

Course Outline of the Postgraduate Programme  
**“Religious Studies and Intercultural Research”**  
of the Department of Social Theology and Religious  
Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of  
Athens

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## **1st Specialization: History, Theology, and Institutions of Religions**

### **1st Semester:**

#### **1. Research Methodology and Academic Writing**

This postgraduate course of the School of Theology, Department of Social Theology and Religious Studies, introduces students to the principles and practice of scientific research and writing. It is a foundation course (general background), taught in Greek, with 30 teaching hours and 5 ECTS, delivered either face to face or by distance learning through the [eclass.uoa.gr](http://eclass.uoa.gr) platform. No prerequisites are required. The course familiarizes students with academic standards, research ethics and the correct documentation of sources. It trains them to locate, assess and use bibliographic and research material from printed and digital repositories, and to organize data in a way that supports reliable academic argumentation.

Upon successful completion, students are expected to be able to search for and compose autonomous academic papers, to adjust to new research demands, and to make systematic use of information technologies. They should be able to evaluate the requirements of their research field, to formulate research questions, and to produce well-argued, evidence-based texts. The course strengthens generic competences listed in the Diploma Supplement: analysis and synthesis of data, autonomous and group work, work in an interdisciplinary or international context, project planning, critical and self-critical ability, and promotion of creative thinking.

The content covers: the concept of academic research; stages of qualitative and quantitative research; formulation of a topic and objectives; literature review strategies; collection and management of data; evaluation of primary and secondary sources; citation styles; structure of an academic paper, dissertation or article; principles of academic integrity and avoidance of plagiarism. Attention is given to how to match research questions with suitable methods so that the final written work is both valid and persuasive.

Teaching is organized through lectures, seminars and guided assignments. Students attend 20 hours of lectures, 5 hours of seminar activity and prepare a short written assignment (5 hours of workload), corresponding to the 30 hours

of the course in the ECTS description. ICT is used for teaching and communication. Assessment is carried out in Greek and may include a written assignment, short-answer or essay-type questions, problem-solving tasks, oral examination or public presentation. The criteria and the form of assessment are made known in advance through the e-class.

**Indicative bibliography:** M. Sarrē, *How to Write a Scientific Paper*, Disigma 2023; Th. Zisis, *Scientific Technography*, Kyriakidis 1992; plus relevant journals.

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## **2. Biblical Theology and the Intercultural Life of the Mediterranean**

The course belongs to the same postgraduate programme and is also of general background (30 hours, 5 ECTS, taught in Greek). It examines biblical theology as a living tradition that was formed in continuous contact with the multicultural environment of the Mediterranean. Its aim is to help students understand the theological concepts of the Bible together with the social, political and cultural conditions that shaped communities around Athens, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Rome.

Learning outcomes include: ability to describe the main notions and historical development of biblical theology; recognition of the Mediterranean as a space of religious and cultural exchanges; competence in locating and using information relevant to the course; development of respect for diversity and intercultural coexistence; cultivation of critical thinking about contemporary challenges such as interreligious dialogue and peaceful cooperation. It also supports generic competences such as working in an international and interdisciplinary environment and producing new research ideas.

The syllabus covers: introduction to biblical theology; main theological themes of the Old and New Testament; historical interactions of Judaism, early Christianity, Hellenistic and Roman cultures; routes of exchange between major Mediterranean centres; social and cultural structures of Mediterranean societies; religion in daily life; and current perspectives on dialogue among the monotheistic traditions of the region. Modern issues of conflict, encounter, identity and hospitality are discussed in the light of the biblical witness.

Teaching is delivered face to face or online, using ICT for materials and communication. Organization includes lectures, seminars, study and analysis of bibliography, and preparation of a written task. Total student workload is 30 hours (20 lectures, 5 seminars, 5 assignments). Assessment may take the form of a written paper, multiple-choice test, short or long essay questions, oral examination or public presentation, with clear criteria accessible to students.

**Indicative bibliography:** S. Despotis, *The Holy Bible in the 21st Century*, vols. 1–2, Athos 2006, 2008; journal *Theologia*.

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### **3. Patristic Theology and Christian Anthropology**

This course offers a systematic approach to patristic theology from the 2nd century to the present, with special emphasis on the anthropological teaching of the Greek Fathers. It is a 5-ECTS, 30-hour course, taught in Greek, delivered in person or online. Its purpose is to clarify the notion of “Father” within the Church’s tradition and to trace the main milestones of patristic thought. Particular attention is paid to the classic patristic triads “God–World–Human” and “Mind–Word–Spirit,” which frame the Christian view of the human person.

After completing the course, students should be able to search creatively in patristic sources, to compare patristic anthropology with older or contemporary anthropological narratives, and to adjust their research to current theological questions. They also cultivate decision-making, autonomous work, respect for diversity, critical and self-critical ability, and creative reasoning.

Content units include: historical setting of patristic theology; major Fathers and their contribution; the human being as image and likeness of God; ecclesiology and society; history and eschatology in patristic perspective; dialogue of patristic anthropology with modern views on the person, freedom and community. The aim is to show how patristic theology can still inform present-day theological and social discourse.

Teaching methods: lectures, seminars, guided reading of patristic texts, analysis of secondary bibliography, and preparation of a short assignment. ICT is used for distribution of material and communication. Student workload follows the same 20–5–5 pattern (lectures–seminars–assignment). Assessment is done through written work or a final test (multiple choice, short answer, essay questions), oral exam, or public presentation, with announced criteria. **Indicative bibliography:** A. Glaros, *Anazitēsas eure*, Gutenberg 2019; journal *Theologia*.

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#### **4. Digital Methods of Analysis and Critical Edition of Biblical Manuscripts**

This 5-ECTS course focuses on the laboratory application of modern digital technologies to the study of biblical manuscripts. It introduces students to Digital Humanities and to the tools currently used for the imaging, analysis and digital editing of scrolls, codices and palimpsests. It is taught in Greek, either in person or online, via e-class.

Learning outcomes: understanding of the various dimensions of the handwritten biblical tradition from a religio-historical point of view; familiarity with digital imaging technologies; ability to apply digital methodologies to different types of manuscripts; capacity to design or contribute to digital critical editions; enhancement of skills in data search, analysis and synthesis with the use of ICT; work in interdisciplinary and international environments.

The course includes the following topics: introduction to digital technologies; overview of Digital Humanities methods; imaging and metadata standards for biblical material; techniques for analysing different manuscript types; issues in transcription and textual comparison; principles for preparing a digital critical edition; and examples of current research projects. Students are encouraged to connect the technological tools with the theological and historical questions that arise from the manuscripts themselves.

Teaching consists of lectures, seminars and practical/laboratory exercises. ICT is central, as students practise with digital tools and online repositories. Total



workload: 20 hours of lectures, 5 hours of seminars, 5 hours for a small project. Assessment may be through a laboratory assignment, written test with multiple-choice or short-answer questions, essay-type questions, oral examination or public presentation, always with transparent criteria shared on the platform.

**Indicative bibliography:** B. Carter, *Digital Humanities*, Emerald 2013.

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## **5. The Church of Greece as a Factor of Nation-Building and Cultural Identity**

This course studies the decisive part played by the Church of Greece in the formation of modern Greek national consciousness and in the shaping of collective cultural identity. It is a 30-hour, 5-ECTS course (Greek, face to face or online) and uses a clearly interdisciplinary approach, combining theology, history and social sciences.

Students who complete the course should be able to analyse the relationship between religious and cultural identity, to recognise the significance of ecclesiastical history for contemporary Greek society, and to search for data with digital tools. They will also be trained to interpret key historical moments — Ottoman period, 1821 Revolution, creation of the independent state, later institutional developments — in connection with the role of the Church.

The syllabus includes: theological and institutional features of the Church of Greece; the link between Orthodoxy and national narratives; the Church's contribution to education, charity, arts and social cohesion; the concept of ethno-religious identity; tensions and convergences between ecclesiastical and state authorities; and the impact of this relationship on present-day public life. Case studies from the 19th and 20th centuries help students see how the Church functioned as a cultural agent.

Teaching methods follow the usual pattern: lectures, seminars, analysis of sources and secondary literature, possible educational visits, and a short assignment. ICT is used for communication and material. Workload again totals 30 hours. Assessment may include written coursework, essay questions, oral exam or public presentation, with criteria made available to students.

**Indicative bibliography:** E. Karageorgoudi, *Ecclesiastical Figures of the 19th and 20th Century*, Barbounakis 2022; *Aspects of the National and Social Contribution of the Church*, Vanias 2013; journals *Theologia*, *Nea Sion*.

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## **6. Ancient Greek Religion and Philosophy**

The course offers a systematic presentation of the historical development of ancient Greek religious tradition and its connection with the rise of philosophical thinking. It is a 5-ECTS, 30-hour postgraduate course, taught in Greek, with the possibility of distance delivery. It is intended to show how questions about the divine moved from myth and cult to philosophical inquiry and how religion permeated social and political life.

Learning outcomes: ability to locate and study primary sources of ancient Greek literature; understanding of the two main forms of Greek religion (popular and intellectual); knowledge of cultic practices and their social function; familiarity with philosophical approaches to soul, becoming and decay; capacity to relate ancient material to current research; development of critical and creative thinking; respect for cultural diversity.

The content covers: historical overview of Greek religion; gods, rituals and festivals; religion and the polis; mystery cults; early philosophical reflections on the divine in the Presocratics; the shift from mythos to logos; conceptions of the soul in Plato and later thought; the intercultural dimension of Greek philosophy in contact with other Mediterranean traditions. The course makes clear that Greek religion was not isolated but interacted with wider cultural currents.

Teaching is organized through lectures, seminars, field-related study of texts, and preparation of a written task; ICT is used for teaching and communication. Total workload: 20 hours of lectures, 5 hours of seminars, 5 hours for the assignment. Assessment may be a written paper, multiple-choice or essay questions, oral examination or public presentation, with clearly stated criteria.

**Indicative bibliography:** K. Papalexiou, *Introduction to the Ontology of the Presocratics*, Zitros 2015; journals *Philosophia*, *Hellenic Philosophical Review*.



## **2nd Semester:**

### **7. Canon Law, History and Theology of the Ecumenical Councils**

This postgraduate course of the School of Theology, Department of Social Theology and Study of Religion, introduces students to the basic concepts and sources of Orthodox canon law and to the historical-theological role of the Ecumenical Councils. It is a general-background course, taught in Greek, offered in the 2nd semester, with 30 teaching hours and 5 ECTS, and may be taught either face to face or at a distance through e-class. No prerequisites are required.

The course first clarifies the terms “canon law” and “ecumenical council,” and explains how synods are classified in the Orthodox tradition: ecumenical and local (provincial, endemousa, major, perfect, pan-Orthodox). It then presents the sources from which the conciliar tradition draws: Holy Scripture, the canons of the Ecumenical and Local Councils, the canons of the Fathers, and the official acts and editions of the councils. Special attention is paid to the historical background in which each council met, to the development of synodality as a constitutive element of Church life, and to the theological logic that led to synodal definitions.

On completion, students should be able to locate and use conciliar sources, to recognise how canon law and conciliar theology are connected, and to form documented judgments about the doctrinal and administrative decisions of the councils. They will also strengthen generic competences such as data analysis, autonomous work, participation in interdisciplinary dialogue, respect for diversity, critical and self-critical thought, and project management.

The content includes: the emergence of the conciliar institution; the seven Ecumenical Councils and their doctrinal contribution (Trinitarian and Christological definitions); their canonical contribution (promulgation or ratification of canons on hierarchy, sacraments, discipline, relations among Churches); synodality and primacy; the ecclesiological and eschatological orientation of conciliar decisions; reception of conciliar canons in later Orthodox practice. The course shows that council decisions are at once juridical, pastoral and confessional.

Teaching is organised through lectures, seminars, guided study of canons and council acts, and use of ICT for material and communication. Total student workload: 20 hours of lectures, 5 hours of seminars, 5 hours of written work. Assessment in Greek may include written assignment, multiple-choice or short-answer test, essay questions, oral exam or public presentation; criteria are clearly announced on e-class.

