

T/RS 122: Introduction to Christian Theology

Theology II • Fall 2026

[Cyrus Olsen, D.Phil.](#) • 3 credits • Prerequisite: T/RS 121 (Introduction to the Bible)

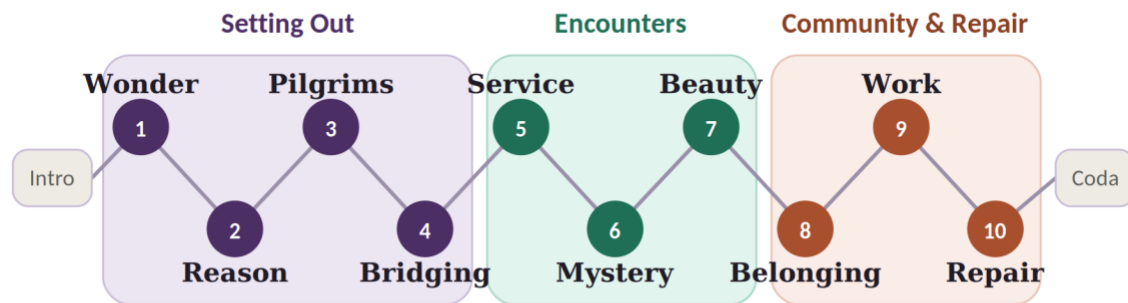
Meetings: Tuesday / Thursday, 8:30–9:45 a.m. • Saint Thomas Hall (STT) 414

Office hours: Tuesday / Thursday, 10:00–11:30 a.m. • Loyola Science Center (LSC), 4th floor (old wing, before the glass stairwell), Room 414

Required text: [Theological Method, Imagination, and Inquiry](#) (Olsen; Kendall Hunt, 2026)

The Course as a Journey

T/RS 122 • ten chapters, three phases, one word heard twice



One journey • three phases • bookended by Shema ('hear')

Our route this term: ten chapters across three phases, opening and closing on the Shema.

Course Description

(Prerequisite: T/RS 121) A survey of key Christian themes: creation, Christ's incarnation and redemption, the Church and sacraments, Christian personhood, and the practice of prayer, virtue, and hope for the future.

This course asks no prior background in Christianity or Catholicism — only your curiosity and a willingness to listen. We proceed as a journey in three phases — Setting Out, Encounters, and Community & Repair — tracing ten paired terms drawn from Hebrew, Greek, and other traditions as a single idea moves across languages and centuries. Our aim is to cultivate capacities, not to settle belief: to learn how theology thinks, imagines, and inquires, building on the biblical literacy you bring from Introduction to the Bible. The book — and this course — open and close on one word, the Shema's "hear," so that you might arrive at a first hearing and then a second, more attentive one.

Learning Outcomes

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

1. Identify and analyze key themes and texts of Christian life and thought.
2. Demonstrate Christianity's interaction with aspects of culture and rationality.
3. Recognize the ways Christ and the Church have been understood in history.
4. Articulate the Christian understanding of the human person in relation to other views.
5. Appreciate the significance and power of Christian practice (sacraments, prayer, virtues).
6. Engage such themes as creation, covenant, sin, and salvation in Christianity.
7. Relate Christian insights to the concerns of our lives today.

A chapter-by-chapter mapping of these outcomes appears in the alignment appendix at the end of this syllabus.

Course Schedule

The term follows the book’s three-part arc, and the three cumulative unit exams land at phase completions: Exam 1 closes Setting Out, Exam 2 closes Encounters, and the comprehensive Final crowns the arc with Chapter 10. Exam 3 keeps its fixed pre-Thanksgiving date as the last cumulative checkpoint before the Final. Each chapter runs two sessions in a steady lecture-with-small-group rhythm; the term opens by bridging from Introduction to the Bible and re-activates that reading at natural points.

