

CORE 2101: *Christianity and Culture in Dialogue*

April 27, 2009

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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 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 historically significant texts that address these questions.

- Prerequisites: CORE 1101, ENGL 1201, ENGL 1202

COURSE OBJECTIVES (measurable outcomes of student learning)

1. Students will demonstrate an 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. Students will demonstrate an 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. Students will participate in a community of discourse by means of a careful reading of a common set of primary texts, and by learning to analyze and critique ideas through engagement with other students in class.

COURSE OUTLINE

A. Weeks 1-3 Christianity and Culture

Required Readings

Paul, *First Letter to the Corinthians*

Early Socratic dialogue, e.g., *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Meno*, or *Phaedo* [Not *Apology* or *Symposium*]

Possible Additional readings

- Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (selections)
- The Epistle to Diognetus
- 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*, excerpts
- Saint Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. 19 and *On Christian Doctrine*

B. Weeks 4-6 Belief and Reason

Required Readings

Thomas Aquinas, selections from *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *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

Possible Additional readings

- Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*
- Juliana of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*
- Hildegard of Bingen, *Selected Writings*
- John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*

C. Weeks 7-8 Belief and Science

Required Readings

Genesis, 1-11

Darwin, Introduction and Chapter 4 of *The Descent of Man*

Galileo, “Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina”

Possible 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)
- Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (2006)

D. Weeks 9-11 Belief and Unbelief

Required readings (at least one text from section I and one text from section II)

I.

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*

II.

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*

E. Weeks 12-14 Christianity and Contemporary Society

Required Readings

Liberal Political Tradition (*Excerpts*)

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

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

Possible Additional readings

- 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. Two, 3-5 page, papers will be assigned during the course of the semester. The papers will require students to analyze and/or react to texts or issues discussed in class. These written assignments count for 30% 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 20% 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.

Academic Integrity Policy:

All forms of dishonesty, whether by act or omission, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism and knowingly furnishing false information to the University, are prohibited. Intentional disruption or obstruction of teaching, research or administrative proceedings is prohibited. University sanctions may extend to suspension and dismissal. Work submitted in course must be the product of the efforts of the student presenting the work, and contributions of others to the finished work must be appropriately acknowledged. The presentation of another's work as one's own is a serious violation of the academic process, and it is penalized accordingly. The decision on the appropriate penalty is in the first instance the professor's, and it may extend to a failing grade for the course.

See Undergraduate Catalogue, p. 36 for this statement.

CORE 2101: Christianity and Culture in Dialogue: The faculty of CORE 2101 considers plagiarism or cheating of any kind a breach of academic honesty. It is the policy of this faculty to fail a student for the entire course if caught plagiarizing. Letters will be sent to the Dean and to the student's academic adviser informing them of the offense.

Seton Hall Office of Disability Support Services: If you have a documented disability, you may be eligible for accommodations, in academic classes, the residence halls, food services areas, etc., under the American with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Civil Rights Restoration Act. To receive special accommodations or assistance, please self-identify at the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS), Duffy Hall, Room 67 *prior* to the beginning of the semester. The staff at DSS will help you to develop a plan for accommodations. For more information, contact Linda Walter, Director of DSS, at 973-313-6003.