**Indicative bibliography:** V. Feidas, *Ecclesiastical Law*, Apostoliki Diakonia, Athens 2021; journal *Theologia*.

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## **8. History, Institutions and Theology of Islam**

This 2nd-semester, 5-ECTS course offers a broad and at the same time structured introduction to Islam as a historical religion and a civilisation. It belongs to the general-background group, is taught in Greek, and consists of 30 teaching hours (lectures or exercises). It can be delivered in person or online. Its purpose is to familiarise postgraduate students of theology and religious studies with the origins of Islam, its sacred sources, its legal-theological schools and its social and cultural expressions.

The course traces the rise of Islam in 7th-century Arabia, the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the first community in Medina and the rapid expansion of Islam into Asia, Africa and Europe. It examines how different Muslim communities formed in the course of history and how their context shaped religious practice. Central institutions are analysed: the Qur'an and Sunna as primary sources, the Five Pillars as the groundwork of worship and community life, the development of Sharia, and the formation of the four main Sunni legal schools, as well as Shi'i traditions. The course also introduces Sufism and its role in spiritual, social and missionary life.

Learning outcomes include: ability to search and use reliable sources on Islamic history; understanding of the religious, political, social and economic institutions that shaped Islamic civilisation; capacity to assess interactions between religion and culture in Muslim societies; and readiness to form new research questions on Islam in relation to Christianity and contemporary intercultural issues. The course also cultivates respect for cultural and

religious diversity, work in international and interdisciplinary environments, and critical thinking.

Teaching is based on lectures, seminars, study and analysis of bibliography, and, where possible, small research tasks. ICT is used for teaching material and communication. Total workload is 30 hours (20 lectures, 5 seminars, 5 for assignment), in line with ECTS principles. Assessment may take the form of a written paper, multiple-choice or essay questions, oral examination or public presentation, with stated and accessible criteria.

**Indicative bibliography:** K. Nikolaou-Patrage, *Islam and Law*, Leimon 2020; L. Patsavella, *Islamic Law within International Criminal Justice*, Leimon 2022; journals *Theologia*, *Nomika Polyptycha*.

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## **9. Comparative Law of Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Sources and Marriage Law)**

This postgraduate course presents, in a comparative manner, the legal traditions of the three major monotheistic religions, with particular emphasis on the sources of their religious law and on the regulation of personality, marriage and family. It is a general-background, 5-ECTS course, taught in Greek in the 2nd semester, with 30 hours of teaching, delivered face to face or online.

The course first outlines the sources of Jewish halakhic law, Christian canon law and Islamic law: sacred texts, later codifications, decisions of religious authorities and interpretative traditions. It then compares the legal-technical and hermeneutical methods used in each tradition to interpret normative texts. The focus is on how Judaism, Christianity and Islam define marriage, consent, impediments, rights and duties of spouses, family protection and dissolution of marriage. Through this, students see similarities rooted in shared scriptural heritage, but also differences stemming from historical and theological developments.

The aim is for students to be able to identify convergences and divergences in the regulatory field of religion-based law, to understand how legal reasoning

is formed inside each tradition, and to use this understanding in contexts of interreligious dialogue, social counselling, migration policy, family mediation and public space management. The course shows that comparative knowledge of religious law is useful not only academically but also for diplomacy, international relations and peacebuilding.

Teaching includes lectures, seminars, analysis of primary legal texts, and guided bibliography study. ICT tools are used for distribution of material and communication. Student workload: 20 hours lectures, 5 hours seminars, 5 hours written work (total 30). Assessment is done through written assignment or final test (multiple choice, short-answer or essay questions), oral exam or presentation, with explicit criteria accessible to students.

**Indicative bibliography:** same basic legal-Islamic titles as above, supplemented by sources on Jewish and Christian canon law; journals *Theologia*, *Nomika Polyptycha*.

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## **10. History and Theology of Eastern Religions**

This course offers a systematic and well-organised introduction to the genesis, historical development and main doctrinal ideas of the major Eastern religious traditions. It is a 5-ECTS, 30-hour, general-background course of the 2nd semester, taught in Greek and supported by e-class. It can be attended in person or online. No prerequisites are required.

The course surveys the origins and evolution of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Shinto. For each tradition it presents: historical setting, founding figures or texts, worldview, concept of the divine or ultimate reality, understanding of the human person, paths of liberation or perfection, ritual life and social impact. It demonstrates how these religions shaped the civilisations of South and East Asia and how they interacted with one another.

Learning outcomes: students will gain structured knowledge of Eastern religions; they will be able to compare religious concepts (karma, dharma, nirvana, dao, li) and to relate them to wider cultural patterns; they will be

trained to search for and evaluate sources using modern technologies; and they will be able to formulate research topics in the field of comparative religion and intercultural education. The course also promotes respect for pluralism, work in international and interdisciplinary settings, and critical and creative reflection.

Teaching organisation follows the standard pattern of the programme: lectures, seminars, study and analysis of bibliography, and preparation of a small assignment; ICT is used throughout. Total workload: 20 lecture hours, 5 seminar hours, 5 hours for the assignment. Assessment may include written work, multiple-choice or essay test, oral exam or public presentation, always with published criteria.

**Indicative bibliography:** St. Papalexandropoulos, *Essays in History of Religions*, Hellenika Grammata 1997; journal *Theologia*.

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## **11. Christian Theological Literature and the Arab–Islamic World**

This course examines the long and often underestimated Christian presence within the Arab–Islamic world and the theological, literary and dialogical texts that this presence produced. It is a general-background postgraduate course (30 hours, 5 ECTS), taught in Greek in the 2nd semester, and may be delivered face to face or online.

The course presents the Christian communities of the Middle East (Copts, Syrians, Assyrians, Melkites and others) before and after the rise of Islam, highlighting their continuous witness within Islamic rule. It studies Christian Arabic theological writings that address Islam, explain Christian doctrine in an Islamic environment, or respond to Muslim critiques. It also examines texts that reflect mutual perceptions and debates between Christians and Muslims on topics such as God's unity, Christology, revelation, prophecy and law. The historical and geographical development of the region is related to the position of these communities within the Arab polity.

By the end, students should know the main sources of Christian Arabic literature, recognise patterns of Christian–Muslim theological dialogue, and be



able to use primary and secondary material to form research questions on coexistence, religious identity and cultural exchange. They will also develop competences in autonomous and group work, adaptation to new contexts, and respect for multicultural environments.

Teaching methods: lectures, seminars, text analysis, guided bibliography study, possibly small projects; ICT supports teaching and communication.

Workload: 20 hours lectures, 5 seminars, 5 assignment (total 30). Assessment is by written work, test, oral exam or presentation, with clear criteria available on e-class.

**Indicative bibliography:** S. Despotis – D. Athanasiou, *Christianity and Islam*, EKPA 2022; journal *Theologia*.

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## **12. Dogmatic and Symbolic Monuments of Religious Traditions**

This 5-ECTS course focuses on the key confessional, doctrinal and symbolic texts through which the major religious traditions articulated and safeguarded their faith. It is taught in Greek in the 2nd semester (30 hours) and can be delivered in person or through distance methods. It belongs to the general-background courses of the programme.

The course has a twofold aim. First, to study systematically the theological content of the dogmatic and symbolic monuments of Christianity (ecumenical creeds, confessions, catechisms, synodical documents). Second, to explore historically the circumstances that led to their composition and to view them within the wider literary corpus of Judaism, Islam and the Eastern religions, where fundamental beliefs are likewise codified and transmitted. In this way students see how religions stabilise their teaching, respond to doctrinal challenges and hand down orthodoxy.

Learning outcomes: students will be able to identify and interpret major Christian doctrinal texts; to compare them with parallel formulations in Judaism (e.g. Maimonides' principles) and Islam (articles of faith); to locate and use sources with digital tools; and to produce research ideas on authority, tradition and confessionality. The course also strengthens abilities in decision-

making, working in interdisciplinary teams, and exercising critical and self-critical judgment.

Content includes: nature and function of dogma; creeds and confessions in Church history; symbolic books and their audience; doctrinal elements in the sacred books of Judaism and Islam; traces of doctrinal codification in Eastern religions; historical factors (controversies, schisms, cultural contacts) that triggered the drafting of such texts. The course shows that symbolic monuments are at once theological documents and cultural artefacts.

Teaching organisation: lectures, seminars, guided analysis of texts, study of bibliography, possibly small projects; ICT used for material and communication. Total workload: 20 lecture hours, 5 seminar hours, 5 hours for written work. Assessment: written assignment or final test (multiple choice, short-answer, essay), oral exam or public presentation, with explicit criteria accessible to students.

**Indicative bibliography:** K. Katerelou, *Christianity and Religions*, Diadrasi 2021; journal *Theologia*.

## **2nd Specialization: Religious Culture and Intercultural Education**

### **1st Semester:**

#### **1. Research Methodology and Academic Writing**

This course introduces students to the theory and practice of academic research and writing, with particular reference to the fields of theology, religious studies and intercultural education. It begins with an explanation of what constitutes scientific research, what distinguishes academic from non-academic writing, and how research questions are formulated in a rigorous way. Emphasis is placed on academic principles and academic ethics: correct use of sources, avoidance of plagiarism, respect for intellectual property, and transparency of method.

Students are guided through the main stages of a research project: defining the topic, setting goals, conducting a literature review, selecting and evaluating sources (printed, archival and digital), collecting and recording data, and choosing the appropriate method for processing them. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are presented, with an analysis of their logic, advantages and limitations, and examples from the humanities and social sciences applied to religion. Special attention is given to modern techniques of bibliographical research using digital databases and information technologies.

A central aim of the course is to help students design a well-structured research plan that can lead to a reliable and well-documented piece of academic writing (seminar paper, conference paper, postgraduate dissertation). For this reason, the course also examines issues of structure (introduction, methodological part, analysis, conclusions), of argumentation and critical discussion of the literature, of correct use of footnotes and bibliographical references according to internationally accepted systems, and of academic style in Greek.

By the end of the course, students will be able to: search for and collect the necessary material for an academic paper; evaluate sources as to their

scientific reliability; choose the appropriate research method for their topic; organize and present their findings in a coherent academic text; and adapt their work to the demands of new research conditions. The course cultivates general skills such as analysis and synthesis of information, autonomous work, use of ICT in research, critical and self-critical thinking, and the generation of new research ideas.

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## **2. Communicative Theology**

This course explores how Orthodox theology can speak meaningfully and convincingly in today's world, in dialogue with contemporary sciences and cultural forms. Starting from the content of Orthodox dogmatic teaching, it investigates its points of contact with philosophy, psychology, mass media, contemporary culture and even cinema. The guiding idea is that theology is not a closed system of truths but a living word that can be communicated, interpreted and embodied in different cultural environments.

A key axis of the course is the notion of being as “communion of love,” as it is revealed in the Trinitarian and Christological teaching of the Church. Against individualistic and purely psychological models of communication, the course shows how the ecclesial understanding of communion can transform human communication from a simple exchange of messages into an ontological encounter of persons. On this basis, students examine how theological discourse can overcome alienation, fragmentation and the loneliness of late modernity.

The course also analyzes the influence of mass media and cultural production on religious consciousness: how images, narratives, series, films and social media shape people's perceptions of God, Church and religion; and how theology can respond not defensively but creatively, using contemporary cultural codes. The relationship of theology with psychology is likewise discussed, especially where psychological language replaces or narrows spiritual experience; the course proposes criteria for a theological discernment of such phenomena.

Through these thematic units, students learn to read contemporary culture theologically, to recognize in it possibilities for dialogue and evangelic presence, and to formulate theological speech that is understandable to the modern person. Upon completion, they will be able to relate Orthodox doctrine to current scientific and cultural discussions, to use modern means of communication in a theologically responsible way, to retrieve tradition without traditionalism, and to develop critical and creative thinking about the challenges of the present social context.

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### **3. Bible and Literary Studies**

This course offers a systematic and in-depth investigation of the relationship between biblical texts and literature. It departs from the fact that, in the Christian world, the artistic expression of religious experience has had as its main source of inspiration the Bible, whose linguistic wealth, multiplicity of genres and powerful imagery have influenced Western and Greek literature both in form and in content.