Exam anchors

Exam	Coverage	Weight	Date
Exam 1	Chapters 1–4 (Setting Out)	10%	Tue, Oct 6
Exam 2	Chapters 1–7 (through Encounters)	15%	Thu, Nov 5
Exam 3	Chapters 1–9	20%	Tue, Nov 24
Final	Chapters 1–10 (comprehensive)	25%	Finals wk · Dec 15–19

Date	Chapter & Theme	Focus & Key Terms	Readings & In-Class Engagement
PHASE 1 · SETTING OUT — Chapters 1–4 (Sep 1 – Oct 6)			
Tue Sep 1	Introduction — “Hearing the Music”	Course launch; from timeline to theme	The bridge from <i>Introduction to the Bible</i> : you have walked Genesis→Revelation; now we learn the method. Percy; Ricoeur (first / second naïveté); the <i>Shema</i> as listening. Orientation question.
Thu Sep 3	Ch 1 · Wonder — <i>Yirab</i> , <i>Thaumazein</i>	Wisdom through the centuries	Genesis 1; Job 28; Plato’s <i>thaumazein</i> . Awe journal launched · Pause-and-Reflect (small groups).
Tue Sep 8	Ch 1 · Wonder (cont.)	Duty of delight; the unknown God	Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> I; Acts 17 (Areopagus); Keltner on awe. Blue-book retrieval warm-up.
Thu Sep 10 ¹	Ch 2 · Reason — <i>Hochmah</i> , <i>Memra</i> , <i>Logos</i>	Reason in pursuit of truth	John 1 (<i>Logos</i>); wisdom literature (recall: <i>Intro to the Bible</i>). Concept-mapping.
Tue Sep 15	Ch 2 · Reason (cont.)	Faith and reason	Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> VII–VIII; Aquinas, <i>ST I</i> q.1; <i>Fides et Ratio</i> . Disputatio: “Can faith be rational?”
Thu Sep 17	Ch 3 · Pilgrims — <i>Derek</i> , <i>Halakhab</i> , <i>Methodos</i>	The pilgrimage of knowing	Wilderness & exile–return; Isaiah 40:3 (recall: <i>Intro to the Bible</i>). Class mapping exercise.
Tue Sep 22	Ch 3 · Pilgrims (cont.)	Embodied knowing; the way as method	Jubilee; a contemporary pilgrimage / migration case study. Walking-meditation exercise.
Thu Sep 24	Ch 4 · Bridging — <i>Kesbet</i> , <i>Merkabah</i> , <i>Iris</i>	Bridging seen and unseen; sacramentality	<i>Kesbet</i> / rainbow; Ezekiel’s <i>merkabah</i> (recall: <i>Intro to the Bible</i>); <i>Iris</i> across traditions. Visual exegesis.
Tue Sep 29	Ch 4 · Bridging (cont.)	Thresholds as theology	Dante, <i>Paradiso</i> (threshold cantos); sign and symbol. Close reading · chavruta pairs.
Thu Oct 1	Phase 1 Review · Setting Out	Consolidation	Retrieval games across Ch 1–4; paired-term review; Exam 1 format walkthrough.
Tue Oct 6 · EXAM 1 — Chapters 1–4 (Setting Out) · 10% Written synthesis; the cumulative base for the term.			
PHASE 2 · ENCOUNTERS — Chapters 5–7 (Oct 8 – Nov 5)			
Thu Oct 8	Ch 5 · Service — <i>Mesorah</i> , <i>Shimmush</i> , <i>Diakonia</i>	Service through transmission	Paul on <i>paradosis</i> / handing-on; the apprenticeship model. <i>Mesorah</i> as received wisdom.

