Theology of Vatican II [RELSA400-001 & LIM C794-001]  Fall, 2008
Instructor: Fr. Peter J. Bernardi, S.J.  Office: Bobet 410; ~x3941  E-mail: bernardi@loyno.edu”
Office Hours: Tues & Thurs. 3:30-4:45pm; Weds. & Fri. 2-4pm & by appointment.

I. Course Description and Goals: This January 25, 2009, will mark the 50th anniversary of Pope John XXIII’s surprise announcement that a church council would be held. After three years of preparation, the Second Vatican Council opened in Rome on October 11, 1962. Vatican II is considered the most significant religious event of the 20th century. Indeed, some Church historians consider Vatican II to be the most important event in the modern era of the Church. Not surprisingly, the post-conciliar period has been marked by tension and controversy over the interpretation of the council. Different interpretative tendencies have emerged concerning the true meaning of the Council. With this in mind, this course has several aims: (1) to attain a properly theological understanding of the Second Vatican Council based on the actual work of the Council—to this end, an attentive reading of the primary documents promulgated by the Council is the primary labor of the course; (2) to achieve a deeper understanding of the Second Vatican Council as an event in the modern history of the Roman Catholic Church—to this end, the study of secondary sources will cast light on the historical, ecclesial, and theological background and context for the Council; (3) to assess the achievements of Vatican II in the light of post-conciliar developments and acquire a perspective on and insight into tensions and disputes that have marked the life of the Church since the Council; (4) to gain an appreciation of the reading and interpretation of the documents of the Church’s Magisterium as an authoritative source for doing theology; and (5) to promote awareness of research materials and methods for theological study.


Optional Texts: Giuseppe Alberigo, A Brief History of Vatican II (Orbis, 2006); Gregory Baum, Amazing Church (Orbis, 2005).

Xeroxed Readings--to be purchased from the professor. $10

III. Teaching Method: Classes will include lectures, seminar discussions, and video presentations. Many course materials are posted at the course website on Blackboard. Click ‘external links’ to access items pertaining to Catholicism and Vatican II.

IV. Course Format and Requirements:

A. Readings, Lectures, and Discussions: A typical class will consist of a lecture and a seminar style discussion of the assigned readings. Careful perusal of the assigned readings and active participation are essential. Student presentations will be a regular component of classwork.

B. Weekly Written Assignments: A weekly 1-page [typed, double-spaced] essay (350wds) that responds to a focus question apropos of the assigned reading will serve as a basis for discussion. Students will take turns presenting their essays in class. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per class late.

C. Research Assignments: 1. Book Review Report. 2. Research paper. A list of suggested topics and personal guidance will be provided. Each student will meet with the instructor about their topic before Nov. 3rd. Prospectus due Nov. 10th; draft due Nov. 24th; final paper due Dec. 8th at class time. Research papers should conform to the Chicago-Turabian style; late papers will be penalized by one letter grade.

D. Final Exam: 20 minute oral exam on a list of pre-given topics.

E. Attendance Policy: Since this is a small class, regular, on-time attendance is essential. If an absence is absolutely unavoidable, the instructor should be informed before 5pm (by e-mail or phone message). The student's grade will be penalized after more than one absence. More than two unexcused absences will result in a failing grade.

F. Grading 90-100=A, 86-89=B+, 80-85=B, 76-79=C+, 70-75=C, 66-69=D+, 60-65=D, below 60=F. Weekly reflection papers=30%; class presentations & book review=20%; research paper=40%; final exam=10%.

G. Academic Integrity: Students should be aware of the university's policy regarding breaches in academic honesty. See University Bulletin, pp. 49-50.
Outline of Classes and Assignments. (This schedule is tentative--the professor reserves the right to alter it when necessary; students will be informed of any changes at least one class in advance.)

Aug 25  Introduction. What was Vatican II? What questions and interests does each of us bring to this course? Conflict of Interpretations: before the 1st class, read essays by Egan, Hitchcock, & O’Malley--posted at BB. What is the conflict over the interpretation of Vatican II? How is "modernity" construed by these authors? Video.

Sep 01  Labor Day: No Class

Sep 08  The Historical & Ecclesial Background of Vatican II: Part I. Readings: O’Malley, 15-92; & Komonchak’s “Modernity and the Construction of Roman Catholicism” Focus questions: Why did modern Roman Catholicism construct a "counter-culture" and what were the distinctive characteristics of its mentality and practice? What developments helped prepare for Vatican II? Video.

Sep 15  The Historical & Ecclesial Background of Vatican II: Part II. On the Eve of Vatican II: Readings: Martina’s “The Historical Context in which the idea of a new ecumenical council was born” & Will’s “Memories of a Catholic Boyhood”. Focus Question: What were the salient features of this context? What tensions and conflicts occurred? 2nd half of class: The Announcement; Preparation; and Opening of the Council. Readings: Alberigo, vii-20; O’Malley, 93-126. Focus Question: What light do these readings cast on the Pope's motives for summoning an ecumenical council and on the differing expectations of the council? [GUEST PANEL]

Fri. Sep 19: Xtra Credit lecture: Bill Huebsch (sponsored by LIM)

Sep 22  The 1st Session. Read “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” (student presentation), Hahnenberg, 1-25; O’Malley, 127-159; Alberigo, 21-42. Suenen’s Plan for the Council. Focus Qu: TBA

Sep 29  Read the "Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation" [=Dei Verbum] "the most significant document to emerge from the Second Vatican Council.” Also read Hahnenberg, 26-36; O’Malley, 160-198; HO’s. Focus question: How does the treatment of faith and revelation in Dei Verbum compare with Vatican I’s Dei Filius?

Oct 06  Church Ad intra: "The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" [=Lumen Gentium], ch.1-4; and Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church [=Christus Dominus] & student presentations of related documents. Also read: Hahnenberg, 37-49, 77-82; O’Malley, 199-246. Focus Qu: TBA

Oct 13  Fall Break: No Class

Oct 20  The Church Ad intra: "The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" [=Lumen Gentium], ch.5-8 Also read: Hahnenberg, 49-55.  Focus Qu: TBA.  Book Review due (see website for details)

Oct 27  Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People [=Apostolicam Actuositatem]; “Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life [=Perfectae Caritatis]; “Decree on Catholic Eastern Churches [=Orientalium Ecclesiaram]; Hahnenberg, 101-109, 95-100; 122-126. Focus Qu.: TBA

Nov 03  The Church and the Modern World: Part I of "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" [=Gaudium et Spes]; Hahnenberg, 56-64; O’Malley, 247-289. Focus question: What understanding of the human vocation emerges from this document?

Nov 10  The Church and the Modern World: Part II. Readings: Part II of the Pastoral Constitution; Hahnenberg, 64-73; O’Malley, 290-313. Focus Qu: TBA

Nov 17  The Church Ad extra: "The Decree on Ecumenism" [=Unitatis Redintegratio]. (prospectus due) Hahnenberg, 110-121. Focus Qu: TBA

Nov 24  The Church Ad extra: "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" [=Nostra Aetate] and "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity" [=Ad Gentes]. HO Hahnenberg. 156-163; 133-140. Focus Qu: TBA

Dec 01  The Church Ad extra: "Declaration on Religious Liberty" [=Dignitatis Humanae]. Hahnenberg, 147-155 Focus Qu: TBA.

Dec 08  Interpretation and Reception of Vatican II. Readings: HO’s. Research papers due--Presentation of research papers.

Dec 15  Final Exam