This course asks what the Christian Faith is essentially, as opposed to some of its widespread, popular distortions, for instance that it is anti-scientific, opposed to material reality, and inherently puritanical about sex.

The essential core of Christian faith is belief in the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ. Students will discover rational alternatives to fundamentalism and reductionism that demonstrate the compatibility of Christianity with science and affirm the value of material reality and sexuality. The course will view human nature, not as the conflict of soul and body, but as their unity.

There are two different historical perspectives on the nature of Christianity. First, there is God’s covenant with Abraham in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which leads to the belief in the future Messiah (Christ). Second, there is the Greek philosophical tradition used to interpret biblical faith (already operating in the Gospel According to St. John), which flourished in the Patristic Period following the conversion of Constantine. In both perspectives, Christian faith seeks reason to understand itself.

This course exposes the problem of innocent suffering, and asks whether it can be reconciled with the belief in the Goodness of God. Special attention will be given to eschatology (study of “last things”), including some new interpretations of the belief in life after death as the Resurrection of the Dead. Students will also see how these beliefs require social justice during this life.

The course does not defend one branch of Christianity at the expense of others. It gives due attention to Eastern Orthodoxy, as well as Western Christianity.