First, the course looks inside the Bible: students become acquainted with the poetic and literary dimensions of biblical books and passages — such as the Song of Songs, Psalms, Ecclesiastes or the highly symbolic Book of Revelation. The course analyzes their imagery, rhythm, parallelisms, symbolism and narrative techniques, showing that the Bible is not only a theological but also a literary monument. This internal literary reading helps students better understand how these texts later inspired writers.

Then, turning outward, the course traces the reception, transformation and creative appropriation of biblical motifs, stories, symbols and phrases in modern European and Modern Greek literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. Through selected examples — Rilke, Camus, Eliot, Yeats, and in Greek literature Solomos, Cavafy, Sikelianos, Papatzonis, Seferis, Elytis, Empirikos and others — it is shown how writers converse with Scripture: sometimes continuing it, sometimes contesting it, sometimes secularizing it, sometimes rediscovering within it existential depth. Particular attention is paid to how

biblical figures (Job, Jonah, Mary Magdalene, the prodigal son) and themes (exile, sacrifice, resurrection, judgment) are re-narrated in a modern key.

Methodologically, students are introduced to tools of intertextual and reception studies: how to detect a biblical echo, how to interpret a deliberate variation, how to distinguish between thematic affinity and conscious reference. In this way, the course does not aim only at a history of influences, but at a hermeneutical understanding of the dialogue between sacred text and literary imagination.

By the end of the course, students will be able to identify biblical elements in literary texts, to interpret them within their literary and cultural context, to appreciate the Bible as a source of poetic language, and to produce research projects that combine theology, biblical studies and literary criticism. More broadly, they will have strengthened skills in analysis, synthesis, autonomous work, the use of technology for bibliographical research, and critical reflection on the interaction of religion and culture.

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#### **4. Comparative Religious Thematography – Bible and Art**

This course studies, in a comparative and historically informed way, Christian religious art — from early Christian and Byzantine art to Western secular art — when it uses biblical subject matter. Its basic aim is to teach students to “read” religious images as structured theological narratives. Each work is approached with full reference to its historical context (period, region, school, artistic influences), because no iconographic choice is arbitrary: it is connected with particular doctrinal, liturgical or pastoral needs.

During the course, the iconographic elements of a composition are presented and analyzed: the main figures, their gestures, positions and attributes; the spatial and architectural setting; the colors and light; the relationship between central and secondary scenes. Students learn to see how these elements are interrelated in order to narrate visually a biblical event — for example, the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Transfiguration, the Crucifixion or the Descent

into Hades. At the same time, they are guided to search for the idea the artist wants to convey, and to uncover the symbolic levels hidden in the image.

Patristic interpretations of the depicted events are also used, so that students can see how theology nourishes iconographic tradition and how, conversely, the image becomes catechesis. In this way, the educational and ethical dimension of religious art is highlighted: iconography does not simply decorate but teaches, reminds, moves to repentance.

A special unit is devoted to the wider field of iconography as a discipline that identifies and interprets forms and scenes — both in Eastern and Western Christian art — from the first Christian centuries until today. The course shows that in a world dominated by visual communication, images continue to transmit theological meanings and to shape religious consciousness. Therefore, learning to read them critically is an essential competence for theologians and educators.

Upon completion, students will be able to compare different artistic treatments of the same biblical subject, to recognize the theological messages encoded in images, to connect art with the liturgical and cultural environment that produced it, and to utilize visual material in teaching or intercultural dialogue. The course cultivates research skills, autonomous and group work, critical thinking and the creative use of ICT for collecting and presenting visual material.

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## **5. Eastern Religions and the West**

This course examines the entry, presence and transformation of Eastern religious traditions in Western societies from the late 19th century to the present. It investigates how religions and spiritual movements rooted in Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism — such as Vedanta, Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, different forms of yoga and New Age syntheses — were received, reinterpreted and sometimes commercialized in Europe and North America.

At the beginning, the historical conditions that made this encounter possible are presented: colonial expansion, Orientalist scholarship, the search for alternative spiritualities in the West, the crisis of traditional churches, and the emergence of counter-culture in the 1960s. Against this background, the course analyzes representative figures, missions and movements that brought Eastern ideas to the West, as well as the role of translations, spiritual teachers and cultural intermediaries.

A central theme is religious and cultural hybridization: how Western people adopted elements of Eastern religiosity (meditation, concepts of karma and reincarnation, holistic views of the human being) but often detached them from their doctrinal and ritual framework, integrating them into psychological, therapeutic or lifestyle models. The course discusses the differences between classical Hindu or Buddhist teachings and their popular Western versions, and raises theological and intercultural questions that arise from this process.

At the same time, the course explores the impact of this encounter on Western culture: the spread of mindfulness, the reception of yoga, the influence on art, music and literature, and the formation of pluralistic and individualized religious identities. Students are encouraged to view Eastern religions not as exotic systems but as active players in today's globalized religious field.

By the end of the course, students will know the main currents and schools originating from Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism that have been established in the West; they will be able to analyze their discourse and practices; to evaluate their contribution to contemporary spiritual seeking; and to discuss the challenges they pose to Christian theology, pastoral care and education. The course promotes skills of analysis and synthesis, adaptation to new situations, research using ICT, and the production of new research ideas in the field of religious multiculturalism.

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## **6. Cultural Psychology of Religion**

This course explores the dynamic intersection between religion and culture from the perspective of cultural psychology. It starts from the observation that



religious beliefs, experiences and practices are not formed in a vacuum but within concrete cultural environments, and that at the same time religion itself shapes culture, values and forms of sociality. Thus, religion and culture are seen as mutually constitutive variables.

Students become acquainted with key concepts such as cultural models of the self, collective representations, symbols, rituals, and religious narratives, and examine how these affect the way individuals interpret and express their faith. Case studies from different cultural contexts show how the same religious tradition can appear with different emphases and emotional tones depending on the culture in which it is embedded — for example, in issues of authority, gender roles, family, or experiences of the sacred.

The course also analyzes how cultural change (migration, globalization, digital media, pluralism) influences religious identity and religiosity, sometimes producing hybrid, individualized or reactive forms of religion. Particular focus is placed on the ways in which groups use religion to preserve cultural continuity, manage collective trauma or negotiate their place in a multicultural society.

At a methodological level, students are introduced to qualitative approaches (interviews, participant observation, narrative analysis) that are suitable for capturing lived religion within its cultural setting. The aim is not only to describe but to understand from within the meanings that believers give to their practices.

By the end of the course, students will be able to identify religious and spiritual variables that influence the surrounding culture and are influenced by it; to analyze the complex interaction between cultural frameworks and religious beliefs and rituals; to use ICT in collecting and processing data; and to design small research projects in the field of psychology of religion with intercultural sensitivity. More broadly, the course cultivates respect for diversity, work in interdisciplinary environments, critical and self-critical thinking, and responsible engagement with religious phenomena in plural societies.

## **2nd Semester:**

### **7. Biblical and Early Christian Aesthetic Expression in the Mediterranean**

This course examines how biblical and early Christian faith was embodied aesthetically in the religious spaces of the wider Mediterranean world during the Greco-Roman period. Its starting point is that religion is never expressed only in doctrines and texts, but also in spaces, buildings, objects, and arrangements that convey meanings, shape communal identity and make faith visible. For that reason, the course approaches worship places from a “religions-and-aesthetics” point of view: how a community organizes sacred space, what it chooses to display, how it regulates public and private worship, and how all this reflects its understanding of God and of itself.

The course first presents the main worship settings in Second Temple Judaism: the Jerusalem Temple as the center of public sacrificial worship, and the synagogue as the space of gathering, prayer and reading. It then moves to the Greco-Roman religious environment, where temples, household shrines and civic cults coexisted. Students analyze how architecture, decoration, statues and ritual routes in the ancient Greek and Roman temple expressed the relationship between human and divine, and how these models were present in the Mediterranean at the very time when Christianity appeared.

On this background, the course traces the emergence of specifically Christian spaces. Attention is given to the earliest domestic churches (house-churches), to the creative re-use and transformation of existing architectural forms, and finally to the development of the early Christian basilica. The question “how did we get from the Greco-Roman temple to the Christian church building?” is treated not only architecturally but also theologically: what did Christians want to emphasize? community, word, Eucharist, images, martyr cult? The course shows that the Christian church was not born in a vacuum but within a vibrant Mediterranean cultural world that Christians reinterpreted.

Throughout, students are trained to identify the aesthetic codes that make faith visible: spatial hierarchies, use of light, symbolic decoration, scriptural

inscriptions, and the distinction between public and private worship. They also learn to connect these aesthetic choices with the social and religious needs of each group. By the end, they will be able (a) to focus on a religious-aesthetic reading of spaces, (b) to describe the ways in which biblical and Christian faith was grounded in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, (c) to use digital resources for locating and studying material, and (d) to design small research projects on early Christian material culture.

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## **8. Intercultural Education and Inclusive Schooling**

This course explores, from both a theoretical and practical viewpoint, how schools can become fair, welcoming and participatory environments for learners coming from different cultural, religious, linguistic and social backgrounds. It starts from today's reality of pluralism — migration, religious diversity, social inequalities — and asks what kind of pedagogy is needed so that the school does not reproduce exclusion but promotes equality and social justice.

First, the main theories of multicultural and intercultural education are presented: from simple tolerance of difference to active intercultural dialogue and critical multiculturalism. Students examine how culture, religion and identity are formed, and how stereotypes and prejudices can enter the classroom through textbooks, language and teacher expectations. The course then connects these theories to inclusive education, that is, to educational approaches that aim to include all learners — not only those from different cultures but also refugees, students with disabilities, religious minorities, or children living in poverty.

Special emphasis is placed on concrete pedagogical strategies: differentiated instruction so that pupils with different starting points can participate; collaborative learning that values each student's contribution; dialogical teaching that allows religious and cultural experiences to be expressed without imposition; and forms of assessment that do not penalize difference.

The course also looks at school–family–community cooperation, showing that inclusion is sustainable only when the school opens up to the wider social environment.

Given that the program is housed in a Faculty of Theology, the course does not ignore the religious dimension: it discusses how religious education can be organized in a way that respects different religious and non-religious identities, how teachers can speak about faith traditions without proselytism, and how the school can become a place of encounter among Christian, Muslim or other pupils.

By the end of the course, students will be able to: examine and evaluate theoretical and practical approaches to intercultural and inclusive education; design teaching practices that enhance participation; cultivate empathy and critical thinking in their pupils; and develop research questions on the inclusion of vulnerable groups in education. More broadly, the course develops skills in data analysis, adaptation to new situations, work in interdisciplinary environments, and respect for diversity — all indispensable in contemporary plural schools.

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## **9. Religious Visual Arts**

This course focuses on the visual arts that have emerged from, served, or been inspired by religious traditions. It covers painting, sculpture, miniature painting, Byzantine iconography, the decoration of churches and other sacred spaces, and the crafting of devotional objects (crosses, icons, statues). Its basic premise is that religious art is not mere ornament; it is an expression of faith, a means of spiritual communication, and at the same time a mirror of the cultural and historical conditions of each era.

The course begins by clarifying what makes a work “religious”: theme, function, context of use, or iconographic code. It then presents the case of Byzantine iconography in some detail, because it is the most systematic

Christian artistic language: fixed prototypes for Christ, the Theotokos and the saints; narrative cycles of feasts; symbolic use of color and perspective; theological criteria for what may be depicted. Students learn how icons participate in liturgy and personal devotion, and how they “teach” doctrine visually.

A comparative glance is also offered toward Islamic art, where figural depiction in religious settings is limited, and thus geometric patterns, arabesques and calligraphy acquire the role of expressing transcendence and divine beauty. In this way, students see that religions seek beauty and symbolic density even when they avoid images, and that every tradition has developed aesthetic solutions consistent with its theology.

Throughout the course, the historical development of religious art is linked with theological and ecclesiastical history: political changes, doctrinal debates, patronage and intercultural contacts all affect artistic forms. Religious art is also presented as cultural capital: something that can mediate interreligious dialogue, education and tourism.

