

THEO 6800
Spring, 2019
Mark Massa, S.J.
Thursday, 3-5:20
24 Quincy Rd., Room 101 (Boisi Center, Seminar Room)

CATHOLICS AND AMERICAN CULTURE

This is an introductory seminar in historical theology/church history, presuming no previous knowledge of Catholicism in the United States.

Reading:

Everyone will be expected to have read the assigned texts before our meetings together (about 150 pages per week), as our meetings will operate on the Socratic method (more about this later). These texts include Finke and Stark's *Churching of America*; Robert Orsi's *Madonna of 115th Street*; John Courtney Murray's *We Hold These Truths*; Will Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*; and my own (deathless prose) *Structure of Theological Revolutions*.

Requirements:

- 1) Attendance at all seminar meetings (not an elective) at which you will show your brilliance and wit (a much-appreciated Massa virtue) during the Socratic dialogues on the text(s) assigned. Near death experiences, of course, constitute a valid excuse for absence from class, but precious few other experiences fall into that category.
- 2) Four essay "exercises" (1000-1250 words) covering both readings and class notes. Questions for these exercises will be passed out one week before they are due; everyone is most welcome to show drafts of these to me before submission. Everyone will be given one "bad hair day" on these (i.e., the lowest of the four exercises will be dropped, and the three highest exercises will be averaged together for the final grade).
- 3) A final historiographic essay of 20 pages (due on Thursday May 9 by 5pm) on a topic to be worked out in conjunction with me. These papers will address an issue/person/theme raised by one of our common texts, and investigate it more thoroughly (e.g., "outsiderhood" as a theological category; the faith lives of North American teenagers/twenty-somethings; Catholic attempts to find a successful model of "Christ and Culture" in the U.S., etc.). We will discuss this at much great length a month into the course.

Evaluation:

The three highest grades on the exercises, averaged together and minus the "bad hair day," will count for 50% of the final grade; the final essay will count for 50%. Participation in the seminar is expected of everyone, and thus will not be graded (I believe this is called "coerced community").

Office Hours:

Office hours for the spring term will be on Mondays from 1-3 pm in my Stokes Office (N431), and on Wednesdays from 1-3 pm in my Boisi office (24 Quincy Rd., off College Rd). You may set up a meeting by arrangement with me (mark.massa@bc.edu) at your convenience.

Disability Services:

If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan (kathleen.duggan@bc.edu) at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities and ADHD; or Rory Stein (rory.stein@bc.edu) in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities, including temporary disabilities. Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.

Academic Integrity:

It is your responsibility to understand the university's policy, posted at www.bc.edu/integrity. Violations of academic integrity will be reported to the appropriate dean and judged by the academic integrity committee in your school. If you are found responsible for violating the policy, penalties may include a failing grade, probation, suspension, or expulsion, depending on the seriousness and circumstances.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS AND READINGS

I. THE CHURCHING (AND UNCHURCHING?) OF AMERICA

Week 1: January 17: Introduction to Course; Models of "Christ and Culture"
Discussion of the Christian Smith Hypothesis
Reading: Chapters 4 and 6 of Christian Smith's *Soul Searching*.

Week 2: January 24: Why We Are Where We Are: Religion and Numbers
The Cultural Establishment of Religion in the U.S.
Reading: Finke and Stark's *Churching of America*, chaps. 1,2, and 3

Week 3: January 31: The Catholic Story: Failing in Success?
Models of U.S. Catholic History
Reading: Finke and Stark, chapter 4
*Exercise Number 1 due on Finke and Stark

II. AN IMMIGRANT CHURCH: "OUTSIDERHOOD" AS IDENTITY

Week 4: February 7: Those Catholic OTHERS:
Immigration and the Protestant Empire
Reading: Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street*, chaps 2, 3 and 5

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Week 5: February 14: “Otherness” as Theological Category:
The Irish and German Stories
Reading: Orsi, *Madonna*, chaps. 6, 7 and 8

Week 6: February 21: Discussion of the Orsi’s “Theology of the Streets”
The “Big” and “Little” Traditions of Christianity
*Exercise Number 2 due on Orsi

III. AMERICAN AND CATHOLIC: THE INTELLECTUAL TRADITION* (*Dense Reading Alert)

Week 7: February 28: Americanism and Natural Law*
*Reading: John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, Intro and Essay I

(March 3-9: Spring Break)

Week 8: March 14: “I Was a Teenage Thomist” I: Murray and the American Consensus*
Reading: Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, Essays 2 (“Articles of Peace”) and 4 (“The Growing End”)

Week 9: March 21: “I was a Teenage Thomist” II: The Problem of *Humanae Vitae*

Week 10: March 28: *Massa* and the Natural Law
*Exercise No. 3 due on Murray

III. THE “CATHOLIC MOMENT”?

Week 11: April 4: “Piety on the Potomac”: Civil Religion and the Religious Revival
Reading: Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
*Initial Description of Historiographic Essay due

Week 12: April 11: The Problem With “Religion”
Reading: Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, chapters 10 and 11
*Exercise Number 4 due on Herberg

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(April 18-21: Easter Break)

IV. ON THEOLOGY AND ITS REVOLUTIONS

Week 13: April 25: The Structure of Theological Revolutions

Reading: Massa, *Structure of Theological Revolutions*, chaps 1 and 2

Week 14: May 2: Other Voices, Other Paradigms

Reading: Massa, chaps 4 and 7

***Historiographic Essay due on Thursday, May 9 by 5pm.