

## SAMPLE TOPICS CHOSEN BY OE STUDENTS

The list below illustrates the diversity of topics chosen by our students for study during the “project” portion of our month-long courses. They are offered only to stimulate your own imagination.

### Art

- Outside Art and populist vision
- Art and feminism in the “clothesline project”
- Portrait photography and “the face” in Levinas’ thought
- Christopher Alexander’s human-centered architecture
- Artists’ responses to the Holocaust
- Hieronymus Bosch and the apocalyptic imagination
- 16<sup>th</sup> century woodcuts: image literacy and the contest for the Christian imagination
- Historical depictions of the crucifixion

### Biblical Studies

- God and human violence
- Jesus and women in the Gospels
- Christian community in the New Testament
- Earth-caring as a biblical calling
- Judas as the first Christian
- Authentic humanity in the Sermon on the Mount

### Communications

- Religion and media in presidential elections
- Childhood in an age of electronic media
- Early TV criticism in McLuhan and Postman
- Images and pain in Susan Sontag
- Media’s distortion of women’s body images and experiences
- The military and the media in the Iraq War
- The material culture of Christianity
- Brandscaping and the accessorizing of identity

### Education

- Pedagogy of Paulo Freire
- Inner-city adolescents in the public schools
- Classroom differences between girls and boys
- Athletics in the educational system
- How working class culture shapes children’s aspirations

### Environmental Studies

- Hydrology and the crisis of the American West
- Ethics of genetic manipulation
- John McPhee’s geological writings
- The deep ecology movement
- Loren Eiseley’s Darwinian naturalism
- E. O. Wilson’s sociobiology
- Viewpoints: Creationism, intelligent design and natural selection
- Christian impulses in the history of science

### History

- Simone de Beauvoir on othering and freedom
- Noam Chomsky’s grim vision
- Jacques Ellul and the reign of technique
- Remi Brague and European eclecticism
- African-American voices: DuBois, Malcolm, hooks, West
- Genocide in Rwanda and Cambodia
- Women and gender in the history of Islam
- Medieval women mystics and the humanity of God
- Slavery and its defenders in the antebellum South
- The “emergent church” in contemporary America
- The First Crusade as a religious pilgrimage

## Literature

- The American West: Kittredge, Abbey, McCarthy
- Feminist criticism and John Updike
- Post-colonial women writers
- Shusaku Endo and Elie Wiesel on human suffering
- Catholic visions of Graham Greene and Francois Mauriac
- The spirituality of Rainer Maria Rilke
- Womanist theology in Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison
- Nick Hornby and the isolated self
- God novels: the *Towing Jehovah* trilogy of James Morrow

## Philosophy

- Kierkegaard's "simple life"
- Paul Ricoeur and the ethics of oneself as another
- Albert Camus and French existentialism
- Nietzsche's Zarathustra
- Hannah Arendt and the "banality of evil"
- Simone Weil's perspective on social evil
- Hans Kung on the great atheists and reasons for faith
- Charles Taylor on the emergence of secularism

## Political Science

- Neoconservative thought and the Iraq War
- Radical Muslim political writing
- International responses to genocide
- Max Weber and Noam Chomsky on political leadership
- Michael Novak on democratic capitalism
- John Kenneth Galbraith and the liberal society of Reinhold Niebuhr
- Veiling and unveiling: the meaning of the veil in Muslim and western culture
- Postdating the origins of modernity: Oliver O'Donovan
- How do institutions think? Hugh Heclo and Robert Bellah

## Psychology

- Carol Gilligan on development of self and voice in adolescent girls
- Consumerism and the psychology of addiction
- Jacques Lacan and Neo-Freudianism
- "True self" in Paul Tournier, Thomas Merton, Richard Schwartz
- Alice Miller and the repressed memory of childhood trauma
- The myth of mother/daughter separation
- Varying psychological portraits of Jesus
- Jung's archetypes

## Religion

- Social implications of atonement theories
- Political realism in the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr
- Liberation theology
- Jean Vanier and the theology of human brokenness
- Julian of Norwich on the relationship of the divine and humans
- Feminine imagery for God and the shaping of personhood
- Borg and Crossan on the historical Jesus
- Reuther and contemporary feminist theology
- Neo-Calvinism and the common grace of social forms
- Heaven and hell in recent theology
- Christian apologetics as a historical argument

## Sociology

- Weber and Marx on the future of capitalism
- "Bowling Alone": loss of civic community in America
- Ernest Becker on death denial as shaping human culture
- Feminist theory's unmasking of gender, race and class relations
- Cultural studies and the elevation of the ordinary
- The Frankfurt School's critique of modernity
- Sociology of religious cults in America
- Peter Berger and religion as a "sacred canopy"