During the academic year of 2010-2011, department members developed a proposal for a 36-credit Master of Arts in Theology and Society degree, hopefully to begin in fall of 2012.

The program design has an integrative approach to the study of the various theological disciplines and to theology’s engagement with society and culture. Courses in Bible, historical theology, ethics, systematic theology, and interreligious relations with one another, encouraging an interdisciplinary grasp of the study of theology. The courses also explicitly relate to the 21st century U.S. and global contexts.

The proposal notes that the program offers an essential contribution to the mission of SJU to “foster a lived awareness of the challenging and mutually enriching interaction between Christian faith and diverse contemporary culture.” In keeping with SJU’s Jesuit character, the program aims to prepare “men and women with and for others” by integrating the study of theology with current issues in and features of American society.

In addition, the proposal cites the university’s 2010-12 Bridge Plan that specifies to continue Saint Joseph’s “momentum towards preeminence” there should be an “emphasis on SJU’s Catholic Jesuit education.” However, of the 21 U.S. Jesuit institutions with an enrollment over 4,000 students, Saint Joseph’s is by far the largest (of only three universities) that does not offer graduate study in theology, ministry, religious studies or a related field.

A supportive note from key leaders in the Diocese of Camden—Most Rev. Joseph Galante, Bishop of Camden; Msgr. Dr. Roger McGrath, Vicar General; Sr. Roseann Quinn, Delegate for Lifelong Formation; and Linda Robinson, Director of Lay Ministry Formation—praised the proposed Masters degree for “integrating the study of theology with contemporary issues and challenges in American society. Such an integration is critical for those in leadership roles in parishes, women and men committed to serving the Church and its people in that sacred marketplace where society and Church converge.”

The proposal has been submitted to the Office of the Provost to begin the approval process to implement this exciting new program of study.

From the Chair

Dr. Shawn Krahmer

They were so thrilled to be in a supporting, loving, educational environment that they were there, despite the general strike. So were their teachers. Public schools were closed, buses weren’t running, but these kids loved being there so much they had made the effort to walk to school anyway. I am in awe of those who possess the gifts and tenacity to work with these children and for them.

There were posters all over the building, a renovated home, posters identifying children’s rights and responsibilities: “All children have a right to food. Children have a right to be treated with kindness. They have a right to know both their father and their mother…”

The paragraphs above are a small part of my reflections from a recent study tour to Bolivia with students in my “Faith, Justice and Jesuit Missions in Bolivia” class.

Each time I return to campus after this week abroad, I find that I am further changed. I feel the disconnect between how much I possess and the generosity of those who have less. I have much less patience with SJU students who don’t value the privilege of the education they have the chance to acquire. I also know that I must keep teaching this course, although it isn’t comfortable and familiar territory or the discipline in which I formally trained. What else can I do with such revelatory experiences if I don’t use them to teach theology, so that there will be more and more graduates of SJU who understand and care about the plight of the poor?
Faculty Publications

Gerald J. Beyer


“Przyladly si nam Tischner dzisiaj,” Gazeta Wyborcza, June 28, 2010. (Newspaper interview on the 10th anniversary of the death of Fr. Jozef Tischner, the Solidarity movement’s philosopher/chaplain. Also, a TV interview on the legacy of Tischner’s thought on “Religia TV,” Poland, June 20, 2010.

James F. Caccamo

Living Worship (co-author), a two-disc, multimedia educational software program for teaching worship in seminary or M.Div. settings. Disk 1 studies worship in a congregation, while Disk 2 offers interviews of leading liturgists.

New Honor Society Members Inducted

On April 27 the Department inducted several new members into the Alpha Xi chapter of the National Honor Society for Religious Studies and Theology, Theta Alpha Kappa. In the front row (r to l) are inductees Lori Ann Rizzo, Jamila Smith, Angela Siegel (this year’s Undergraduate Achievement Award winner), and Emily Holmes.

Major New Book in Catholic-Jewish Relations Published

Dr. Philip A. Cunningham is the US coordinator of a 5-year international project that has just published Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today: New Explorations of Theological Inter-relationships. It asks the question: “How might we Christians in our time reaffirm our faith claim that Jesus Christ is the Savior of all humanity, even as we affirm the Jewish people’s covenantal life with God?”

