

# RELS305

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## Course Summary

**Course :** RELS305

**Title :**

Theologies of Social Responsibility: Food, Faith, Community & Justice

**Length of Course :** 8   **Faculty :**

**Prerequisites :** N/A   **Credit Hours :** 3

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## Description

### Course Description:

This course provides an exploration of theologies and practices related to agitation, direct action for social change, and responsible action in the religious setting. This course dives into how identity, power, and suffering shape historical judgments about the intersection of religion and ethics [and social action]. Course materials feature the close reading of a variety of primary texts (historic and contemporary), including autobiographies, letters, sermons, poems, and treatises. Figures considered may include John Wesley, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Octavia Albert, Eberhard Arnold, Martin Luther King Jr., Pauli Murray, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Rev William Barber II, Jean Vanier, Daniel Berrigan, Joan Chittister, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Brian Bantum, Chanequa Walker-Barnes, and The Sister Fund.

### Course Scope:

This course focuses on the ways in which diverse religious traditions conceive of and practically respond to critical issues in the building of a just society. Challenging conversations both defining social responsibility and then framing it theologically and ethically in order to move proactively in the face of deep hardship and/or injustice faced by individuals and by communities of all kinds — around the globe— provides the framework and focus for this course. In this course, we'll consider questions like:

- How do communities in general, and faith communities in particular, find ways to agree on what is right or appropriate or even “righteous” action in light of difficult and sometimes intractable social challenges?
  - How might hunger be ended?
  - How might homelessness be addressed?
  - How do we stop gender violence, and human trafficking?
  - What about access to education, provision, safety — and freedom?
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- Are people of faith responsible to stay out of civic issues and abstain from offering active responses to world conflicts? Or should they hop into them in defense of the weak and vulnerable?
- What faith-based endeavors are changing the world for the better?

Taking a global view, this course will explore a number of works whose common threads are food, faith, community/hospitality, and justice. By looking to history, narrative, and art to frame our conversations about how to address these kinds of needs and for ideas on how to move forward in thinking about and supporting thriving communities and individual well-being, this course explores ways the questions above have been answered by public theologians, by powerful preachers, and by community activists through time and from the perspective of multiple religious traditions—all striving to live faithfully and authentically at the intersection of ethics and faith.

You will encounter life stories (as well as theological arguments) from Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Mormonism, among others—learning about how their common passion for justice and social responsibility has been sparked by unique religious and cultural contexts. We will also explore how the communal challenges and religious practices that shape the individual and the community within the faith tradition intersect our primary discussion as well as the ways food rituals, dietary customs, cultural traditions, and commitment to hospitality play a key role in establishing and maintaining religious and ethnic identity in a pluralistic world. All of these dynamic elements of religious identity form a vital part of daily life and shape attitudes toward social responsibility, and the commitment to work for justice.

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## Objectives

After successfully completing this course students will be able to:

- CO1 Analyze the role religion and key religious leaders have played (historically and at present) in social responsibility, specifically resolving food insecurity, environmental degradation, and in tending to the unhoused, the abandoned, the orphan, and the refugee.
- CO2 Explore religious traditions and world views different from one's own, using practical and applied methods including ethnography, interview, and informed reflection.
- CO3 Formulate a response to social challenges critical to one's own family, neighborhood, identity group or faith community.
- CO4 Identify some of the unique and innovative ways religious rituals and cultural traditions related to food and hospitality provide solutions to social challenges or offer models for action that might be applied to issues of justice and communal responsibility—globally and locally.

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## Outline

### Week 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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#### LO

- 1.3 Explore personal narratives from individuals facing housing insecurity
  - 1.5 Examine the theological positions held by the Catholic and Orthodox traditions concerning issues of freedom and justice
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- 2.1 Recount key teachings that intersect and that are different from those of your own faith community (or own faith position)
- 3.2 Explore social challenges identified by various entities such as Elders in your community and the formalized calendar of seasons.