By the end, students will know the main religious visual arts and their functions; they will be able to study them as expressions of faith and spiritual experience; to trace their historical evolution and connection with religion and theology; and to produce research projects using visual material. The course cultivates analytic and synthetic skills, autonomous and group work, the use of ICT for collecting iconographic material, and critical appreciation of art as bearer of moral and spiritual values.

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## **10. Topics in Philosophy of Religion**

This course introduces students to central philosophical questions about religion, moving across the historical, analytic and theological spectrum. At its core is the great classical question: does God exist? Students study major arguments for theism (cosmological, teleological, moral) alongside

sophisticated critiques coming from earlier and modern atheists and skeptics. In this way, they become familiar with the broad panorama of criticism of religion but also with forms of rational defense of faith.

The course then looks at the ways philosophers and theologians have related reason to faith. Natural Theology is presented as the attempt to reach religious truths through reason and experience of the world, while Fideism is presented as an emphasis on trust, revelation and the limits of reason. These approaches are placed within their historical contexts, especially the period of the Reformation and the later developments of Western Christianity, to show how philosophical ideas influenced theological positions.

A separate unit is devoted to monotheism and polytheism: what each presupposes about the divine, how religious language works in each case, and how philosophical critiques (from Kant to logical positivism) challenge traditional God-talk. The course explains why Kant's critique of the traditional proofs did not abolish faith but relocated it; and why Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle raised questions about the meaning and verifiability of religious statements, questions that still affect theological discourse today.

Students read and analyze selected texts, learn to reconstruct arguments, to identify presuppositions, and to respond theologically. By the end, they will be able to study classic problems such as evil and suffering, faith and reason, religious pluralism, and the rationality of belief. They will also have improved in searching and evaluating sources, working autonomously, and producing original research in philosophy of religion — always with awareness of intercultural and interreligious realities.

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## **11. Religious Rhetoric and Cultural Diversity**

This course investigates how religious speech — sermons, pastoral letters, public statements, doctrinal texts, even media interventions by religious leaders — shapes cultures, identities and social perceptions. It treats religious

rhetoric not as a purely internal church matter but as a form of public discourse that can unite or divide, legitimize or criticize, include or exclude. Because of that, the course is comparative and interdisciplinary, drawing on philosophy, history, sociology, religious studies and political science.

First, students are introduced to the tools of rhetorical analysis: audience, ethos, pathos, logos, narrative, symbol, intertextuality. They then apply these tools to examples from different religious traditions, historical periods and cultural environments. The course shows how religious rhetoric has supported nation-building or resistance, how it has framed human rights or their denial, and how it continues today to influence debates about migration, gender, peace and violence.

A key aim is to understand the ambivalence of religious discourse in multicultural societies: the same sacred texts and images can inspire reconciliation and hospitality, but also exclusionary identities. For this reason, special attention is paid to the theological narratives, metaphors and semiotic devices used by religious leaders — what they emphasize, what they silence, how they present the “other,” and with what consequences for social cohesion.

By the end of the course, students will be able to: examine the role of religious rhetoric in shaping cultural identities; explain how religious discourse intervenes in public debate; analyze concrete rhetorical strategies; and design research projects on religion and public communication. The course cultivates data analysis, decision-making, critical and self-critical thinking, work in international and interdisciplinary environments, and respect for diversity — all essential for theologians and educators working in plural settings.

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## **12. Axiological Reading of Hagiographical and Hymnographic Texts**

This course focuses on the theological understanding of holiness as it is expressed in the hagiographical texts of the Orthodox Christian tradition from the earliest centuries until today, and on how this holiness is poetically and

liturgically articulated in hymnography. Its point of departure is that the lives of the saints and the hymns of the Church do not only tell edifying stories; they embody value-systems — models of Christian life, virtues, ways of responding to history — which can be read, analyzed and brought into dialogue with today's context.

Students study a wide range of sources: early ascetic and edifying narratives, critical editions of lives and synaxaria, the Constantinopolitan Synaxarion, the Menologion of Symeon Metaphrastes, imperial menologia. They learn to distinguish issues of authenticity, originality and later redaction (“translation” of a life for a new audience). Through this, they see that the re-writing of lives in later periods was not falsification but re-contextualization: the same saint is presented in a way that speaks to the spiritual, social or political needs of a new era.

Parallel to the hagiographical material, the course deals with major Greek hymnographic texts — kontakion, canons, stichera — that encapsulate the doctrinal teaching and liturgical memory of the Church. Figures such as Romanos the Melodist, Andrew of Crete, John of Damascus and Kosmas the Melodist are presented as theologians in verse. Students analyze how hymnography interprets Scripture, how it presents the saints, how it teaches Christology and Mariology through poetry, and how it forms the faithful's imagination.

The term “axiological reading” means precisely this: to look at what values, virtues and models of sanctity these texts propose — martyrdom, asceticism, humility, love for the poor, obedience, missionary zeal — and how these relate to the historical and social conditions of each period. In this way, holiness is not idealized but seen in dialogue with reality.

By the end, students will be able to focus on the theological view of holiness in texts, to work critically with hagiographical and hymnographical sources, to connect them with their historical and liturgical context, and to design research questions for contemporary theology, catechesis or education. The course strengthens skills in source analysis, autonomous research, use of ICT



for accessing manuscripts and editions, and creative, critical engagement with the tradition.

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### **3rd Specialization: Applied Theology and Social Sciences of Religion**

#### **1st Semester:**

##### **1. Methodology of Research and Academic Writing**

This course introduces postgraduate students to the theoretical foundations and practical applications of academic research and writing within the fields of Theology and Religious Studies. Its primary aim is to equip students with the necessary methodological, analytical, and compositional skills to conduct independent scholarly research that adheres to the highest academic and ethical standards. The course covers all stages of the research process — from identifying a topic and reviewing relevant literature to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data, and finally producing a coherent, well-structured academic text.

Students are introduced to the philosophy of science and the epistemological principles underpinning research design. Emphasis is placed on the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods, their respective purposes, and the criteria for selecting an appropriate methodology. Through lectures, workshops, and guided discussions, students learn to evaluate sources critically, distinguish between primary and secondary materials, and use academic databases and citation tools effectively. A key objective is to cultivate the ability to integrate diverse sources of evidence into a consistent argument that demonstrates originality, depth, and methodological rigor.

The course also explores questions of academic integrity and research ethics, focusing on responsible citation, the avoidance of plagiarism, and the transparent presentation of findings. Students engage with the formal requirements of academic writing, including the structure of research papers and theses, argument development, style conventions, and referencing systems (APA, Chicago, or MLA). Practical sessions provide opportunities for developing individual research proposals and for receiving feedback on early

drafts. These exercises help participants refine their ability to articulate research questions, define objectives, and justify methodological choices.

By the end of the course, students are expected to demonstrate the ability to plan, execute, and present an independent research project. They will have developed competence in managing bibliographic material, analyzing data through suitable research methods, and producing clear, persuasive, and academically sound texts. Additionally, the course fosters transferable skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, critical thinking, and the effective use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in research and writing.

Learning outcomes include:

- The ability to identify and formulate research problems and hypotheses.
- Proficiency in literature review and data management using academic databases.
- Mastery of research design principles and ethical research practices.
- Competence in drafting and editing extended academic papers in the field of Theology and Religious Studies.
- Capacity to evaluate, synthesize, and communicate research results to academic and professional audiences.

The teaching approach combines lectures, seminars, and practical workshops, supported by digital learning tools (e-class and email communication).

Students actively participate in group discussions, peer-review exercises, and project-based learning activities. The course may be delivered face-to-face or online, depending on program needs, and integrates the use of ICT for sharing resources, submitting drafts, and conducting guided feedback sessions.

Assessment is based on the quality and originality of the student's written work, participation in research exercises, and their final research project or essay. Evaluation criteria include methodological precision, coherence of argument, critical engagement with sources, and the clarity of academic expression.

Recommended readings include:

- M. Sarris, *How to Write a Scientific Paper*, Disigma Publications, Athens 2023.
- Th. Zisis, *Scientific Writing and Documentation*, Kyriakidis Publications, Thessaloniki 1992.

Through this course, students gain the academic discipline and intellectual autonomy required for advanced theological research, laying the foundation for the successful completion of their postgraduate dissertation and for future scholarly contributions to their field.

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## 2. Religious Law and Human Rights

This course examines the complex and evolving relationship between religious law and modern human rights theory. It focuses on the philosophical, theological, and legal dimensions of how religious norms and human rights frameworks interact, complement, and sometimes clash in pluralistic societies. By drawing on comparative perspectives from Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, the course explores the challenges of reconciling divine law with universal principles of human dignity, freedom, and equality.

The course begins by introducing the concept of *religious law* — its sources, authority, and function within a faith community. Students examine canonical, halakhic, and sharia traditions as normative systems governing moral and social life, and how these have historically shaped religious identity. This is followed by an exploration of the development of *human rights* in the modern era, from Enlightenment thought and early declarations to contemporary international charters such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. Through this juxtaposition, students analyze the different anthropologies underlying religious and secular legal systems.

A central theme is the tension between collective religious authority and individual autonomy. The course examines issues such as freedom of religion

and belief, gender equality, marriage and family law, bioethics, and the rights of minorities within religious communities. Students explore case studies from Greece, the broader European context, and the Middle East, focusing on how courts, governments, and religious authorities negotiate the boundaries between religious norms and state law. Emphasis is placed on interpreting such conflicts not as mere oppositions, but as opportunities for legal pluralism and intercultural dialogue.

Methodologically, the course combines theological and legal analysis with ethical and sociological insights. Students are introduced to interpretative techniques for reading religious legal texts, as well as to international human rights instruments and jurisprudence. They are encouraged to evaluate the principles of subsidiarity, proportionality, and accommodation in the governance of religious diversity. The goal is to equip them with conceptual and practical tools for navigating the intersection of law, religion, and human rights in contemporary societies.

Learning outcomes include the ability to:

- Explain the origins and key characteristics of major religious legal systems.
- Assess the theological and ethical arguments for and against universal human rights within different traditions.
- Analyze case law and policy decisions involving religion and rights.
- Develop reasoned, evidence-based arguments on complex issues of religious freedom, gender, and equality before the law.
- Formulate proposals for interreligious and intercultural dialogue on human dignity and moral responsibility.

The teaching process consists of lectures, seminars, and interactive discussions using both primary sources (canonical, halakhic, and sharia texts) and contemporary legal documents. Students are encouraged to engage critically with current debates — for example, the role of religion in the public sphere, the limits of freedom of expression, and the rights of converts and religious

minorities. Digital tools (e-class platform) are used for reading material, communication, and submission of assignments.

Assessment is based on a written essay or research paper, supplemented by oral presentations or participation in class debates. Evaluation criteria emphasize analytical precision, interdisciplinary understanding, clarity of writing, and originality of thought.

#### **Indicative Bibliography:**

- L. Patsavella, *Islamic Law and Human Rights*, Leimon Publications, 2022.
- V. Feidas, *Ecclesiastical Law*, Apostoliki Diakonia, Athens 2021.
- Selections from *Theologia* and *Nomika Polyptycha* journals.

Upon completion, students will have developed the capacity to bridge theology and legal reasoning, appreciate the moral depth of human rights discourse, and contribute constructively to interreligious and intercultural discussions concerning law, justice, and human dignity.

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### **3. Religious Education in the Public Sphere in the 21st Century**

This course explores the role, challenges, and prospects of religious education within contemporary democratic and pluralistic societies. It critically examines how religion is understood, represented, and taught in public education systems in the 21st century, considering both European and global perspectives. The course provides students with theoretical frameworks and practical tools for rethinking religious education as a field that promotes dialogue, inclusion, and active citizenship.

The course begins with an overview of the historical and sociological evolution of religious education in modern Europe. Students trace the transition from confessional models — shaped by the alliance of church and state — to contemporary paradigms that emphasize diversity, intercultural learning, and

respect for human rights. This contextual understanding helps them analyze how religion has re-entered public debates around identity, migration, social cohesion, and values education. The course situates these developments within the broader framework of post-secular theory and the notion of religion as a public rather than purely private phenomenon.

