

*Syllabus: Catholicism and the Modern World*

Catholicism and the Modern World

Religion 01:840:317:01 Spring, 2010

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MRAB Room 204 Monday and Thursday at 12:35 – 1:55pm

**Course Description:** This course is about the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and modern culture. We will examine this relationship primarily through the lens of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), its context, its debates and its major statements. In the course of discussing these statements, we will touch on issues of Biblical belief, science and technology, church-state relations, Catholic encounters with Judaism, Islam and Buddhism, social action, sexuality, gender, prayer and spirituality.

**Work Load, Tests and Grading**

There will be one short paper (20%) one in-class midterm (20%) and one long paper (40%) plus a final exam (20)%. Note, however, that it is not under any circumstances possible to get a grade higher than B without good attendance and some participation in class. If you miss more than three classes in the term, please understand that you will put your grade at risk and consult with me. Plagiarism is not only unethical but detrimental to the spirit and substance of this course.

**Office Hours:** Mondays 2-4 by appointment only, email consultations anytime

Email: [cleo.kearns@gmail.com](mailto:cleo.kearns@gmail.com)

**Book List:**

John O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (required and frequently used)

The Holy Bible (preferably the RSV or the Oxford Study Bible)

## Syllabus

### Week One: “Pascendi, Recipe for Disaster or Bulwark of the Faith?”

We will begin with the general terms of the modernist controversy in the aftermath the French Revolution. The term “modernist controversy” refers to the conflicts surrounding the Catholic Church during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Catholics were faced with a profound wave of anti-clericalism in Europe, with new sociological and historical realities, new mass movements for social justice, new currents in Biblical criticism and the increasing prestige of scientific explanations for the cosmos and even for the nature of human life itself. These controversies often took the form of a *Kulturkampf* or “culture war” between religious and secular forces, mostly a war of words but sometimes spilling over into violence.

In order to understand this context, we must bear in mind that the French Revolution (1789) – unlike its more successful American prototype – took place in a profoundly Catholic country and sought to displace the Catholic leadership of that country along with its aristocracy. Associated with the French Revolution were a number of disparate phenomena, including democracy, personal and individual liberation, industrialization, progressivism, social activism, anticlericalism and a generalized secularism. Later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when further conflicts pitted traditional Christian values against the state (among them the Civil War in Spain, Fascism, The Mexican Revolution, The Russian Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, the Maoist Revolutions of China, Cambodia and Peru), these often played out against the French precedent and example.

The Church’s defensive reaction to these modern revolutions in politics and culture was profound and for the most part, with some notable and later very important exceptions, negative. It crystallized in the proceedings First Vatican Council (which promulgated for the first time officially the dogma of papal infallibility) and in the papal encyclical *Pascendi* (1907) which sought to “purge” the Church of progressive elements. Without in any way solving the problem of modernism, these initiatives left a difficult legacy to which the church in the twentieth century had to respond. Most of the course will have to do with that response and with the Church’s supreme and massive effort to re-envision its encounter with the modern world as manifest in the deliberations of the great Second Vatican Council and in the life and work of John Paul II.

Immediate assignment: to lay the basic chronological and conceptual framework for this course you need first to understand and be able to give a generation definition of the terms modernist controversy and papal encyclical. You also need to know without hesitation the dates of the French Revolution (1789), the First Vatican Council (1869-1870), the publication of *Pascendi* (1907), the Russian Revolution (1914), the two World Wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945 respectively) and the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). You might also like to be able to recall quickly and accurately the dates of the terms of office of Pope John XXIII (1958-1963), Pope Paul VI (1963-1968), Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) and Pope Benedict XVI (2005-).

### Week Two (Jan. 25 and 28): The Modernist Controversy

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Assignment: Acts 1-4; 6-9; 15, O'Malley, 1-24; 36-43

We continue now first with a flashback to the conflicts that spawned what might be called the first Christian church council, the great controversy over what to do with Gentile converts faced by the apostles Peter (the conservative, country bred man of the people) and Paul (the liberal, cosmopolitan intellectual). Here we see the various resources to which the Christian church traditionally turns in crisis: scripture, tradition, prophesy, dream, interpretation and analysis, the calling of councils and the appeal to authority.

