

# **CORE 2101: Christianity and Culture in Dialogue**

7/24/2006

To raise the question of the relationship between Christianity and culture is to ask, among other things, about the relationship between theology and philosophy, faith and reason, religion and society, and religious belief and science. Do these pairings represent separate spheres that have little or nothing to do with one another? What is the relationship between reason and faith? Is the option for faith reasonable? Can one be committed to both a scientific view of the world and religious belief? Is religion a strictly private matter? How does religion affect the way we live together in society? Such issues are of more than academic interest, as they go to the heart of what it might mean to be a religious believer (or non-believer) in contemporary society.

This course considers these kinds of questions through an approach based upon the principles of dialogue, development, and community.

The dialogical emphasis is present in the pairing of texts from the Christian tradition with texts from non-Christian traditions. Here the stress is on how texts from non-Christian traditions directly influence, converse with, and/or critique Christian belief and practice. This emphasis on direct connections across traditions highlights a second principle, namely, development.

Development manifests itself in the syllabus structure both chronologically and thematically. The course moves chronologically from early Christianity, through the medieval and modern periods. This chronological development is joined to a thematic development that addresses questions and issues central to the Catholic tradition. The central question of the early period is how Christianity relates to the classical traditions of Greece, Rome and Israel. The great question of the medieval period asks how faith relates to reason. With the rise of modern science we are confronted with questions about the relationship between religious belief, scientific method, and conclusions based on that method. Another central question of the modern and post-modern period concerns belief and unbelief in tension. This section of the course focuses on challenges put to faith in the modern period and Christian responses to those challenges. The course concludes with a consideration of the Catholic tradition's engagement with the economic, social, and political realities of the contemporary world.

As with the other Signature courses, this course seeks the overall goal of creating a new community of conversation at Seton Hall. Through a focus on key questions and the important texts that address these questions, we aim to foster the conditions in which such a community can be developed and sustained.

## **Catalogue Description**

This course is taken by second year students as part of the University Core Curriculum. The course considers the relationship between Christianity and culture, through an approach based on principles of dialogue, development, and community. Texts from the Christian tradition paired with texts from non-Christian traditions demonstrate direct connections across cultures that influence the development of the Catholic intellectual tradition. The course seeks to foster the development of a community of conversation through a focus on key questions and the important texts that address these questions.

Prerequisite: CORE 1101, ENGL 1201, ENGL 1202

## **Course Implementation**

To develop a community of conversation among all the participants in this course, faculty will read and discuss the texts in seminar format prior to teaching the course. This experience is aimed at generating a set of discussion points arising from the texts. The development of these common discussion points will be the work of the faculty pilots in the coming year.

## **Course Objectives** (measurable outcomes of student learning)

1. To demonstrate understanding of the central questions at work in the encounter between Christianity and culture, faith and reason, religious belief and science, belief and unbelief, and Christianity and society, through written assignments, quizzes and exams.
2. To demonstrate understanding of the notion of historical development as it manifests itself in the Catholic intellectual tradition's engagement with the world, through in-class analysis of texts, and written assignments comparing primary texts in historical sequence.
3. To participate in a community of discourse by means of a careful reading of a common set of primary texts, and to analyze and critique ideas through engaged class participation.

## **Course Outline**

### **Weeks 1-3 Christianity and Culture**

#### **Required Readings**

Paul, *First Letter to the Corinthians*

Early Socratic dialogue, e.g., *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, or *Phaedo*

#### **Additional readings**

Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (selections)

The Epistle to Diognetus

Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*

Tertullian, (Athens vs. Jerusalem)

Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* (selections)

Emperor Trajan and Pliny the Younger, "Letters on Treatment of the Christians"

Emperor Constantine, "The Edict of Toleration" and "The Edict of Milan"

The Rule of Saint Benedict

### **Weeks 4-6 Belief and Reason**

#### **Required Readings**

Thomas Aquinas, selections from *Summa Contra Gentiles* and/or *Summa Theologica*

Selections from one or more of the following: Ibn Rushd (Averroes), *The Decisive Treatise Concerning Theology and Philosophy*, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Moses Maimonides

#### **Additional readings**

Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*

Juliana of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*

Hildegard of Bingen, *Selected Writings*

John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*

### **Weeks 7-8 Belief and Science**

#### **Required Readings**

*Genesis*, 1-11

Darwin, selections from *The Origin of Species* and/or *The Descent of Man*

Documents from the Galileo Trial

#### **Additional readings**

John Polkinghorne, *Quarks, Chaos, & Christianity: Questions to Science and Religion*

John Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (2003)

John Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity: The Christian Encounter with Reality* (2006)  
John Haught, *Science and Religion: From Conflict to Conversation* (1995)  
John Haught, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*  
John Haught, *Is Nature Enough?: Meaning and Truth in the Age of Science* (2006)

**Weeks 9-11      Belief and Unbelief**  
**Required readings (at least one text from sections A and B)**

**A**

Umberto Eco and Carlo Maria Martini, *Belief or Nonbelief?*  
Gianni Vattimo, *Belief*  
John Caputo, *On Religion*  
Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*  
Descartes, *Meditations*  
Pascal, *Pensees*  
G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*  
C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*  
Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer*  
Dostoevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor"  
Tolstoy, *A Confession or My Religion*

**B**

Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*  
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*  
Miguel de Unamuno, "Saint Manuel, The Good, Martyr"  
Montaigne, *Essays*  
Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*

**Weeks 12-14      Christianity and Contemporary Society**  
**Required Readings**

Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World)  
Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

**Additional readings**

Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions)  
Baum, *The Priority of Labor*  
John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*  
Rene Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*  
Durkheim, "Individualism and the Intellectuals"  
Weber, selections from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*  
Simmel "The Transcendent Character of Life," "Freedom and the Individual"  
Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*  
Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*  
Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*  
Mill, *On Liberty*  
Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*  
Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*  
Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*  
Edith Stein "The pattern of the day"  
Simone Weil "The Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God"  
Elie Wiesel, *Night*  
James Martin, "An Interview with Camille Paglia"  
Mary Segers, "Feminism, liberalism, and Catholicism"

### **Course Requirements**

1. Several short (3-4 page) papers will be assigned during the course of the semester. The papers will require you to analyze and/or react to texts or issues discussed in class. These written assignments count for 35% of the course grade.
2. Approximately 5-7 quizzes will be given. Each will consist of a few questions that can be answered briefly. These are not essay questions - they are designed to determine your ability to identify the essential points in the assigned readings. Quizzes constitute 30% of the course grade.
3. There will be a final exam for the course. Do not make end of semester travel plans without consulting the exam schedule first. The final exam is worth 20% of the course grade.
4. Class participation is important in this type of class, and each person's input is valuable. You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings, even if at times that means just asking relevant questions about material you did not understand. Everyone is expected to participate regularly. The participation grade depends on both the quality and the quantity of your participation. Obviously the most basic form of class participation is regular attendance. Class participation counts for 15% of the final grade.

### **Grading Scale**

95-100=A, 90-94=A-, 86-89=B +, 83-85=B, 80-82=B-, 76-79=C +, 73-75=C, 70-72=C-,  
66-69=D +, 60-65=D, 0-59=F

### **Required Texts**

1. Some materials will be copied and made available as a course packet; other material will be available on-line to be downloaded for class.
2. Other texts will depend on which readings the instructor chooses from the options provided above.