A key part of the course is devoted to mapping different international approaches to religious education: confessional, non-confessional, pluralistic, and integrative models. Students compare curricular frameworks and pedagogical practices from countries such as Greece, the UK, Germany, Sweden, and Finland. Through this comparative analysis, they evaluate how each system balances freedom of religion, the neutrality of the state, and the educational right of the child to knowledge about religions. The focus is on developing an informed understanding of how diverse educational policies manage the tension between tradition and pluralism.

Another thematic axis addresses the relationship between religious education and digital culture. The rapid transformation of communication, the spread of social media, and the rise of algorithmic information systems have deeply affected young people's religious imagination and learning patterns. Students discuss how digital platforms can be used responsibly for teaching religion and how religious literacy can help counter misinformation, stereotyping, and extremism. This part of the course highlights the potential of digital tools for participatory and experiential learning, especially through augmented or virtual reality environments that simulate sacred spaces and intercultural encounters.

Pedagogically, the course blends lectures, workshops, and project-based learning. Students participate in small research projects on issues such as inclusion of minority religions in curricula, interfaith education, or the relationship between religion and citizenship. They are encouraged to design innovative lesson plans or educational interventions promoting intercultural dialogue, democratic coexistence, and moral development. Case studies from Greek and international contexts illustrate good practices and persistent challenges.

Learning outcomes include the ability to:

- Understand the historical and social dynamics shaping religious education in the public sphere.
- Evaluate the philosophical and pedagogical foundations of various international models.
- Design inclusive and dialogical approaches to teaching about religion.
- Critically assess the impact of digital transformation on religious learning.
- Contribute to policy debates on the future of religious education within plural democracies.

Assessment is based on a combination of written assignments, project presentations, and participation in discussions. Evaluation criteria include depth of analysis, clarity of argument, originality, and the ability to apply theoretical concepts to practical educational challenges.

#### **Indicative Bibliography:**

- M. Zogka, *Religious Education and Diversity in Europe*, Athens 2021.
- P. Valk, G. Bertram-Troost, M. Friederici, and C. Béraud (eds.), *Religious Education in a Plural, Secularised Society*, Waxmann, 2009.
- Articles from *Theologia* and *Religious Education Journal of Australia*.

Upon completion, students will have developed the analytical and pedagogical competence to engage with religious education as a field of intercultural understanding and social responsibility. They will be prepared to design learning environments that reflect respect for diversity and the values of a democratic, inclusive society.



## 5. Geopolitics of Religion: Theoretical Approaches and Practical Applications

This course investigates the complex interconnections between religion, politics, and geography in the modern world. It introduces students to the conceptual and analytical tools of *religious geopolitics* — a field that explores how religious beliefs, institutions, and identities shape international relations, and how global and regional power structures, in turn, influence religious developments. Through interdisciplinary approaches drawing from theology, political science, history, and sociology, the course seeks to help students understand religion as a dynamic geopolitical actor rather than a private or purely cultural phenomenon.

The course begins with a theoretical overview of geopolitics as a discipline. Students examine its classical foundations — from Ratzel and Mackinder to the critical geopolitics of the 20th century — and then focus on the specific emergence of the *geopolitics of religion* as a contemporary field of study. They learn how spatial concepts such as territory, borders, and cultural space interact with the symbolic and missionary dimensions of religion. The concept of *civilizational blocs* and Samuel Huntington's thesis of the "Clash of Civilizations" are analyzed and critiqued, while alternative paradigms emphasizing dialogue, soft power, and cultural diplomacy are also explored.

A second unit addresses how religions themselves conceptualize geography and space. The notions of sacred territory, pilgrimage, religious centers (Jerusalem, Mecca, Constantinople, Rome, Varanasi) and the idea of *holy landscapes* are discussed as elements that continue to influence international politics and identity formation. The course then turns to the geopolitical presence of the major world religions — Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism — and examines how their institutions and networks function transnationally. Case studies include the role of Orthodoxy in Southeastern Europe and the Balkans, the Vatican's diplomatic activity, the geopolitical use of Islam in the Middle East, and the growing religious dimension in the politics of Africa and Asia.

Special emphasis is placed on the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans, where religion remains deeply intertwined with national identity, cultural memory, and international strategy. Students study the religious factor in conflicts, peace processes, migration movements, and intercultural diplomacy. They are also introduced to contemporary debates on religion and globalization, including the phenomenon of *religious soft power*, the media image of religions, and the role of faith-based organizations in humanitarian action and environmental advocacy.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand key theories and concepts of geopolitical analysis as they apply to religion.
- Evaluate the role of religious institutions and movements in shaping regional and global politics.
- Analyze concrete geopolitical cases where religion influences conflict or cooperation.
- Interpret the impact of globalization, migration, and digital media on religious power dynamics.
- Formulate research projects connecting theology, politics, and geography.

The teaching methodology combines lectures, thematic seminars, and the analysis of case studies, with the support of audiovisual materials and digital cartographic tools. Students work collaboratively to map religious influence zones and simulate diplomatic scenarios involving religious actors. The course may include guest lectures by experts in international relations and religion. Digital platforms (e-class) are used for communication, reading materials, and submission of assignments.

Assessment is based on a research paper or case-study analysis, complemented by participation and short oral presentations. Evaluation criteria include analytical depth, originality, theoretical coherence, and ability to synthesize data from multiple disciplines.

### **Indicative Bibliography:**

- P. L. Berger, *The Desecularization of the World*, Eerdmans, 1999.
- E. Wæver & O. B. Buzan, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, 1996.
- K. Papastathis, *Religion and Geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Athens 2022.

By integrating theological insight with geopolitical analysis, this course enables students to approach religion not as a static institution but as a living global force that shapes identities, policies, and transnational relations in the 21st century.

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## 5. Dogmatic Tradition and Political Theory

This course examines the deep and often underestimated relationship between Christian dogmatic thought and political theory. It explores how theological concepts such as divine sovereignty, personhood, communion, and eschatology have historically influenced political philosophy, and how modern political categories have, in turn, reshaped the understanding and reception of theological doctrines. The goal is to help students recognize that theology and politics are not separate spheres but share a long-standing dialogue concerning authority, justice, community, and human destiny.

The course opens with an overview of the emergence of political theology in the Western and Eastern Christian traditions. Students study the ways in which early Christian thinkers — such as Augustine, the Cappadocian Fathers, and later Byzantine theologians — articulated their theological worldview within the political realities of their time. Augustine's *City of God* is examined as a foundational text for understanding the relationship between the Church, the state, and the divine order. In parallel, the Byzantine synthesis of imperial and ecclesiastical authority (*symphonia*) is analyzed as a

distinct model of political theology that differs significantly from Western theocratic or secular paradigms.

A central axis of the course concerns the transfer of theological concepts into modern political theory. The influence of dogmatic categories — particularly the Trinity, Incarnation, and personhood — on ideas of community, freedom, and equality is discussed in depth. Students read excerpts from Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology*, which famously asserts that “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts,” and examine critical responses from theologians and political theorists such as Erik Peterson, Jürgen Moltmann, and Oliver O'Donovan. The course contrasts Schmitt's view of sovereignty with Christian conceptions of kenosis and relational authority.

Further thematic units explore how dogmatic anthropology — the theological understanding of the human person created in the image of God — has inspired political visions of dignity, rights, and responsibility. The Trinitarian notion of communion is discussed as a model for political community beyond individualism and collectivism. Similarly, eschatology and hope are analyzed as sources of political imagination: the idea that history is open to transformation and renewal, not merely repetition or decline.

The course also addresses the challenges posed by secularization. Students examine how Enlightenment thinkers reinterpreted or rejected theological notions in constructing modern political orders, and how post-secular theories today revisit religious resources for meaning and legitimacy. The dialogue between Orthodoxy, modern democracy, and human rights is a recurring theme, showing how the dogmatic tradition can inform ethical and political reflection without imposing confessional boundaries.

Learning outcomes include the ability to:

- Identify key dogmatic concepts that have shaped political theory and vice versa.
- Analyze classic and modern texts in political theology critically.

- Evaluate the compatibility and tension between religious dogma and political modernity.
- Formulate research questions on the interaction between theology, politics, and ethics.
- Apply theological insights to contemporary debates on democracy, authority, and social justice.

Teaching combines lectures with close reading of primary and secondary texts, group discussions, and student presentations. Interdisciplinary connections with philosophy, history, and sociology are emphasized. The course uses digital resources for reading distribution and collaborative work.

Assessment consists of a research essay or oral presentation, graded according to analytical depth, coherence, originality, and engagement with sources.

#### **Indicative Bibliography:**

- C. Schmitt, *Political Theology*, University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- O. O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, SCM Press, 1967.
- G. Mantzaridis, *Christian Dogma and the Human Person*, Thessaloniki 2008.

By the end of the course, students will have developed a nuanced understanding of how dogmatic theology can contribute to rethinking political life and moral responsibility in the public sphere, moving beyond oppositions between faith and reason toward a vision of transformative engagement.

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## **6. Religion and Political Philosophy**

This course explores the complex and dynamic relationship between religion and political philosophy from antiquity to the present. It examines how religious thought has influenced political ideas, and conversely, how

philosophical conceptions of politics have shaped religious understanding and practice. By engaging with both classical and contemporary thinkers, students investigate the foundational questions that lie at the intersection of theology, ethics, and political theory — questions concerning justice, authority, freedom, community, and the meaning of the common good.

The course begins with a historical survey of the philosophical treatment of religion in political thought. It traces the origins of political philosophy in Greek antiquity — from Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics* to the Stoic idea of the cosmopolis — and their influence on early Christian political imagination. Students analyze how early Christianity transformed Greco-Roman political categories by introducing concepts such as divine sovereignty, universal equality, and eschatological hope. Augustine's *City of God* serves as a foundational text for understanding the theological reinterpretation of political order and human destiny.

The medieval synthesis between faith and reason is examined through figures such as Thomas Aquinas, who integrated Aristotelian philosophy with Christian theology, defining natural law as the rational participation of the human person in divine law. The Reformation period is explored for its decisive role in reshaping the relationship between religion and politics, particularly in debates over conscience, authority, and the legitimacy of resistance. Students study how the emergence of modern political philosophy — with Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau — introduced secular understandings of sovereignty and social contract, often in deliberate contrast to theological frameworks.

Modernity and secularization are central themes of the course. Students assess Enlightenment critiques of religion — notably those of Spinoza, Voltaire, and Kant — as well as later responses from Hegel and Marx, who interpreted religion as a social and historical phenomenon. The course highlights how the secular turn redefined political legitimacy, moving it from divine sanction to human reason, yet often retained moral and symbolic elements derived from religion. This analysis allows students to grasp the paradox that modern

secular politics still carries theological echoes in its moral vocabulary and its concept of history.

In the contemporary context, the course addresses post-secular debates and the renewed interest in the political relevance of religion. Thinkers such as John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and Alasdair MacIntyre are discussed for their differing views on how religious reasoning can participate in public discourse within pluralistic democracies. The course explores models of *public reason*, *recognition*, and *dialogical pluralism*, emphasizing how religious traditions can contribute constructively to moral and civic life without claiming privilege or exclusivity.

Throughout the semester, the course promotes an understanding of political philosophy as a dialogue between worldviews — metaphysical, ethical, and theological. Students analyze the moral implications of political decisions, the ethical foundations of law, and the possibility of transcendent meaning in collective life. Comparative perspectives from Christianity, Islam, and secular humanism are included to illustrate the variety of ways in which religion continues to inspire political thought.

Learning outcomes include the ability to:

- Identify and explain the historical evolution of religion's role in political philosophy.
- Critically evaluate philosophical arguments for and against the public presence of religion.
- Analyze how religious ideas influence conceptions of justice, authority, and freedom.
- Engage with classical and modern texts through theological and philosophical lenses.
- Develop research projects that integrate normative political theory and religious ethics.

Teaching combines lectures with textual analysis, student-led seminars, and written reflections. Students work with both primary philosophical texts and

modern secondary literature. The course employs the e-class platform for resources and communication.

