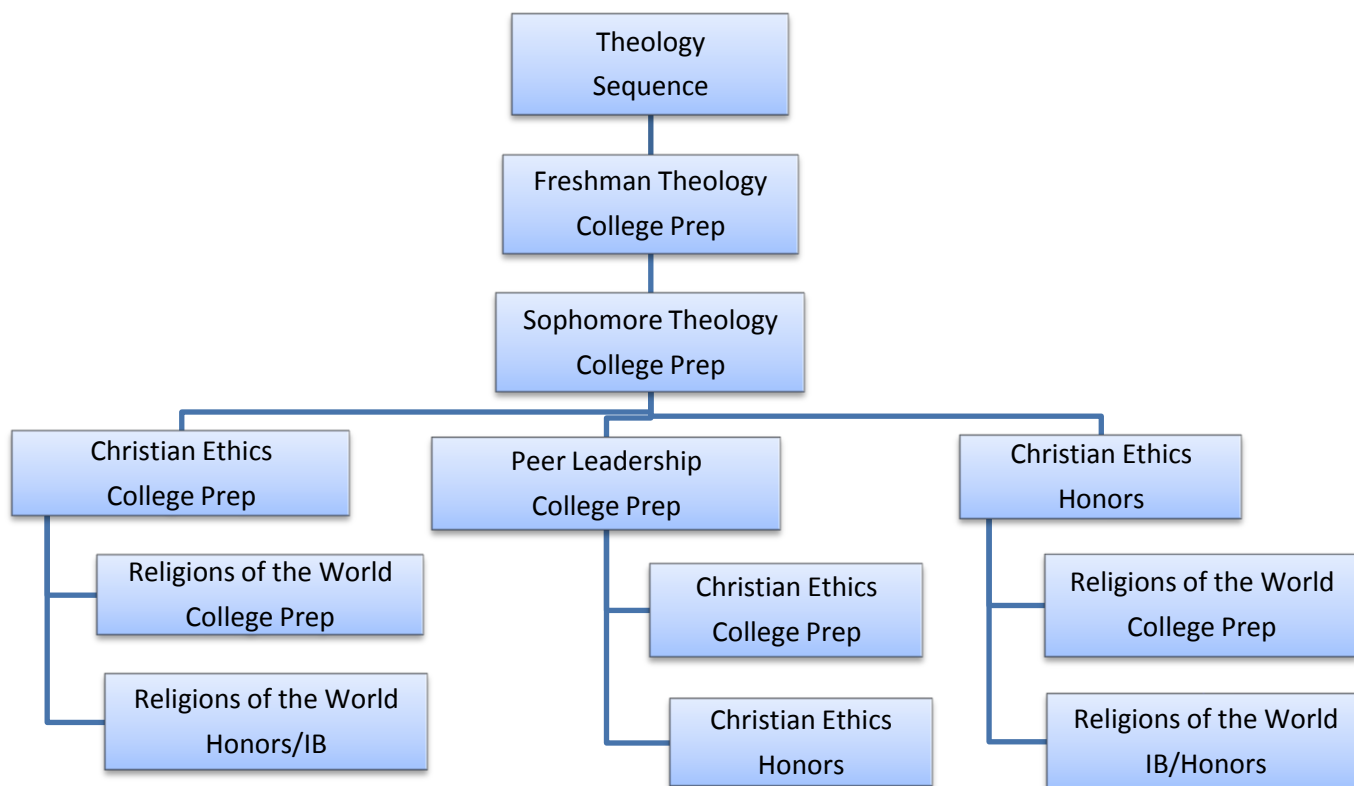
# THEOLOGY

*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. The search for 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 between the College Prep, Honors, and IB Levels based on teacher and/or department recommendations

## **FRESHMAN THEOLOGY (Sacred Scripture and Christology) – COLLEGE PREP**

#0001

Freshman

1.00 credit

Yearlong

The Bible! Is it fact or fiction? How can we find out? As freshmen we can 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. An extensive unit on the study of Jesus the Christ (Christology) will be introduced during this year. In addition to this, attention will be given to life skills and character building, in particular the Charism of Mercy instituted by Catherine McCauley, 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.

## **SOPHOMORE THEOLOGY (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 how the Church began 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 models of the church, the New Testament Church, the early Church Fathers and the early Church Councils, 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, 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 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.