Date	Chapter & Theme	Focus & Key Terms	Readings & In-Class Engagement
Fall Break · Oct 10–13 — no class Tue Oct 13 (classes resume Wed Oct 14)			
Thu Oct 15	Ch 5 · Service (cont.)	Tradition as social service	Leo XIII, <i>Rerum Novarum</i> ; <i>diakonia</i> and justice. Small-group application.
Tue Oct 20	Ch 6 · Mystery — <i>Galab</i> , <i>Apokalypsis</i> , <i>Energeia</i>	Unveiling mystery through intellect	Apocalyptic “unveiling”; Daniel / Revelation (recall: <i>Intro to the Bible</i>). Reverence before what exceeds.
Thu Oct 22	Ch 6 · Mystery (cont.)	Intellect and the deepening mystery	Augustine’s interiority; Teilhard. Group analysis.
Tue Oct 27	Ch 7 · Beauty — <i>Tor</i> , <i>Kalokagathia</i>	The way of beauty	Genesis <i>tor</i> ; Plato, <i>Symposium</i> ; <i>kalokagathia</i> . Visual exegesis.
Thu Oct 29	Ch 7 · Beauty (cont.)	Beauty’s slow work (<i>dilatatio</i>)	Dante, <i>Paradiso</i> XXXIII; Balthasar on aesthetics. Textual analysis.
Tue Nov 3	Phase 2 Review · Encounters	Consolidation on the base of 1–4	Retrieval across Ch 1–7; cumulative connections; Exam 2 walkthrough.
Thu Nov 5 · EXAM 2 — Chapters 1–7 (through Encounters) · 15% Cumulative written synthesis.			
PHASE 3 · COMMUNITY & REPAIR — Chapters 8–10 (Nov 10 – Dec 10)			
Tue Nov 10	Ch 8 · Belonging — <i>Chavruta</i> , <i>Kehillah</i> , <i>Koinonia</i>	Participation across difference	<i>Koinonia</i> ; Vatican II; <i>Ubuntu</i> ; enlarged by the other. Chavruta (paired reading).
Thu Nov 12	Ch 8 · Belonging (cont.)	Dialogue across difference	<i>Laudato Si’</i> ; solidarity across difference. Disputatio.
Tue Nov 17	Ch 9 · Work — <i>Avodah</i> , <i>Leitourgia</i>	Work of the people; liturgy	<i>Avodah</i> / <i>leitourgia</i> ; Eucharist as the people’s work; Aquinas, <i>ST</i> III q.73.
Thu Nov 19	Ch 9 · Work (cont.)	Labor, Sabbath, the rhythm of creation	The Sabbath pattern; a labor-and-technology case study. Concept-mapping.
Tue Nov 24 · EXAM 3 — Chapters 1–9 · 20% (last class before Thanksgiving) Cumulative synthesis. Uncapped redemption applies to your lowest completed unit exam.			
Thanksgiving Break · Nov 25–29 — no class Thu Nov 26 (classes resume Mon Nov 30)			
Tue Dec 1	Ch 10 · Repair — <i>Kintsugi</i> , <i>Lev Nishbar</i> , <i>Tikkun Olam</i>	The golden seam	<i>Kintsugi</i> as theology; <i>lev nishbar</i> (contrite heart); <i>tikkun olam</i> (repair of the world).
Thu Dec 3	Ch 10 · Repair (cont.)	The fractures are where the light enters	The mending as shared vocation. Visual exegesis (<i>kintsugi</i>).
Tue Dec 8 ²	Synthesis & Coda · “The Music You Have Become”	Whole-book integration	The <i>Shema</i> frame completed; capacities, not conclusions. (No exam — no-exams week.)
Thu Dec 10 ²	Final Review & Course Reflection	Preparing the comprehensive final	Retrieval across Ch 1–10; the throughline spine. (No exam — no-exams week.)
FINALS WEEK · Dec 15–19 · COMPREHENSIVE FINAL — Chapters 1–10 · 25% Date & time per the Registrar’s final-exam grid.			

Notes

¹ Sept 10 is the Holy Spirit Liturgy.

² Dec 8 and Dec 10 fall within the last week of classes (Dec 8–14), when no in-class examinations are permitted — hence synthesis and review, with the graded Final held in the finals period (Dec 15–19).

Calendar anchors (2026–27 University of Scranton undergraduate calendar): classes begin Aug 31; Labor Day (no classes) Sept 7; Fall Break Oct 10–13, classes resume Wed Oct 14; last class before Thanksgiving Tue Nov 24, classes resume Mon Nov 30; last week of classes (no exams) Dec 8–14; finals Dec 15–19.

