

**DESCRIPTION:**

This course explores the Church as a people called and sent to bear witness to the mystery of salvation revealed for all people in Jesus the Christ. Drawing on multiple sources (Scripture, magisterial teachings, theological writings and Christian praxis) we will examine significant self-understandings of the Christian community over its two millennium sojourn from apostolic beginnings to the globalized present. This course serves the mission of Aquinas Institute by immersing students in the sources of the tradition while examining contemporary questions in order to enliven their faith, broaden the scope of their ecclesiological imaginations and seed their love for the gift and task of becoming the community called church.

**OBJECTIVES:**

At the completion of this course students will

- be familiar with the mutually-informing methodologies (social, historical and theological) that contribute towards a comprehensive study of the Church;
- be able to discuss the relationship between Jesus' historical preaching/enactment of the Reign of God and the community called church that emerges after the Resurrection;
- be familiar with the diversity of ecclesial self-understandings expressed in the New Testament;
- be able to identify significant self-understandings of the Christian church from the time of the apostolic community to the twenty-first century and the influence of these self-understandings on the Church's mission;
- recognize and recount the significance of Vatican II and post-Vatican II magisterial teachings for emerging understandings of laity and theologies of ministry;
- be able to relate the four marks of the Church, *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic* to significant dimensions of contemporary ecclesial life: mission, discipleship, communion, liturgy and worship, tradition, dialogue, ecumenism, and relationship to the world's religions;
- be able to describe the contemporary challenges and opportunities facing a truly "global Church".

**PROCEDURES:**

The course will be taught as a *graduate seminar* with mostly discussion of readings and some lectures. Participants are responsible for required readings, a weekly two-paged reflection paper on the readings, class discussions and a final exam.

**METHOD:**

This graduate seminar course requires *close reading* of required texts and *participation* in discussions.

Close reading of texts

I recommend that students carefully outline the readings in order to gain a sense of how an author structures the argument or case being made. This will help you determine significant points and allow you to engage the argument thoughtfully.

Participation

Participation involves thoughtful preparation for class as well as student input, comment and questions as part of class discussions. Seminar courses, at their best, maximize student

engagement of the course material and require each to contribute verbally to the discussion. Please make every effort to speak to the group (not just the instructor) when sharing.

Weekly preparation for class:

Please prepare a two-page report (typed, double spaced, 10-12pt, 1 in. margin) and include the following:

- Points of simple clarification (e.g., technical terms, words in foreign languages, etc.);
- Major Issues raised;
- Your own questions and reflections stimulated by the reading.

(Occasionally, I will adjust the writing assignment and give you selected questions to respond to in a two-page essay.)

A word about classroom discussion:

We enjoy a remarkable privilege to study and pursue an understanding of our faith in service of the gospel. In this Spirit, I share my expectation that all of our exchanges be marked by respect, genuine curiosity, and generosity towards those with whom we may differ. I encourage you to pay attention, speak your truth with clarity, and seek clarification; let us always respect the power of a living question among us.

**EVALUATION:**

Students will be evaluated on their weekly reflection paper, their engagement in class discussions and their final paper which will serve as the final exam.

- 40% Weekly short essays, research related assignments
- 30% Oral participation
- 30% Final Exam

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- Arbuckle, Gerard. *Catholic Identity or Identities?: Refounding Ministries in Chaotic Times*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013.
- Berger, Peter. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York: Doubleday, 1967.
- Bevens, Stephen and Roger Schroeder. *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2011.
- Congar, Yves, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000 printing (We will read only volume 2, but it is less expensive to buy the three volume text than to buy the second volume on its own...unless you find a treasure somewhere!)
- Faggioli, Massimo. *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning*. New York: Paulist Press, 2012.
- Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973/2000. (Please be sure to purchase the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition with the new introduction by the author).
- Hahnenberg, Edward P., *Ministries, A Relational Approach*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003.
- Harrington, Daniel J., *The Church According to the New Testament: What the Wisdom and Witness of Early Christianity Teach Us Today*. Chicago: Sheed and Ward, 2001.
- Sanks, T. Howland. *Salt, Leaven, and Light: The Community Called Church*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

A copy of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, preferably the inclusive language translation. There is a non-inclusive translation online at <<http://www.rc.net/rcchurch/vatican2/index.html>>.

And selected articles provided by the instructor.