## Reading & Resources

### Week 1 Lesson

## Assignments

### Week 1 Discussion

## Week 2: CREATION & ECOLOGY

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### LO

- 2.1 Recount key teachings that intersect and that are different from those of your own faith community (or own faith position)
- 2.2 Examine closely the traditions and worldview of a religion that is new to you or about which you know very little

## Week 2 Reading & Resources

### Week 2 Lesson

## Assignments

### Week 2 Discussion

### Week 2 Assignment #1 – THINK: Identity, Diversity & Activism [Analysis Paper]

## Week 3: POVERTY & FOOD INSECURITY

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### LO

- 2.1 Recount key teachings that intersect and that are different from those of your own faith community (or own faith position)
- 3.2 Explore social challenges identified by various entities such as Elders in your community and the formalized calendar of seasons.
- 4.2 Locate primary resources (including religious texts) that discuss how "the faithful" should respond to issues of inequality, oppression, or need.

## Required Readings

### Week 3 Lesson

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## Assignments

### Week 3 Discussion

## **Week 4: POVERTY, HOUSING & HOSPITALITY**

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### LO

- 1.1 Identify how food insecurity has been addressed by three or more non-western religious groups
- 4.1 Select examples of rituals or cultural traditions that seem to model hospitality.
- 4.3 Investigate how formal faith communities -- those who live together and not just worship together -- are uniquely addressing food and housing insecurity.

## **Required Readings**

### Week 4 Lesson

## Assignments

### Week 4 Discussion

## **Week5: WOUNDEDNESS, TRAUMA & JUSTICE**

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### LO

- 1.5 Examine the theological positions held by the Catholic and Orthodox traditions concerning issues of freedom and justice
- 3.1 Research and then defend a position on restorative justice different from your own.
- 3.2 Explore social challenges identified by various entities such as Elders in your community and the formalized calendar of seasons.

## **Required Readings**

### Week 5 Lesson

## Assignments

### Week 5 Discussion

### Week 5 Assignment #2 -- EAT— Restaurant Evaluation [Field Work]

## **Week 6: JUSTICE, POLITICS & NON-VIOLENCE**

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### LO

- 1.5 Examine the theological positions held by the Catholic and Orthodox traditions concerning issues of freedom and justice
  - 2.2 Examine closely the traditions and worldview of a religion that is new to you or about which you know very little
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## Required Readings

Week 6 Lesson

## Assignments

Week 6 - No Discussion/ Prep work for Assignment #3

## **Week 7: CHALLENGE OF EMBODIMENT**

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### LO

- 4.2 Discuss how "the faithful" should respond to issues of inequality, oppression, or need
- 4.3 Examine how formal faith communities -- those who live together and not just worship together --are uniquely addressing food and housing insecurity.

## Required Readings

Week 7 Lesson

## Assignments

Week 7 Discussion

Week 7 Assignment #3 – ACT: What have you heard & what will you do?

[Multi-Modal Presentation]

## **Week 8: FEASTING, FREEDOM, HEALING & INTERFAITH EFFORTS @ TIKKUN OLAM**

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### LO

- 2.2 Examine closely the traditions and worldview of a religion that is new to you or about which you know very little
- 3.1 Discuss a position on restorative justice different from your own.
- 4.1 Select examples of rituals or cultural traditions that seem to model hospitality.

## Required Readings

Week 8 Lesson

## Assignments

Week 8 Discussion: Share Course Artifacts [ Zoom option available]

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# Evaluation

## Grading:

### Discussions 50%

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Creation & Social  
Responsibility

Week 3: Poverty & Food  
Insecurity

Week 4: Poverty, Homelessness, and  
Hospitality

Week 5: Woundedness Trauma & Just

Week 6: Idea Engagement & Prep  
work /*Non-graded*

Week 7: Challenge of Embodiment

**Week 8: Tikkun Olam** – Sharing &  
Acting/ *Live Media option*

### Assignments 50%

THINK — Identity, Diversity  
& Activism Analysis Paper —  
Due Week #2

EAT — Restaurant  
Evaluation –Due Week #5

ACT — What have you heard  
and what will you do?  
Media presentation- Due  
Week #7

## Materials

All materials for this course are Open Access Electronic sources. Students can link to these within the Classroom or will be guided to them in tandem with weekly Lesson material.