A collaboration among Boston College, Catholic Theological Union, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Lund University, Pontifical Gregorian University, and Saint Joseph’s University, the book has already been praised as “stunning in its scope, erudition, and creativity, this work is without parallel or peer” and “a watershed contribution to a new era in the Jewish-Christian encounter.”

Peter Clark, S.J.


“Surgical Vaccine: Should Male Circumcision Be Mandatory in Sub-Saharan Africa?” with J. Eisenman, S. Szapor in Bioethics: Issues and Dilemmas, T. Pace, ed.

“Telemedicine: Medical, Legal and Ethical Perspectives,” with K. Capuzzi & J. Harrison, Medical Science Monitor 16/12.

[continued on back page]
Department Welcomes Dr. Katie Oxx

Joining the faculty on a fulltime basis this fall is the department’s new assist professor of Catholicism in America, Dr. Katie Oxx.

Her academic work integrates the history of American Catholicism into the study of American religious history, paying special attention to the variegated interactions between Catholics and Protestants of various sorts, particularly in Philadelphia.

Indeed her research into the religious history of Philadelphia will be a notable asset to the life of the SJU community.

Since completing her doctorate in 2006, she has revised her dissertation on the relations between religious communities in early national Philadelphia into a wider exploration of the role of space and place in the context of lived urban religion.

She is currently studying five early Catholic churches to map Catholicism’s emergence in Philadelphia.

Dr. Oxx has served as an adjunct professor at SJU and already is known as a creative and engaging teacher.

Welcome aboard!

Faculty Presentations and Activities

Gerald J. Beyer

“Can Poland’s Solidarity be Globalized? Insights from Evolutionary Biology,” Internat’l Conf: “Ethical Pluralism and Global Solidarity” at Metropolitni Univerzita Praha, Prague, Czech Republic, Apr 29, 2011.


“Celebrating the 31st Anniversary of the Pastoral ‘Brothers and Sisters to Us.’” Keynote at the Archdiocese of Cincinnati’s Forum on Race: “Are All Welcome? Race in the Church Today,” University of Dayton, Jan 29, 2011. Close to 300 people attended the event, the first time a U.S. Archdiocese devoted an entire day to the topic of race. The organizing committee cited Beyer’s 2009 America article “Why Race Still Matters: Catholics and the Rise of Obama,” as the catalyst that sparked their preparation of the event.


James F. Caccamo


Founded the Technology Ethics Interest group in the Society of Christian Ethics to spur research on technology ethics from the perspective of Christian tradition. At the SCE’s January 2011 conference in New Orleans, the Group held its first meeting on “Deepwater Horizon: Technology, Failure, and the Ethics of Engineering.”

Peter Clark, S.J.


“Ethical Decision-Making in Catholic Hospitals Today,” Holy Redeemer Hospital, Meadowbrook, PA, Mar 10, 2011.


Philip A. Cunningham


Milcent Feske


Allen Kerkeslager

“How to Start a Program to Protect the Environment, Improve Communities, and Create Jobs: Learning with the Genesee River Wilds Project,” Wheeling Jesuit University, Mar 2010.


Umeyye Isra Yazicioglu


“Abraham, Sarah and Hagar in the Muslim Tradition,” at The Jewish Community Center in Manhattan, Oct. 2010.

“By its very nature, a University develops culture through its research. Helps to transmit the local culture to each succeeding generation through its teaching, and assists cultural activities through its educational services. It is open to all human experience and is ready to dialogue with and learn from any culture. A Catholic University shares in this, offering the rich experience of the Church’s own culture. In addition, a Catholic University, aware that human culture is open to revelation and transcendence, is also a primary and privileged place for a fruitful dialogue between the Gospel and culture.”

-Pope John Paul II, Ex Corde Ecclesiae, Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities
The Department of Theology and Religious Studies is committed to a rigorous presentation of the methods and content of both the scholarly study of Christian Theology and the academic discipline of Religious Studies. We view these combined disciplines as an important component within the liberal arts curriculum of a Roman Catholic university in the Jesuit tradition. We therefore take seriously our charge to engage students in the serious and critical study of religious experience, practice, thought and inquiry, both historically and in the contemporary world.