Assessment is based on a research paper or essay (50–60%), participation in seminars, and possibly an oral presentation. Evaluation criteria include clarity of argument, analytical rigor, use of sources, and originality of thought.

**Indicative Bibliography:**

- J. Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, Polity Press, 2008.
- C. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Harvard University Press, 2007.
- A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.
- J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Columbia University Press, 1993.

Upon completion, students will possess a comprehensive understanding of the dialogue between religion and political philosophy. They will be able to interpret the moral and spiritual dimensions of political life and to engage critically with the challenges of pluralism, secularism, and democratic coexistence in the modern world.



## 2nd Semester:

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### 7. Theology and Literature

This course examines the rich and multifaceted dialogue between Christian theology and literature, focusing on how theological themes, biblical figures, and experiences of the sacred are received, reworked, or problematized in modern and earlier literary production. It introduces students to key methodological questions: in what ways can literature “theologize”; how can theological discourse interpret literary texts without reducing their aesthetic autonomy; and how does poetic or narrative language sometimes reach realities that systematic theology describes more abstractly?

The course draws on examples from both Greek and world literature — poetry, prose, and drama. Particular attention is given to central biblical and theological motifs such as sin, repentance, forgiveness, passion, Resurrection, evil, the experience of absence or silence of God, and the problem of suffering. Students will see how emblematic biblical figures — Mary Magdalene, Jesus, Judas, Cain, Adam and Eve, Job — have inspired authors of different periods and traditions (Dante, Dostoevsky, Claudel, Saramago, Kazantzakis, Papadiamantis, Zoe Karelli, Kiki Dimoula, among others), either as symbols of human struggle or as vehicles for theological reflection.

A further axis of the course is the question of the sacred in literature. How is God approached in literary speech? When does poetry become almost metaphysical language? Can we speak of “implicit theology” in literature, even in writers who do not confess a Christian worldview? Students will be trained to detect theological resonances in literary texts, to distinguish between orthodox and heterodox appropriations of biblical material, and to evaluate when literature contests, when it reinterprets, and when it serves the theological imagination.

Learning outcomes include the ability to: (a) identify theological themes and biblical intertexts in literary works; (b) relate literary treatment of sin, guilt,

and forgiveness to patristic and biblical anthropology; (c) analyze how modern writers problematize traditional figures such as Judas or Job; (d) use digital and library resources to further research on theology and literature; and (e) propose original research topics that link dogmatic, biblical, or spiritual theology with Greek or world literature.

Teaching is delivered through lectures supplemented by seminars, close reading of selected texts, guided bibliography, and individual student work. E-class is used for distributing materials and submitting written assignments. Assessment may include a written essay, short written exercises of interpretive character, and oral presentation of a literary-theological analysis. Criteria are clearly communicated to students.

Recommended reading: K. Kefalea, *Poetry and Theology*, NKUA Press, Athens 2024, along with relevant articles from the *Scientific Yearbook of the Faculty of Theology, University of Athens*.

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## **8. History of Art, Religious Iconography, and Museum Education**

This course explores the close, age-long relationship between religion and visual art, showing how artistic creation functions as an externalization of faith, an interpretation of the transcendent, and a didactic vehicle of religious experience. Starting from the fundamental anthropological observation that human beings seek to express their metaphysical questions not only through rational discourse but also through image, symbol, and form, the course demonstrates that sacred art has been, across traditions, a privileged path for communicating dogma, ethics, and communal memory.

Students are introduced to the main phases of Christian religious art (with references, where useful, to other religious traditions): from the symbolic and narrative needs of the early Christian community, to the canonized forms of Byzantine iconography, to post-Byzantine and Western forms of religious representation. The course shows that works of religious art do not merely

decorate spaces of worship, but narrate the history of salvation, embody theological positions (e.g. Christological and Trinitarian), and cultivate a shared religious consciousness.

An important part of the course is the study of art as a “bridge” of religion to the wider society. Because the image is immediately intelligible, it became throughout history an excellent medium for the Church to communicate teachings, moral imperatives, and hagiographic traditions to people of different levels of education. The course, therefore, emphasizes the reciprocal complementarity of religion and art at a high level of spiritual expression.

On this basis, the second unit introduces Museum Education (museum pedagogy) as it relates to religious collections. Museum Education, belonging to Cultural Pedagogy, is presented as a contemporary tool that enables theological education to meet applied social and cultural methods: designing educational programs in museums, approaching religious artifacts with interpretive frameworks, and cultivating respect for religious diversity through material culture. Students learn how museum spaces can function catechetically, dialogically, and interculturally.

Upon successful completion, students will be able to: (a) describe the main forms and purposes of religious visual art; (b) analyze the theological content of specific religious artworks; (c) explain the social and pedagogical role of religious art in shaping religious identity; (d) design or evaluate simple museum-educational activities related to religious themes; and (e) conduct independent research using modern technologies and bibliographical tools.

Teaching is carried out through lectures, seminars, possible field visits or virtual museum tours, and independent study. Assessment is based on written work or project, participation, and possibly oral examination. The e-class platform supports communication and material sharing.

Indicative bibliography: D. Liantinis, *The Museum and the Teaching of the History of Culture and Art*, Bibliogonia, Athens 2001, plus articles from the *Scientific Yearbook of the Faculty of Theology, University of Athens*.

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## 9. Dialogue between Theology and Psychology

This course offers a systematic introduction to the interdisciplinary meeting point of Theology and Psychology, with particular attention to their usefulness for pastoral practice and for a deeper understanding of the human person. It begins by clarifying what each discipline studies, what methods it uses, and what its epistemological limits are. Theology approaches the human being as person-in-relation to God and to the ecclesial community; psychology studies psychic processes, behavior, and development. The course shows that, although the two disciplines have different starting points, they can converge fruitfully when the goal is the healing, guidance, and spiritual maturation of the believer.

The course presents basic models of interaction between theology and psychology: models of conflict (when psychology is seen as reducing the spiritual to the psychological), models of independence, and models of integration or dialogue. Students will examine how psychological knowledge (from developmental, clinical, or counseling psychology) can illuminate spiritual struggles, guilt, scruples, religious obsessions, or experiences of loss, and how, in turn, theological anthropology offers a broader horizon of meaning, sin and grace, freedom and responsibility.

Special reference is made to the use of psychology in pastoral counseling. How can the clergy or church worker recognize psychological factors behind spiritual problems? What are the boundaries of pastoral counseling and when is referral to a mental health professional necessary? How can we speak of asceticism, repentance, and forgiveness in a psychologically sensitive way, without moralism but also without psychologizing sin? These are questions discussed through case studies.

By the end of the course, students are expected to: (a) know the main research principles and goals of the dialogue between theology and psychology; (b) recognize epistemological and methodological limits, so as not to confuse

spiritual with psychic; (c) use bibliographic and digital tools to locate interdisciplinary material; (d) form a positive, but critical, stance toward human sciences within ecclesial life; and (e) design pastoral approaches that respect both the spiritual freedom of the person and psychological integrity.

Teaching includes lectures, seminars, study of selected texts, and possibly role-playing for counseling situations. Assessment may be done through written assignment, oral examination, or presentation, with clearly defined criteria.

Suggested bibliography: Sp. Tsitsigos, *Religious-Psychological Miscellanies*, Tremendum, Athens 2018; journals such as *Theophany* (NKUA).

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## 10. Religions and Ecology

This course investigates how the major religious traditions of the world address nature, creation, and the human relationship to the environment, and how these perspectives can contribute to confronting today's ecological crisis. It starts from the observation that environmental destruction is not only a technological or economic issue, but also a cultural and spiritual one — it reflects how humanity understands itself in relation to the rest of creation. Religions, as carriers of powerful narratives and moral imperatives, can influence human attitudes and behaviors in ways that purely secular approaches often cannot.

The course presents the ecological dimensions of Christianity (with emphasis on Orthodox theology and spirituality), Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. For each tradition, students examine scriptural or doctrinal sources, spiritual practices, and contemporary theological or religious initiatives that promote respect for creation, sobriety, compassion toward living beings, and a renewed sense of stewardship. The students are thus able to compare anthropocentric, theocentric, and cosmocentric worldviews.

A distinctive aspect of the course is its link with the Psychology of Religion, especially the emerging fields of Ecopsychology and Environmental Psychology of Religion. These show that religious or spiritual experience can nurture environmental consciousness, offering meaning, motivation, and inner strength for ecological action. The course therefore explores the spiritual roots of ecological indifference (individualism, consumerism, alienation from creation) and the possibilities for spiritual healing and re-orientation.

The complexity of contemporary ecological problems requires cooperation — between religions themselves, but also between religion and science, law, and politics. The course highlights interreligious declarations on the environment, ecological encyclicals, and initiatives that engage civil society. Particular attention is given to the Orthodox theological reflection on creation, the sacramental view of the world, and the ascetic ethos as an ecological stance.

On completion, students will be able to: (a) describe religious teachings on nature in the main world religions; (b) assess the potential of religions to shape environmentally responsible behavior; (c) connect spirituality with environmental awareness; (d) use ICT tools and bibliographic databases to deepen research on religion and ecology; and (e) formulate new research questions relevant to theology, psychology, and environmental ethics.

Teaching is lecture-based with seminars, analysis of religious texts and contemporary documents, and individual assignments. Assessment is through written work, tests, or oral presentations, with criteria accessible to students via e-class.

Indicative bibliography: G. Foundoulaki, *Ecopsychology and Ecology of Human Performances*, Herodotos, Athens 2024; journals such as *Theophany*.

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## **11. Religion, Identity, Politics, and Postmodernity**

This course explores the changing role of religion in late modern and postmodern societies, focusing on how religious traditions contribute to the

formation of cultural and national identities, but also how they are challenged by globalization, secularization, and the instrumentalization of faith in politics. It starts from the premise that religion has historically been a cohesive force, providing societies with shared narratives, values, and symbols. Today, however, religion operates within pluralistic environments, mediated by mass media and global networks, where identities are multiple, fluid, and often contested.

Students examine religion as a factor of social peace and cohesion, but also as a potential source of tension when it is linked to exclusivist ideologies, fundamentalism, or ethno-religious nationalism. The course analyzes phenomena such as: (a) postmodernity and the diffusion of stereotypes and narratives that fuel antagonism; (b) the homogenizing character of globalization, which tends to flatten differences and provoke reactions from religious or cultural communities; (c) the political instrumentalization of religion, whether by populist movements or by regimes seeking legitimacy; and (d) the threats such processes pose to democracy, human rights, and intercultural coexistence in Europe and beyond.

A theological and sociological approach is adopted in order to interpret religious identity not as a closed, defensive construct, but as a dynamic reality capable of dialogue, self-critique, and participation in the public sphere. Students are encouraged to approach critically the relations Church–State, Religion–Democracy, and to discern lines of cooperation toward the common good without surrendering the integrity of religious witness.

By the end of the course, students will: (a) understand the diachronic role of religion in shaping national and cultural identity; (b) be able to interpret contemporary phenomena such as fundamentalism, militant secularism, and politicized religion; (c) evaluate globalization from a theological and ethical perspective; (d) use technological tools to gather and analyze data on current issues; and (e) propose research on religion and politics relevant to the Greek and European context.

Teaching involves lectures, seminars, analysis of current events, and independent study. Assessment is through written assignment, exam, or presentation. Recommended bibliography includes K. Kotsiopoulou, *Religion and Politics*, Migdonia, Thessaloniki 2015; K. Kotsiopoulou, *Globalization. Construction and Reality*, Kyriakidis, Thessaloniki 2020; N. Denaxas, *Religious and Cultural Conflict according to S. Huntington*, Altintzis, Thessaloniki 2025.

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## **12. Neurotheology and Cognitive Psychology of Religion**

This course introduces students to a cutting-edge field at the intersection of theology, psychology, philosophy of mind, and the neurosciences: the attempt to understand what happens in the human mind/brain when it engages with the transcendent. It presents the main questions of Neurotheology and the Cognitive Science of Religion: Are human beings “wired” for religious experience? Which cognitive mechanisms make belief in God, spirits, or ultimate meaning possible and persistent? How can we interpret mystical experiences, prayer, or liturgical participation in light of brain processes — and what are the theological implications of such interpretations?