Grading

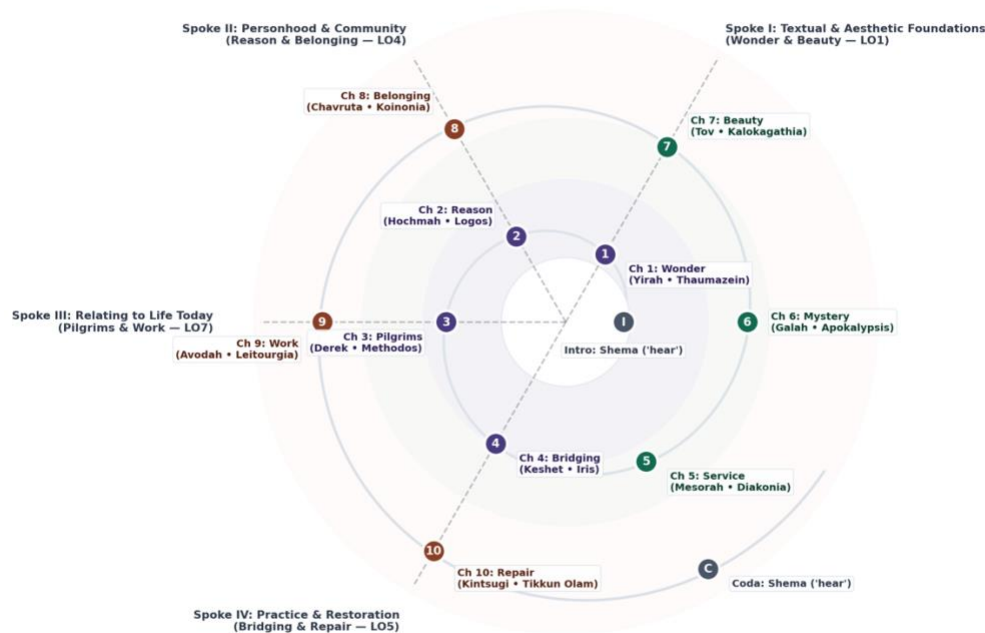
Your grade rewards process as well as mastery. The cumulative-building exams (each covering all prior chapters) reward steady retention rather than cramming, and the redemption clause keeps a single difficult exam from defining the term.

Category	Weight	Description
Three unit exams + comprehensive final	70%	Exam 1 (10%), Exam 2 (15%), Exam 3 (20%), Final (25%); cumulative-building coverage.
In-class engagements	10%	Disputatio, chavruta, concept-mapping, retrieval games, visual exegesis, blue-book warmups; sampled periodically.
Chapter checkpoints	10%	Graded complete / incomplete at the chapter level; short post-reading checks.
Attendance & participation	10%	Consistent attendance, preparation, and respectful engagement in class dialogue.
Total	100%	

Exam redemption (“failing forward”): because each exam is cumulative, a stronger later performance can lift your *lowest* completed unit exam — uncapped. The comprehensive Final is not subject to redemption. This rewards genuine growth across the term.

A Spiral Course Journey: Learning Outcomes & Themes Re-Centered

T/RS 122 • Introduction to Christian Theology • Fall 2026



Revisiting Core Themes in Concentric Tiers:
 • Inner Ring: Setting Out (Chapters 1-4) • Middle Ring: Encounters (Chapters 5-7) • Outer Ring: Community & Repair (Chapters 8-10)
 The spiral progression visualizes chronological flow, while radial spokes show thematic alignments.
 As we spiral outward, we return to the same learning outcomes (LOs) at deeper levels of theological reflection.

Course Policies

These policies are written to support your learning, to communicate expectations clearly, and to express my commitment to your success — in a spirit of collaboration, fairness, and *cura personalis*, care for the whole person.

Attendance and Participation

I hope you will join us for all class sessions, since your voice and presence enrich our shared learning. Theology is best learned in dialogue. If you need to miss class for health, family, work, or other important reasons, please let me know and we will make a plan to keep you connected to the material and your peers. Consistent engagement is essential; please note that more than six absences results in a course failure (“F”).

Late Work

Unexpected circumstances arise. If you anticipate difficulty submitting on time, communicate with me in advance whenever possible. Late work remains eligible for partial credit (typically 50%). The goal is to balance fairness to the class with flexibility, so you can still demonstrate your learning even when timing is difficult.

Office Hours

I warmly invite you to office hours — not only for questions about assignments but for conversation about your interests, challenges, or how this course connects to your life. If the posted times do not work, email me and we will arrange an alternative.

Academic Honesty and Integrity

Our class follows the University’s Honor Code, and I assume your best intentions. Part of academic honesty is giving credit to the ideas and words of others; if you are ever unsure how to cite a source, please ask. The Academic Code of Honesty is set forth in The University of Scranton Student Handbook.

My Reporting Obligations as a Required Reporter

All faculty members are required to report incidents of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct involving students. I cannot keep such information confidential, but I will keep it as private as I can and will not report anything without first discussing it with you. I would bring it to the University’s Associate Vice President for Institutional Compliance & Title IX, Elizabeth M. Garcia, or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator, Diana M. Collins-Gilmore. The University’s Counseling Center (570-941-7620) is a confidential resource; counselors have no obligation to report to the Title IX Coordinator.

Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to an educational, residential, and working environment free from harassment and discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, gender, sex, pregnancy and related conditions, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, sex characteristics, sex stereotypes, age, disability, genetic information, national origin, ethnicity, family responsibilities, marital status, veteran or military status, citizenship status, or any other status protected by applicable law. Concerns may be directed to Elizabeth M. Garcia, AVP for Institutional Compliance & Title IX (570-941-6645, elizabeth.garcia2@scranton.edu) or Deputy Title IX Coordinator Diana M. Collins-Gilmore (570-941-6645, diana.collinsgilmore@scranton.edu).

Mental Health

Many students experience mental health challenges in college, and seeking help is the smart and courageous thing to do. Resources include: the Counseling Center (6th Floor, O’Hara Hall; 570-941-7620) for free, confidential counseling; confidential online Mental Health Screenings; the Dean of Students Office (201 DeNaples Center; 570-941-7680) for private support; and the Center for Health Education & Wellness (CHEW) for skills-based well-being programs.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may be eligible for reasonable academic and non-academic accommodations, with relevant and current documentation. Please contact the Office of Student Support and Success (disabilityservices@scranton.edu, 570-941-4038) to determine eligibility for academic accommodations; for non-academic accommodations, contact the Office of Institutional Compliance and Title IX (non-academic-accom@scranton.edu, 570-941-6645). I am glad to help you connect with these resources.

Writing Center

The Writing Center offers one-on-one feedback from trained peer consultants at any stage of the writing process. Make an appointment through the my.scranton portal (OSSS Card > Writing Center Scheduler) or contact writing-center@scranton.edu.

First-Generation College Students

First-generation students are those whose parents/guardians have not completed a four-year degree. This course is designed to support all students, including first-gen students. Please visit me during office hours with any questions — even if I'm unsure of the answer, I'll connect you to resources. For more, contact Dr. Shaefny Grays, THR1VE Program Coordinator (thr1ve@scranton.edu).

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Scranton campus was built on land formerly cared for by the Lenape, the Monsey, the Shawnee, and the Susquehannocks. As we live, learn, and love on this campus, may we be ever mindful of their absence from this place and commit ourselves to stewarding this land with care and compassion as we navigate our communities toward justice grounded in knowledge and wisdom.

Pronouns

Using the pronouns a person has indicated is both professional and polite, and I ask that all members of our class do so. If you have questions, feel free to look up more information at mypronouns.org or email me.

SLO Throughline — Outcomes by Chapter

T/RS 122 · Introduction to Christian Theology · Fall 2026 — each chapter mapped to the outcomes it advances

Chapter	LO1	LO2	LO3	LO4	LO5	LO6	LO7	Exam reach			
Setting Out · Chapters 1–4								E1	E2	E3	Fin
Ch 1 · Wonder Yirah · Thaumazein	●					●	●				
Ch 2 · Reason Hochmah · Logos	●	●		●							
Ch 3 · Pilgrims Derek · Methodos	●		●								
Ch 4 · Bridging Keshet · Iris		●			●	●					
Encounters · Chapters 5–7											
Ch 5 · Service Mesorah · Diakonia	●		●								
Ch 6 · Mystery Galah · Apokalypsis	●			●							
Ch 7 · Beauty Tov · Kalokagathia	●	●			●						
Community & Repair · Chapters 8–10											
Ch 8 · Belonging Chavruta · Koinonia			●	●							
Ch 9 · Work Avodah · Leitourgia		●			●						
Ch 10 · Repair Kintsugi · Tikkun Olam				●	●		●				

Cumulative exam coverage

Exam 1 · Ch 1–4 · 10% · Oct 6

Exam 2 · Ch 1–7 · 15% · Nov 5

Exam 3 · Ch 1–9 · 20% · Nov 24

Final · Ch 1–10 · 25% · Dec 15–19

Learning outcomes

LO1 Key themes & texts

LO2 Culture & rationality

LO3 Christ & Church in history

LO4 The human person

LO5 Christian practice

LO6 Creation, covenant, sin, salvation

LO7 Relating to life today

● Chapter advances this outcome (3 per chapter). Exam spans show cumulative coverage down the term.