THEO 1024.03: Exploring Catholicism II: The American Catholic Experience

Course Description:

This the second part of an introductory theology course. In the Fall Semester, we considered: 1) the philosophical and anthropological bases for faith and religious belief; 2) the historical person of Jesus, as described in the Gospels of the New Testament and other records of the primitive church; 3) how and why religious groups have increased (and decreased) in the United States since the American Revolution; 4) how popular religion (usually called “lived religion”) is both similar to, but also different from, institutional religion; and 5) how “civil religion” operates in the United States, and how if offers a somewhat different theology from denominational religion.

This semester, we will revisit (quickly) the major points of the fall, but quickly move to some new areas for exploring Catholicism: the neo-scholastic tradition of theology (Murray); a Christian approach to literature (Lewis); Catholic feminism (Ruether); ecclesiology (Dulles); and a long look at Vatican II (O’Malley). “Exploring Catholicism II” satisfies one semester of the two-course (year-long) core requirement in Theology at Boston College.

The course operates on the “Socratic Method,” which means that I arrive in class with 10 smart questions, and all of you respond with equally smart answers. This requires everyone to do all of the reading for every class, although everyone will be allowed two “bad hair days” (i.e., everyone will be allowed to respond: “I am not prepared today” to any question twice during the semester). Class participation will not be graded, as I simply call on people randomly. I also prefer that you do not use any form of social media in class (laptops, iphones, etc), and that your note-taking be done by hand.

Required Texts:

Students are expected to purchase or use library copies of the following texts:

Avery Dulles, Models of the Church
C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters
John Courtney Murray, We Hold These Truths
John O’Malley, What Happened at Vatican II
Mark Massa, Catholics and American Culture
Rosemary Radford Ruether, Feminism and God-Talk
Richard Viladesau and Mark Massa, Foundations of Theological Study: A Sourcebook
Office Hours:
I will be open and ready for business on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 to 5:30 in my office at the Boisi Center. (24 Quincy Rd: up the street from Stokes). I encourage students with any questions (or students without questions) to stop by so I can get to know you.

Sherry Hour:
I will be hosting a Sherry Hour from 5 to 6 pm every Tuesday afternoons in my office at the Boisi Center: go out of the front door of Stokes Hall, walk up the hill – on Quincy Road – to the third house on the left): No one is required to attend: it is simply my way of getting to know you better outside of class for the sake of writing recommendations, etc.

Course Requirements:
1) Attendance at all class meetings (save for near-death experiences; 2) a careful reading of all assigned texts/readings (a requirement central to the Socratic Method of class management); 3) five assigned “critical essays” (750-1250 words). The four essays with the highest grades (minus the “bad hair day”) will be averaged together toward the final grade. 4) A final exam – take-home and essay in format.

Grading:
The four highest of the five critical essays will count for 70% of the final grade; the final exam will count for 30% of the overall grade.

Academic Integrity:
All BC students are expected to both know and follow the university policy on academic integrity, which can be found (in excruciating detail) at: www.bc.edu/integrity. If you have any questions about the policy, please see me, and I’ll be glad to explain it in non-breaucrateeze. You are responsible for following the guidelines offered there, whether you have read it or not (so read it).

Assistance for persons with disabilities:
If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodation in this course, please contact either Kathy Duggan (617-5528093; duggankabc.edu; or in her office at the Connors Family Learning Center) for ADHD; or Paulette Durrett (617-552-3470; paulette.durrett@bc.edu; or in her office in the Diabilities Service Office for all other kinds of disabilities, including temporary disabilities (i.e., a broken limb).