Students first become familiar with the relevant scientific disciplines: cognitive psychology, cognitive neuroscience, neuropsychology, and philosophy of mind. They learn basic concepts such as attention, memory, intentionality, theory of mind, agency detection, and emotional regulation, and how these may be involved in religious cognition and behavior. The course then shows how certain neuroscientific findings (e.g. brain areas activated during meditation or prayer) have been interpreted by researchers who speak of a “neural basis” of spirituality.

At the same time, the course insists on epistemological clarity: neuroscience can describe correlates and processes, but it cannot by itself decide on the truth-value of religious experience. Theology, therefore, enters the dialogue to articulate a Christian understanding of the human person as psychosomatic



and spiritual, capable of communion with God, without being reducible to neuronal activity. Students thus learn to avoid both scientism (reducing faith to brain chemistry) and anti-scientific attitudes.

Practical applications are also discussed: how knowledge of cognitive and neuropsychological processes can help pastoral care, religious education, or the spiritual guidance of persons with particular psychological profiles. The course encourages students to think how ascetic and liturgical life may shape the brain and psyche over time — in other words, how grace works through nature.

Learning outcomes: students will (a) know the basic concepts and methods of the cognitive/neural study of religion; (b) be able to describe cognitive processes involved in religious experience; (c) recognize the limits of these approaches and integrate them with theological anthropology; (d) use modern technologies and databases to keep up with current research; and (e) formulate original questions for postgraduate research.

Teaching is through lectures, discussion of selected scientific and theological articles, and individual written work. Assessment follows the usual pattern (written work, exam, or presentation) with criteria made available to students.

Suggested bibliography: Sp. Tsitsigos, *Elements of Cognitive Psychology of Religion*, Tremendum, Athens 2019; journals such as *Theophany*, *Nea Sion*, and the *Scientific Yearbook of the Faculty of Theology, University of Athens*.

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## **4th Specialization: Leadership, Economy, and Church Law**

### **1st Semester:**

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#### **1. Research Methodology and Academic Writing**

This course introduces students to the theory and practice of scientific research and academic writing within the field of Theology and Religious Studies. It aims to familiarize postgraduate students with the basic principles of research methodology as these are formed in contemporary academic discourse and governed by academic ethics. Particular emphasis is placed on the selection and evaluation of sources, on the use of modern methods of collecting research and bibliographical material, and on the systematic recording and processing of data. The course presents both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, clarifying their stages, tools, and fields of application, so that students are able to choose the most appropriate method for their own research topic.

During the course, students learn how to formulate a research problem, how to narrow it into research questions or hypotheses, and how to design a coherent research plan. Attention is given to issues of academic integrity (proper referencing, avoidance of plagiarism, faithful use of sources), to international standards of citation, and to the structure of a scientific paper (introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis, conclusions, bibliography). In this way, the course creates the necessary preconditions for reliable and well-documented academic writing at postgraduate level.

On completion of the course, students will be able to: (a) locate, collect, and critically assess bibliographical and archival material using digital technologies; (b) compose autonomous academic papers that meet current scholarly standards; (c) adapt to new research requirements arising from developments in the field; and (d) generate new research ideas on the basis of gaps or open questions identified in the literature. The course also cultivates broader competences such as autonomous work, critical and self-critical

thinking, problem solving, and the synthesis of information from interdisciplinary fields.

Teaching is delivered face to face or, where necessary, by distance learning, with the systematic use of ICT (eclass, digital libraries, communication platforms). The teaching methods include lectures, seminars, guided bibliography study, and the drafting of short research assignments, with a total workload of 30 hours for the semester. Student assessment is carried out either through a written assignment, or through a summative written test (multiple-choice, short-answer or essay questions), or through an oral examination, always on the basis of clearly defined criteria made available to the students. Recommended bibliography includes, among others, manuals of scientific writing and research design (e.g. M. Sarri, *How a Scientific Paper is Written*, Athens 2023), as well as classic Greek manuals of academic technography.

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## **2. Ecclesiastical Correspondence and Protocol**

This course examines the historical formation, theological significance, and formal rules governing ecclesiastical correspondence, together with the protocol that regulates written and oral communication within the structures of the Church. Its starting point is the observation that letters in the Christian tradition have never been merely practical texts: from the apostolic and patristic periods onward, they function as instruments of pastoral guidance, doctrinal clarification, administrative regulation, and sometimes even church diplomacy between ecclesiastical and political authorities. The course therefore treats ecclesiastical letters as texts situated at the intersection of theology, law, and institutional life.

Students are introduced to the evolution of style, address, honorific formulae, and internal structure of ecclesiastical letters from Late Antiquity to the present. Through selected primary sources, they learn to recognize the institutional conventions that signal rank (patriarchal, synodal, episcopal), the

relationship between sender and recipient, and the intended ecclesial effect of the document. At the same time, the course presents the basic principles of ecclesiastical protocol: forms of address, order of precedence, the correct drafting of invitations, announcements, condolences or congratulatory letters, as well as rules governing participation of clergy in public events.

Methodologically, the course adopts a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from history, philology, theology, and diplomatic studies. Teaching combines lectures with text analysis workshops, in which students practice drafting official ecclesiastical documents in contemporary Greek, observing style, clarity, and hierarchical propriety. In this way, the course does not only describe ecclesiastical communication but actively trains students in it.

By the end of the course, students will be able to: (a) explain the historical and institutional importance of ecclesiastical correspondence; (b) analyze the form, style, and conventions of such letters in different periods; and (c) produce correct, orderly, and canonically sensitive ecclesiastical documents suitable for real administrative use. Teaching is face to face or online with ICT support, and assessment is done through written work, tests, or oral examination, on explicitly announced criteria. Indicative bibliography includes studies on the social and national contribution of the Church and articles from the journal *Theologia*.

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### **3. Organization and Administration of Ecclesiastical Legal Persons**

This course offers a systematic introduction to the structure, organization, and administration of ecclesiastical legal persons in Greece, at the point where Orthodox canon law meets the applicable state legal order. Its primary aim is to help students understand how the theological and ecclesiological self-understanding of the Church is expressed institutionally through its organs and, at the same time, how this institutional life is framed by the Constitution, the Charter of the Church of Greece, state legislation, and judicial decisions.

The course first presents the canonical foundations of church governance: the role of the Holy Synod, the authority of the diocesan bishop, the position of parishes, monasteries, shrines, and other ecclesiastical entities. It then examines the Statutory Charter of the Church of Greece and the regulations of the Holy Synod that specify procedures, competences, and organs. Special attention is given to the particular ecclesiastical regimes existing within the Greek territory (Church of Crete, Dodecanese, Mount Athos) and the way in which their administration is organized.

Beyond description, the course insists on the practical application of the relevant norms: how decisions are taken, which bodies are competent, what kind of documentation is required, and how church administration can remain faithful to its theological and pastoral mission while operating lawfully within the state framework. Thus, students learn to read not only canonical and synodal texts but also state regulations and jurisprudence relevant to ecclesiastical legal persons of public or private law.

Upon completion, students will be able to: (a) identify the theoretical basis of ecclesiastical administration in Orthodox canon law; (b) navigate the main normative texts governing the Church of Greece; (c) use digital tools to locate legal and canonical material; and (d) evaluate the needs of their own pastoral or administrative field, proposing legally and ecclesiologically sound solutions. Teaching is delivered through lectures, seminars, and guided study (30 hours total), and assessment may take the form of written or oral exams or a written project. Suggested bibliography includes works on the principle of legality in canon law and relevant legal-theological journals.

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#### **4. Church and Social Networks of Solidarity**

This course explores the contribution of Religion — and specifically of the Orthodox Church — to the formation, support, and expansion of social networks, social infrastructures, and what is today called the “social and solidarity economy.” Starting from the contemporary economic crisis, which is

interpreted not only as a financial but also as a crisis of values, the course investigates how Christian anthropology and ecclesial community life offer alternative models to consumerist individualism and to precarious, risk-based late-modern societies.

The historical part of the course recalls the long-standing social and philanthropic tradition of the Church, from the communal practices of the first Christian communities and the organized institutions of the Byzantine period to parish welfare and modern ecclesiastical charities. This tradition is examined as a durable, people-centered, and often discreet social force, whose real impact is frequently underestimated because much of the Church's social work is offered unpublicized.

The analytical part focuses on present-day conditions: the passage from mass consumption to underconsumption, the need for new forms of social organization, and the emergence of flexible, community-based support networks. Within this context, the course shows how the Church can function as a generator of social capital, as a space of trust, and as an agent capable of mobilizing voluntary, intergenerational, and intercultural cooperation. At the same time, students are made aware of the methodological difficulties of measuring social benefit and of integrating ecclesiastical initiatives into broader policies of social cohesion.

Learning outcomes include: (a) knowledge of the connection between Religion/Church and social economy; (b) understanding of the ecclesial and communal character of Christianity as a living social paradigm; (c) ability to search for relevant data using ICT; and (d) capacity to design or evaluate church-related social projects. Teaching (lectures, seminars, assignments) amounts to 30 hours; assessment may be through written work, tests, or oral examination, with clear criteria. Indicative bibliography covers the sociology of Christianity and studies on economic crisis and religiosity.

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## **5. Ecclesiastical Leadership and Human Resource Management**

This course studies the ministry of the ecclesiastical leader through the lens of Orthodox theology, patristic teaching, and contemporary theories of leadership and organization. Its central assumption is that church leadership is primarily pastoral and diaconal, not managerial in a secular sense; nevertheless, it requires concrete skills of organization, communication, team coordination, and responsible use of human potential within the parish or other ecclesiastical structures.

The course first presents the theological foundations of leadership: the bishop or presbyter as icon of Christ, leadership as service, authority exercised in love and humility, and the communal character of decision-making. It then analyzes the multiple fields in which an ecclesiastical leader acts (liturgy, teaching, pastoral care, administration, social outreach) and proposes ways of prioritizing them so that the core pastoral mission is not overshadowed by administrative burdens.

A substantial part of the course is devoted to human resource management in the Church: motivation and support of clergy and lay collaborators, conflict management, communication strategies, prevention of burnout, and creation of a cooperative parish culture. Case-based teaching illustrates how theological and ethical principles can guide very practical choices — allocation of tasks, evaluation of staff, or introduction of change in a community. In this way, students acquire not only knowledge but also attitudes and skills.

By the end, students will be able to: (a) map the main tasks of ecclesiastical leadership; (b) assess the importance of Orthodox pastoral leadership for the life of the Church; (c) recognize the ethical and theological dimension of administration; and (d) generate new ideas for improving pastoral structures. Teaching (lectures, seminars, project work) totals 30 hours. Assessment may be through written assignments, examinations, or presentations, with transparent criteria. Recommended sources include studies on modern ecclesiastical figures and articles from theological yearbooks.

## **6. Canon Law and Principles of Economic Administration and Utilization of Church Property**

This course provides an integrated framework for the lawful, transparent, and pastorally responsible management of church assets. It starts from the canonical and theological understanding of ecclesiastical property as something given to the Church for the service of worship, pastoral care, and charity, and shows how this understanding must harmonize with state legislation, financial best practices, and contemporary requirements of accountability.

The course distinguishes the various categories of church property according to their canonical and legal status (sacred objects, real estate, endowed property, income-producing assets) and explains the different ways in which each may or may not be disposed of. After a concise introduction to basic concepts of economic administration — budgeting, functional planning, strategic management, risk assessment, innovation, and problem-solving — students are guided through the existing legal framework governing ecclesiastical legal persons in Greece, together with relevant jurisprudence.

On this basis, the course presents concrete principles and practices for the administration and development of church property: drafting of organizational charts, setting of financial controls, ensuring compliance with both ecclesiastical ethos and civil law, planning of income-generating activities compatible with the Church's mission, and managing crises that may arise from economic or legal challenges. Particular emphasis is placed on the need for transparency, stewardship, and the avoidance of any conflict between economic activity and ecclesial witness.