Week Three (Feb. 1 and 4): Calling the Council

Assignment: O'Malley, 53-64; 85-88

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was to some extent an answer to, indeed a redirection of, the Church's stance toward the modern world as evidenced at Vatican I and in the encyclical *Pascendi*. This week we will discuss the circumstances under which the Council was called, its major players (with emphasis on the roles of two future popes, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI), and the nature of its agenda.

Week Four (Feb. 8 and 11): *Sacrosanctum Concilium* O'Malley 129-141

Catherine Bell on ritual, on Sakai

Week Five (Feb. 15 and 18): *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (cont.)

**Short Paper Due: Observation of Mass, Due Feb. 18.**

Read: Catherine Bell on ritual (Sakai). Assignment: having read the relevant material in O'Malley and Bell, attend and observe a Roman Catholic mass and take notes on your reactions and questions. Write these notes up into a three page paper using the guidelines posted on Sakai.

Week Six (Feb. 22 and 25): *Dei Verbum*. O'Malley, 141-152

Syllabus (cont.)

Week Seven: (March 1 and 4): *Dei Verbum* (cont.) O'Malley, 141-152. *De Verbum*, Preface, Chapter 1 #2; Ch II #9 and #10; Chapter III, #11 and # 12; Chpater V, # 19.

One of the major issues raised by the modern movement was the proper interpretation of scripture. In the face of the Higher Criticism (which we will discuss) how should the Church respond? By insisting on the literal truth of scripture, like so many evangelical Protestants did? By arguing that only duly constituted authorities like bishops and theologians with orthodox views could reliably interpret it, as had been done in the past? Or by subjecting the whole text to criteria of scientific and historical accuracy, as many moderns wished to do?

Week Eight (March 8 and 11) *Dei Verbum* (cont.) and Mid Term  
Read: Dom Cuthbert Butler on *Dei Verbum* (url on sakai)

**Mid-Term Exam, March 11**

**Vocabulary, terms, documents and people to define or identify: bishop, cardinal, priest, *aggiornamento*, *ressourcement*, *nouvelle theologie*, orthopraxis, orthodoxy, liturgy, eucharist, mass, liturgy of the word, anamnesis, paschal mystery, signs of the times, higher criticism (historical criticism), literary genre, credo, ordination, two source theory of revelation, *Sacrosanctum Consilium*, *Dei Verbum*, Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI, Cardinal Ottaviani, Cardinal Bea, Cardinal Suenens, Karl Wojtila, Joseph Ratzinger.**

**Study questions: what were the major changes in the mass initiated by *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and what was their rationale? What are some of the problems with those changes as perceived today? What is the *Dei Verbum* position on the literal and historical truth of the Bible? What is the two source theory of revelation and how did Vatican II address it?**

To Come:

Week Nine (March 22-25): *Lumen Gentium*. O'Malley, 160-186.;  
Reading: *Lumen Gentium* TBA (on Vatican website)  
Steinfels, Intro and 17-40, "The Battle for Common Ground"

Week Ten (March 29 and April 1): O'Malley, 186- 198; *Lumen Gentium* (TBA)  
Steinfels, 203 -252 "Passing on the Faith"

Week Eleven (April 5 and 8): *Humanae Vitae*  
Steinfels, 253-306 "Sex and the Female Church"

Week Twelve (April 12 and 15): *Dignitatis Humanae*  
Steinfels, p. 68-203, "The Church and Society"

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Week Thirteen (April 19 and 22): Paper Due (topics TBA)

Reading: Steinfels 103-162 “Catholic Institutions and Catholic Identity”

Week Fourteen and Fifteen (April 26 and 29; May 3): Vatican III

Reading: Steinfels, 207-359 “At the Helm” and “Finding a Future”