



RELIGIOUS STUDIES INSIDERS

Fall 2020



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Program Coordinator's Corner

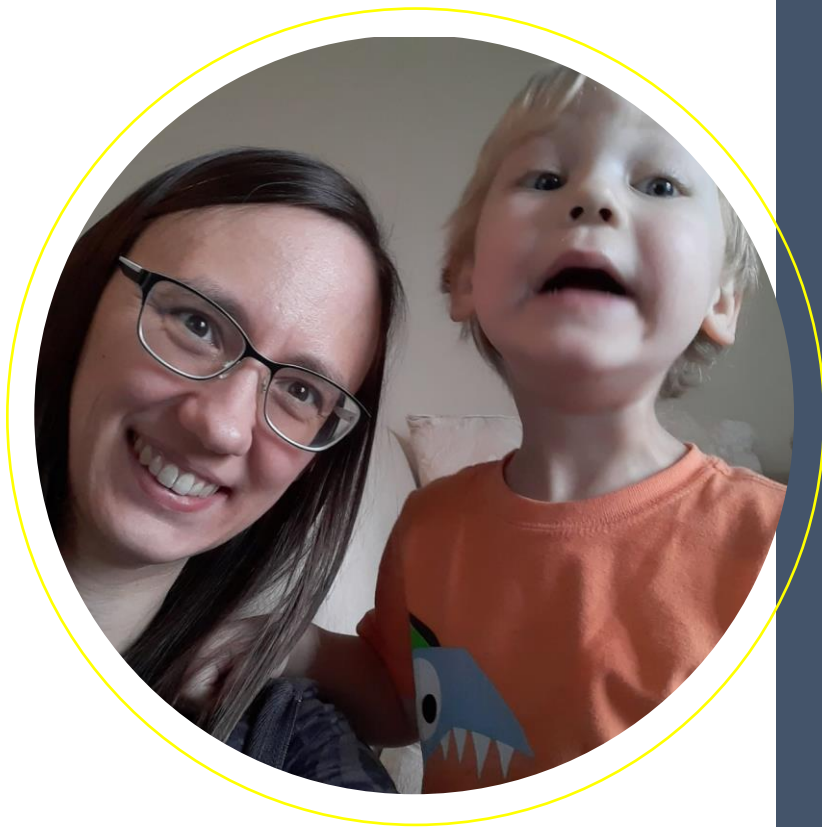
Common Dialogue Day – Sr. Helen Prejean!

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Which RST Minor Should I Get?



PROGRAM COORDINATOR'S CORNER

For those new to Religious Studies Insiders...

Welcome!

This is the newsletter for religious studies majors, minors, education concentration-ers, TAK honors society members, and the people who teach and advise you all.

This semester one of the courses I am teaching is LAS 341: Contemplation and Action, and we've just started reading *The Miracle of Mindfulness* by Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. He tells a story about reminding his friend to eat a tangerine one slice at a time because the joy and pleasure of eating a tangerine can only be experienced if we are mindful of the present moment.

I've been thinking a lot about that tangerine. During this strange semester of social distancing, hybrid courses, and zoom calls with our family and friends, it is easy to think of "pandemic time" as a time to

simply get through. Perhaps, like me, you've been imagining all the fun things you want to do once COVID-19 is no longer a threat. But, Thich Nhat Hanh challenges me to approach this semester differently. What experiences of joy and pleasure am I missing by focusing all my attention on the future? What good things can I learn to see in the present moment?

Although this year might not be what we hoped, let's not make this year one to simply survive. Let's all try to be mindful of the joy found in the present moment.

Find joy in your classes.

Find joy the solitude of your room.

Find joy in your ability to participate in democracy.

Find joy in the fresh air of the outdoors – even when the weather gets cold.

If all else fails...find a tangerine and eat it one slice at a time.

- Dr. Crosby

COMMON DIALOGUE DAY 2020

This year's Common Dialogue Day Keynote Speaker is Sr. Helen Prejean.

Sr. Helen Prejean believes deeply in the dignity of the human person – whether one is guilty or innocent. This conviction has led her to serve as a spiritual advisor for prisoners on death row and to work for an end to capital punishment in this country.

In light of Pope Francis' new encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, which calls use of the death penalty "inadmissible," and in light of the federal government's recent use of the death penalty after a 17-year hiatus, her talk couldn't be more timely.

Watch the daily announcements for instructions on how to tune in via Teams.