Learning outcomes include: (a) familiarity with analytical models of economic administration for ecclesiastical organizations; (b) ability to apply principles for lawful and effective utilization of church property; (c) proficiency in locating legal, canonical, and financial information through ICT; and (d) readiness to propose innovative, yet canonically sound, solutions in the field of church economics. Teaching (lectures, seminars, assignments) is 30 hours in



total; assessment is carried out through written or oral examinations or project work, with clearly defined criteria. Indicative bibliography includes specialized works on the law of sacred things and articles from both theological and legal journals.

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## 2nd Semester:

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### 7. Theological Communication and the Mass Media

This course explores the relationship between theology and contemporary mass media, and asks how theological discourse can be communicated credibly, clearly, and responsibly through media such as television, radio, the press, the internet, and social media platforms. Its main aim is to equip postgraduate students with the conceptual tools to understand how media shape religious language, images, and narratives, and with practical skills for designing theological content that is suitable for public communication without losing its doctrinal depth.

The course begins with a brief historical overview of the encounter between Christianity and mass communication: from traditional ecclesiastical channels to the age of broadcasting and the current digital environment. It then presents basic theories of communication (sender–message–receiver models, framing, audience analysis, media logic) and shows how these can be applied to theological material. Special emphasis is placed on the opportunities and challenges the media create for the Church: amplification of the message, but also simplification; visibility, but also exposure to polemics and misinformation; possibilities for dialogue, but also risks of commodifying the sacred.

Students analyze different media formats (news reports, interviews, opinion pieces, podcasts, YouTube/video preaching, social media posts) and assess how theological ideas, liturgical life, and church positions are translated — or distorted — in them. Ethical issues are discussed throughout: truthfulness, respect for persons, representation of other faiths, and the responsibility of church communicators not to turn theology into propaganda. A practical component introduces basic principles of content creation (structuring a message, using accessible language, selecting visuals, timing and targeting posts) and of managing an ecclesiastical or theological presence on social media.

On completion, students will be able to: (a) describe the links between theology and the media ecosystem; (b) critically evaluate media coverage of religious themes; (c) apply communication theory to real theological interventions; (d) produce theologically sound, audience-aware media content; and (e) administer an online presence in a way that is consistent with the Church's ethos. Teaching is face to face or online, with systematic use of ICT (eclass, digital resources). Methods include lectures, seminars, text and media analysis, and small applied projects (30 hours total). Assessment may be by written assignment, media content project, or written/oral exam on clearly stated criteria. Indicative bibliography includes V. Gaitanis, *Essays in Communicative Theology* (Athens 2021), and articles from the *Scientific Yearbook of the Faculty of Theology, University of Athens*.

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## **8. Institutions and Structures of the Church of Greece**

This course offers an in-depth study of the institutional, legal, and organizational dimensions of the Church of Greece as they have been historically formed and as they function today in relation to the Greek state and society. Its goal is to help postgraduate students understand the Church not only as a theological and liturgical reality but also as a complex public institution governed by specific rules, bodies, and administrative procedures.

The course starts with the historical development of the Church of Greece, highlighting the key moments that shaped its autocephalous status and its relationship with the state. It then presents the main governing bodies (Holy Synod of the Hierarchy, Standing Holy Synod, diocesan/metropolitan structures), the way responsibilities are distributed, and how decisions are made and implemented. Students become familiar with the ecclesiastical charter, synodal regulations, and relevant state legislation, and they learn to read these texts together, since in Greece the Church often operates in a space where canon law and public law intersect.

A second axis of the course examines how internal structures (parishes, monasteries, church foundations, educational and charitable institutions) affect administration, financial management, and the application of ecclesiastical law. Case studies show the interaction of the Church with contemporary social, political, and economic parameters — for example, in education, social welfare, public discourse, or cultural heritage — illustrating the role of the Church as a significant national and cultural actor.

By the end of the course, students will be able to: (a) identify and describe the institutional sources of the Church of Greece; (b) explain the rules of governance that regulate its operation; (c) locate and process data using digital technologies; and (d) critically assess challenges and propose strategies for more effective ecclesiastical administration in changing environments.

Teaching (lectures, seminars, guided study) amounts to 30 hours and may be delivered face to face or online with ICT. Assessment is by written work, tests (including multiple-choice or essay questions), oral examination, or public presentation, always with clearly accessible criteria. Suggested bibliography includes works on the principle of legality in canon law (Eir. Christinaki, *The Principle of Legality in the Sacred Canons*, Athens 2018) and collections on modern ecclesiastical personalities, as well as the journals *Theologia* and the *Scientific Yearbook*.

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## **9. Religious Diplomacy and Soft Power: Trends and Strategies**

This course focuses on the role of religious actors — churches, ecclesiastical leaders, religious NGOs — in contemporary international relations and on the ways they exercise what is now widely termed “soft power”. It examines how religion, far from being a purely private matter, often serves as a channel of influence, mediation, and cultural presence in the international arena, sometimes complementing and sometimes challenging state diplomacy.

The first part of the course introduces basic concepts from International Relations and Political Science: power, soft power, public diplomacy, cultural

diplomacy, transnational actors. These are then reinterpreted in a theological-religious context: how can a church or a patriarchate exercise influence? Through what narratives, symbols, or networks? What is the role of interfaith dialogue, humanitarian action, educational and cultural exchanges, or peace initiatives as diplomatic instruments? Students study contemporary examples of religious diplomacy — for instance, mediation in conflicts, appeals for peace and human rights, environmental or social campaigns initiated by religious leaders — and analyze both their effectiveness and their limitations.

A second part explores the challenges that arise when religious and secular actors interact: issues of representation (who speaks for a religion?), of legitimacy, of geopolitical sensitivities, and of instrumentalization of religion by states. The course promotes an interdisciplinary approach that combines Theology, International Relations, and Communication, so that students can map the field and design realistic strategies for ecclesiastical institutions that operate nationally but are called to speak internationally.

By the end, students will be able to: (a) describe the diplomatic potential of religious organizations; (b) distinguish and evaluate theoretical and practical approaches to religious diplomacy; (c) use digital tools to research current initiatives and policies; and (d) generate new research ideas on the nexus “religion–soft power–global governance.” Teaching is by lectures, seminars, case studies, and project work (30 hours), either in person or online, using ICT. Assessment may be through a research paper, written exam (multiple choice, short or essay questions), or oral/public presentation, on transparently stated criteria. Indicative bibliography includes texts on reconciliation, dialogue, and church initiatives in international fora, as well as the *Scientific Yearbook* of the Faculty of Theology.

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## **10. Organization of Missionary Activity and Dialogue with the Contemporary World**

This course provides a systematic framework for organizing Orthodox missionary activity at both global and local levels, and for conducting meaningful dialogue with today's plural, secular, and often religiously indifferent world. It starts from the theology of mission — biblical and patristic foundations, the ecclesiological understanding of witness, the soteriological and eschatological horizon — and connects it with modern theories of dialogue and contextualization.

Students examine contemporary societies as “multiple modernities”, that is, as a mosaic of cultural, religious, and ideological environments, each requiring a differentiated missionary approach. Within this context, the course trains students to plan missionary action with clear objectives, knowledge of the local culture, respect for otherness, and an attitude of listening. Mission and dialogue are presented not as opposites but as complementary movements: proclamation that is hospitable, and dialogue that is rooted in identity.

Primary and secondary theological texts — patristic, modern Orthodox, ecumenical, inter-Christian and interreligious — are studied to illustrate different models of presence and witness. Historical and current case studies (Orthodox missions in Africa or Asia, interfaith platforms, dialogue with youth or with non-religious people) offer practical knowledge, methodologies, and “know-how” for those who will be called to lead initiatives in the field. Particular emphasis is placed on personal formation: self-knowledge of the agent, spiritual maturity, intercultural competence, and leadership.

On completion, students will be able to: (a) describe and organize missionary activity in specific contexts; (b) participate constructively in demanding interreligious and intercultural environments; (c) use ICT to collect and process data relevant to mission work; and (d) formulate new research questions on missiology and dialogue “at the borders”. Teaching (lectures, seminars, field-related study, projects) totals 30 hours, delivered in person or online. Assessment is by written work, exams, or public presentation, on

explicit criteria. Recommended bibliography includes Greek missiological works (E. & Il. Voulgarakis) and articles from *Theologia* and *Salt*.

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## **11. Religious Tourism and Psychosocial Symbolism**

This course centers on religious tourism related to biblical and early Christian figures — especially Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, and John of the Apocalypse — and studies the psychosocial dynamics that make such journeys and pilgrimages meaningful for individuals and communities today. It treats religious tourism not merely as travel to a sacred site but as a symbolic, experiential process through which visitors encounter places and objects invested with sacred significance in the collective consciousness.

The course begins with definitions and basic concepts of religious tourism, tracing its historical evolution from early Christian pilgrimage to modern organized tours. It then examines the psychological motives of pilgrims/tourists (search for meaning, healing, identity reinforcement, communality) and the social impacts on host communities. A key innovation of the course is the introduction of the term “psychosocial symbolism”: the study of how contact with sacred topoi, relics, monuments, and liturgical spaces activates personal and collective symbolic worlds.

Students learn methods for interpreting symbols, rituals, and sacred spaces so that the visit becomes a transformative, “awakening” experience through representational and symbolic learning. In a separate unit, the course addresses the management and development of religious tourism: suitable promotion strategies, issues of marketing that respect the sacred character of the site, and the integration of religious tourism into sustainable development with a positive environmental footprint.

By the end, students will be able to: (a) articulate the link between religious tourism and the biblical tradition; (b) approach religious symbols, rituals, and pilgrimages in an experiential and interpretive way; (c) search for and process

data using ICT; and (d) design or evaluate initiatives in religious tourism with sensitivity to culture, environment, and community life. Teaching is through lectures, seminars, possibly field-related activities, and project writing (30 hours), in person or online with ICT. Assessment is through written tests, assignments, or oral/public presentation, on clearly stated criteria. Indicative bibliography includes works on Pauline pilgrimage commemorations (e.g. *The Apostle Paul, 1950 Years after his Martyrdom*, Holy Metropolis of Ilia 2017) and articles from *Theologia*.

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## **12. Ecclesiastical Prosopography and Models of Leadership**

This course uses the literary genre of ecclesiastical prosopography — narratives, biographies, hagiographies, and other portrayals of church figures — as a lens through which to study the ethos and practice of Christian leadership. Its core claim is that the Church's tradition has preserved, in narrative form, concrete models of service, discernment, and governance which can inform today's pastoral and administrative leadership.

The course traces the development of prosopographical writing from early hagiographical biographies to later synaxaria and modern biographical collections. Students analyze how virtues such as humility, wisdom, discernment, integrity, justice, sincerity, and self-sacrifice are presented, and how methods of exercising leadership — initiative, empirical/guided mentoring, supervision, inductive and experiential learning, collaboration, empathy, and legitimate “overstepping” for the sake of the flock — are embedded in these narratives. In this way, prosopography is shown to be not merely edifying literature but also a repository of leadership pedagogy.

A second axis connects historical models to current challenges in ecclesiastical and public life: leadership in multicultural contexts, in times of crisis, in social diakonia, or in church administration. Through textual testimonies, the course clarifies the role of church leaders as bearers of spiritual guidance and social cohesion. Different leadership types are identified — pastoral leadership,



charismatic leadership, leadership by example — and critically assessed, encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue with leadership studies and organizational theory.

On completion, students will be able to: (a) use ecclesiastical prosopography as a historical and theological source; (b) identify the moral traits of Christian leadership; (c) employ digital tools to search for biographical and hagiographical material; and (d) generate new research ideas on leadership formation in the Church. Teaching (lectures, seminars, text analysis, project work) totals 30 hours, in person or online with ICT. Assessment may be by written assignment, exam (multiple-choice, short or essay questions), oral examination, or public presentation, always with explicit criteria accessible to students. Recommended bibliography includes Emm. Karageorgoudis, *Ecclesiastical Personalities of the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Thessaloniki 2022), and articles from *Theologia*.

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