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

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 classroom cheating, premarital sex, the right to live and the right to die, and a host of equally critical contemporary moral conflicts. There will be an extensive unit on Christian lifestyles, including the single life, the religious life, the ordained life and the married life as well as an extended essay entitled A Testimony to My Uniqueness. Throughout this course of study the process is one of discovery; the end sought is moral commitment that leads from awareness to action.

Every fifth meeting of this course will be spent working at an inner city grade school with students in the primary grades. The purpose of this field experience is to move the students outside their "comfort zones" and activate the ethical maxim: if you want to be good, you must do good. Required reading for this honors level course includes, but is not limited to, four 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 peer ministers to serve the Mercyhurst Prep student community. Some of the juniors who complete this course will be invited to help their fellow students during their senior year. 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. Several faculty members and the administration will monitor the peer mediation process.

## **SENIOR THEOLOGY**

### **RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD – COLLEGE PREP**

#0011

Senior

1.00 credit

Yearlong

What is our human nature? Are we just physical bodies that happen to be able to think and feel? Or do we have some deeper essence, some form of a soul? Why in some instances do humans suffer? What happens to us upon our last breath? These questions are not unique. In fact every religion in the world tries to offer an answer to these fundamental questions. In addition to exploring how various religions try to come to terms with these matters, students get to explore fascinating topics in many of the world's most popular faiths. Hinduism teaches that humans can achieve infinite being, awareness, and bliss. Buddhism speaks of avoidance of both sensual indulgence and asceticism. Judaism is built upon a historic Covenant with God. Christianity states that through one sacrificial death and resurrection, all human sin is overcome. Islam, the fastest growing religion in the world, was founded on the shoulders of a reluctant prophet. If you wish to answer and learn more about these questions and topics and delve more deeply into religious conflicts in our world, then this is the course for you.

*Religions of the World* is one vehicle through which students can broaden their understanding of other people. A person's religious orientation is a significant factor in shaping his/her perceptions of reality, goals, values, motivation, hopes, and fears. Religions of the World will explore the origin and development of religious awareness across cultures and through time. Students will examine and reflect on the multiplicity of humankind's responses to the mystery of life at both the communal and personal levels. The course is an opportunity for students to examine their own beliefs and to view them within the context of the responses offered by other traditions. Particular attention will be placed on the seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church when Catholic Christianity is studied. This will provide an in-depth view into this religion.

## **RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD – IB/HONORS**

#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, Taoism, and Christianity, with particular in-depth emphasis on Buddhism and Judaism. Particular attention will be placed on the seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church when Catholic Christianity is studied. 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 explore through a 1500-1800 word Investigative Study and will sit for two final exams at the end of the course. Those who take this course for Honors will also be required to take the 2 hour exam.

## **THEOLOGY ELECTIVES**

### **THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGIOUS PERSONHOOD-COLLEGE PREP**

#0501

Junior, Senior

1.00 credit

Yearlong

This course may be taken as a yearlong course or as three separate term courses. Taking all three terms would cause the course to be considered a yearlong Theology elective. One term will be Religious Person, one term will be Spiritual Communication, and one term will be Death and Dying.

### **THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGIOUS PERSONHOOD (BY TERMS) (#0503, #0505, #0507)**

#### **RELIGIOUS PERSON-COLLEGE PREP**

#0503

Junior, Senior

.33 credits

Term course

Each of us, in one way or another, asks questions about fulfillment, Ultimate Meaning, and who it is that we wish to become. There is in all of us, a certain hunger for something beyond ourselves. This term course considers what it means to be human, what it means to possess personhood, and what "ultimate" questions people have asked themselves down through the centuries. Attached to this is an explication of how it is that believers wrestle with the God question and how it is that we can come to understand the Divine Reality in our lives.

#### **SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATION: "IS ANYBODY LISTENING?"-COLLEGE PREP**

#0505

Junior, Senior

.33 credits

Term course

This course explores the how and the why of Christian prayer today. Areas to be explored will include finding God through contemporary music, experiencing God through the beauty of creation, reaching God through relaxation and meditation techniques, approaching God through devotional prayer, and determining appropriate prayer styles through an analysis of personality types. Students will be expected to keep a prayer journal and to be open to visiting diverse places of worship within the Erie area in order to expand their understanding of the multiple approaches to their God.

#### **DEATH AND DYING-COLLEGE PREP**

#0507

Junior, 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.