*Photo taken by the
Theology and Ministry
Library at Boston
College*

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF GRAD SCHOOL

Neven Gerich was a religious studies major who graduated in 2018. He went on to earn a Master of Theological Studies degree at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry (one of the top programs in the country!) Here, he offers some advice for those who might be considering graduate school:

Be Prepared for Insecurities

“Earning a Masters Degree in Theology (and another forthcoming) was arguably the most challenging and, consequently, the most rewarding endeavor that I have undertaken thus far. It isn't very comforting to walk into a building where to one's right stands a literal genius, and to the left stands a proficient debater and speaker. In an illustrated way, this environment was as daunting as a steep summit, where one abruptly and cruelly confronts the demons called Inexperience and Insecurity. At this impasse, I could either turn back or march forward; regardless of choice, my future was at stake.”

Make Friends

“I realized early on that joining and maintaining a community of like-minded individuals would make the summits less daunting and success more apparent. Although most of my friends are Catholic, a reality that may not exist for others, the diversity of worldviews that each contributes to our community is invaluable. For instance, my conservative colleagues are incredibly knowledgeable in Catholic teaching. In contrast, my liberal friends challenge us to consider other perspectives, and there can never be a dull debate in this crowd. I was not alone; in fact, I was never alone in the first place.”

Get Involved

“Graduate school may feel isolating, and to some extent, it is, but it should not exclusively be the case if you desire it otherwise. Like Siena, there are always new groups and committees to join, social gatherings to attend, and places to visit in the meantime. That is, once you finish your (many) assigned readings and papers.”

Take Challenging Courses Now

“Although undergraduate courses do not compare to the rigor of graduate courses, I took some courses at Siena that prepared me enough for my recent classes. As I am specializing in the Hebrew Bible, the biblically-oriented *Values in Video* and *Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures* (shocker) were enlightening primers to the mythologies and narratives that undergird this glorious work of art which we call our Canon. I did not have the opportunity to take *Introduction to the Christian Scriptures* during my time at Siena. Still, I suspect it would do one well to take it. On a broader level, I also found *Theological Ethics* and the *Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* courses offered at Siena to be worth the effort. One must always be exposed to and understand the perspectives that counter one's own. This is a fundamental tool and resource to develop as early as possible (*Theological Ethics* exemplified this, and graduate school took this for granted).”

Final Advice: Pray

“One is never alone in the company of the angels, saints, Mary, Joseph, and God. So I encourage you all to pray to them. We (Christians and theologians alike) are preparing for the Kingdom of God, so let's not forget Who it is that led us here in the first place.”

If you'd like to hear more about Neven's experience in graduate school, feel free to send him an email at ngerich3@gmail.com. He is happy to share more with any current SHU students.

WHY ARE THERE 3 RST MINORS???

The Religious Studies Department at Siena Heights University offers 3 different minors. Each caters to students with different goals and interests. Use the descriptions and chart below to determine which minor is the best fit for you. Still have questions? Contact the Religious Studies program coordinator, Dr. Wendy Crosby.

Religious Studies Minor: The Religious Studies minor is for students with a broad interest in religion. It is a great option for students who want to understand religion, even if they aren't particularly religious themselves. Since all the requirements can also be met through CPS (the College of Professional Studies), this minor is also a great choice for non-traditional students.

Theology Minor: The Theology minor is like a mini-version of the Religious Studies major. It focuses specifically on the Catholic/Christian tradition and is a great fit for students who want to understand their own faith more deeply or who are considering a career with a faith-based organization.

Catholic Studies Minor: The Catholic Studies minor focuses less on the theology of Catholicism (although you'll get that too!) and more on the cultural impact of Catholicism, both historically and in the present. This is an interdisciplinary minor with offerings that can include courses from history, art, philosophy, or even music!

	Religious Studies Minor	Theology Minor	Catholic Studies Minor
Intro course →		1 RST 102: Intro to Christian Theology RST 103: Catholicism Today RST 104: Intro to the Bible	1 RST 103: Catholicism Today
Bible course →	1 RST 302: Hebrew Scriptures RST 303: Christian Scriptures	2 RST 302: Hebrew Scriptures RST 303: Christian Scriptures	2 RST 303: Christian Scriptures
Ethics/Christology →	2 RST 305: Theological Ethics	3 RST 305: Theological Ethics RST 319: Christology	3 RST 305: Theological Ethics RST 319: Christology
Theology/Spirituality →	3 RST 319: Christology RST 310: Readings in Contemporary Theology	4 RST 310: Readings in Contemporary Theology RST 326: Christian Spirituality	
	4 RST 301: Theological Inquiry		
Global Perspective →	5 RST 313: Theology of the Church RST 314: World Religions RST 324: Western Religions		
Senior Project →	6 RST 395: Theological Application	5 RST 395: Theological Application	4 RST 395: Theological Application RST 480: Faith in Action
		6 RST 480: Faith in Action	
Electives →	7 1 RST Elective *For many students, a 100-level course is used as the elective	7 1 RST Elective	5,6,7 3 Interdisciplinary Electives that relate to Catholicism