## Course Guidelines

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## **Citation and Reference Style**

- Students will follow MLA format as the sole citation and reference style used in written assignments submitted as part of coursework to the Humanities Department.
- Please note that no formal citation style is graded on discussion assignments in the School of Arts & Humanities—only attribution of sources (please see details regarding discussion communication below).

## **Tutoring**

[Tutor.com](#) offers online homework help and learning resources by connecting students to certified tutors for one-on-one help. AMU and APU students are eligible for 10 free hours of tutoring provided by APUS. Tutors are available 24/7 unless otherwise noted. Tutor.com also has a SkillCenter Resource Library offering educational resources, worksheets, videos, websites and career help. Accessing these resources does not count against tutoring hours and is also available

## **Late Assignments**

### **School of Arts & Humanities Late Policy**

Students are expected to submit classroom assignments by the posted due date and to complete the course according to the published class schedule. As adults, students, and working professionals, I understand you must manage competing demands on your time. Should you need additional time to complete an assignment, please contact me before the due date so we can discuss the situation and determine an acceptable resolution.

Work posted or submitted after the assignment due date will be reduced by 10% of the potential total score possible for each day late up to a total of five days, including discussion posts/replies, quizzes, and assignments. Beginning on the sixth day late through the end of the course, late work, including discussion posts/replies, quizzes, and assignments, will be accepted with a grade reduction of 50% of the potential total score earned.

## **Turn It In**

Assignments are automatically submitted to Turnitin.com within the course. Turnitin.com will analyze an assignment submission and report a similarity score. Your assignment submission is automatically processed through the assignments area of the course when you submit your work.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

Academic Dishonesty incorporates more than plagiarism, which is using the work of others without citation. Academic dishonesty includes any use of content purchased or retrieved from web services such as CourseHero.com or Scribd. Additionally, allowing your work to be placed on such web services is academic dishonesty, as it is enabling the dishonesty of others. The copy and pasting of content from any web page, without citation as a direct quote, is academic dishonesty. When in doubt, do not copy/paste, and always cite.

## **Submission Guidelines**

Some assignments may have very specific requirements for formatting (such as font, margins, etc) and submission file type (such as .docx, .pdf, etc). See the assignment instructions for details. In general, standard file types such as those associated with Microsoft Office are preferred, unless otherwise specified.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure all submitted work can be accessed and opened by the instructor.

## **Disclaimer Statement**

Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of a particular group or class.

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## Communicating on the Discussion

Discussions are the heart of the interaction in this course. The more engaged and lively the exchanges, the more interesting and fun the course will be. Only substantive comments will receive credit. Although there is a final posting day/time after which the instructor will grade and provide feedback, it is not sufficient to wait until the last day to contribute your comments/questions on the discussion. The purpose of the discussions is to actively participate in an on-going discussion about the assigned content.

“Substantive” means comments that contribute something new and important to the discussion. Thus, a message that simply says “I agree” is not substantive. A substantive comment contributes a new idea or perspective, a good follow-up question to a point made, offers a response to a question, provides an example or illustration of a key point, points out an inconsistency in an argument, etc.

As a class, if we run into conflicting viewpoints, we must respect each individual's own opinion. Hateful and hurtful comments towards other individuals, students, groups, peoples, and/or societies will not be tolerated. Students must post a response to the weekly discussions prompt and post the required number of replies to other students – refer to the grading rubric and/or discussion instructions for specific expectations on number of replies and requirements.

The main response to the discussion is due mid-week – refer to the grading rubric and/or discussion instructions for specific expectations. Late main response posts to a discussion may not be accepted without prior instructor approval. Replies must be posted in the week due and replies after the end of each week may not be graded.

## University Policies

### [Student Handbook](#)

- [Drop/Withdrawal policy](#)
- [Extension Requests](#)
- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Appeals](#)
- [Disability Accommodations](#)

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