UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: Fall 2015
Instructor: Dr. Michael Cover
Course #: THEO 3110
Sections: 101/901 (THEO, CATH Majors/Honors)
Course Title: New Testament Selected Books:
Topic: “The Prison Letters of Paul”

Description:

“Remember my chains”: thus writes Paul the Apostle at the end of his letter to the Colossians. Among the hardships endured by Paul in his mission to spread the message of Jesus Christ among the nations, none is more iconic than his frequent imprisonment. The aim of this honors course is to look more closely into Paul’s theology through the prism of the so-called “Prison Letters,” in particular, the Letters to Philemon, the Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians. Students will learn various methods of interpreting the letters of Paul, including both historical and sociological approaches to his writings, and will gain an appreciation of Paul’s role in the spread of the early Christian movement. Using the prison letters as a lens will allow us not only to consider afresh how Paul came to understand his suffering as a part of his witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but also to reflect on modern Christian responses to incarceration, including those of Martin Luther King, Jr., Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Walter Ciszek, S.J., and Helen Prejean, C.S.J., with a special emphasis on the themes of civil disobedience, abandonment to divine providence, and forgiveness and reconciliation. This course will have a discussion component, and students will be expected to regularly contribute to class discussions.