For Freshmen only:
Your very own! The Freshman Dean is Rory Browne, whose office is Stokes 140S. 617-552-9259. rory.browne@bc.edu.
I. A SHORT REVIEW OF AN ANCIENT FAITH

Week 1: A Review of the Basics
January 16: Models for Theology and the Study of Religion (Review)
January 18: Lived Religion, Civil Religion, and (oh my God) Natural Law (Review)
  Reading: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*

II. NEO-THOMISM AS “CATHOLI-SPEAK

Week 2: A Dive Into the Deep End
January 23: Numbers, American and Catholic Natural Law
  Reading: John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, Introduction
January 25: Natural Law and Neo-Thomism
  Reading: Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, Chapter 1 (“E Pluribus Unum”)

Week 3: Murray and the Natural Law
January 30: Articles of Peace and Articles of War
  Reading: Murray, *WHTT*, Chapter 2 (“Civil Unity and Religious Integrity”)
February 1: What Is the “Public Consensus”??
  Reading: Murray, *WHTT*, Chapter 4 (“Origins and Authority of the Public Consensus”)

Week 4: There’s No “Ism” Like Thomism”
February 6: All Murray, All the Time
  Reading: Murray, *WHTT*, Chapter 5 (“Creeds at War Intelligibly”)
February 8: To Speak Intelligently of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition
  *Exercise No. 1 on Murray due in class*
III. THE CATHOLIC TRADITION CONFRONTS THE MODERN WORLD

Week 5: Vatican II and All That

February 13: Ecumenical Councils, and What They Mean
   Reading: Viladesau and Massa, Foundations, Nos. 52, 53, 54, 55. 59; Lumen Gentium

February 15: What Happened at Vatican II?
   Reading: John O’Malley, What Happened at Vatican II, Introduction

Week 6: The Tradition of Ecumenical Councils

February 20: The Long Duree
   Readings: O’Malley, What Happened, chapter 1 (“Big Perspectives”)

February 22: The 19th Century and Its Theological Aftermath
   Reading: O’Malley, What Happened, chapter 2 (“The Long Nineteenth Century”)

Week 7: Why Vatican II Changed Everything

February 27: The First Sunday of Advent, 1964
   Reading: Massa, Catholics and American Culture, chapter 7 (“Into Uncertain Life”)

March 1: The Meaning(s) of Vatican II
   *Exercise No. 2 on O’Malley due in class

(March 4th through March 11th: Spring Break)

IV. THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING(S) OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

Week 8: The Sacramental Universe in Literature

March 13: Thomas Merton and the Catholic “Literary Revival”
   Reading: Massa, Catholics and American Culture, chapter 2 (“Young Man Merton”)

March 15: CS Lewis and the Reality of Grace
   Reading: CS Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, Letters 1-12

Week 9: The Analogical Imagination

March 20: Falleness, Grace, and Redemption
March 22: What Does Lewis Show about the Christian Tradition?  

**V: TO SPEAK RIGHTLY OF GOD**

Week 10: To Speak Rightly of God  
March 27: Elizabeth Johnson and *She Who Is*  
In-Class Discussion of Johnson  
*Exercise Number 3 on Lewis due in class*

Week 11: Feminism and Theology  
April 3: What IS Feminist Theology?  
Reading: RR Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, chapter 1 ("Feminist Theology")  
April 5: Male and Female Images of the Divine  
Reading: Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, chapter 2 ("Sexism and God Language")

Week 12: Feminist Anthropology  
April 10: A “Non-Liberal” Feminist Anthropology  
Reading: Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, chapter 4 ("Anthropology")  
April 12: Can a Male God Save Women?  
Reading: Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, chapter 5 ("Christology")

Week 13: American and Catholic  
April 17: Can God Have a Gender?  
*Exercise Number 4 on Ruether due in class*

**VI. CATHOLICS AND AMERICAN CULTURE**

April 19: Deviance Theory and American Catholicism  
Reading: Massa, *Catholics and American Culture*, chapter 1 ("Boundary Maintenance")

Week 14: The Inside and the Outside
April 24: Merton and Catholicism’s Coming of Age  
**Reading:** Massa, *Catholics*, chapter 2 (“Young Man Merton”) 

April 26: “A Conspiracy So immense”  
**Reading:** Massa, *Catholics*, chapter 3 (“Catholicism as a Cultural System”) 

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**Week 15: “The Downward Path”**  

May 1: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker  
**Reading:** Massa, *Catholics*, chapter 5 (“The Downward Path”) 

May 3: The End of All Things: Review  
*Exercise Number 5 on Massa due*