

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. How might a contemporary reading of the ancient ecclesial marks of the Church, *one, holy, catholic* and *apostolic*, offer a compelling vision and support a transformative *praxis* of Christian life?

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 hybrid course will consist of online lectures, discussions, and face-to-face intensive instruction (Nov 1-2, 9am-4:30pm, Nov. 3, 9-12). Participants will be responsible for required readings, small group online class discussions, full mandatory attendance/participation in the three-day intensive and a final paper.

METHOD: THE DESIGN OF THE COURSE

This is a hybrid course that combines online learning with concentrated face-to-face classroom time during the course intensive. Weekly, students will complete readings, listen to narrated powerpoints, prepare responses to questions posed by the instructor and participate in asynchronous online small group discussions. **Facility with Blackboard as an online learning resource is an important skill for students who wish to take this course.**

Each week you will engage in a focused online discussion, dedicated to a specific topic. For example, the theme of the second week of the course concerns theological context and method. The online discussion questions will help you better understand and grapple with the required readings.

Readings and the discussion assignment will be available on Fridays, **allowing students to read and prepare Friday-Sunday for the coming week's discussion.**

Students will take turns leading group discussions that are also monitored by the instructor.

- The designated leader will write a lead statement (250-500 words) in response to the question(s) posed for the week’s topic. **The lead statement is due no later than Monday noon**, so that the other members will have time to read and reply thoughtfully.
- Following the leader’s post, group members will respond with their initial response to the leader on **Tuesday (by midnight)**.
- All members (including the leader) will continue the conversation by a second post on **Thursday, noon**.

Recap: All students will post twice in the week. Leaders post on Monday and Thursday. Group members post by Tuesday and on Thursday.

The most valuable resource in our learning is the wisdom and experience that each of us brings to the course. I encourage you to see this learning cohort as a genuine wisdom community within the wider communion of the church.

EVALUATION:

Assessment of Online Work:

1. Lead posting demonstrates
 - creative and critical engagement of course themes from both personal and pastoral contexts
 - thorough grasp of the readings and support presentations leading to a mastery of key concepts and themes
 - ability to communicate clearly online
 - evidence of critical thinking, the ability to relate theory to praxis and vice versa
2. Online group participation demonstrates
 - frequency of participation
 - quality of participation
 - quality of feedback to group members

This rubric is a helpful guide for assessing participation

	Incomplete	Proficient	Exemplary
Frequency	No postings or one posted response to the initial posting	2-3 postings during the week, but all postings are on the same day or in the same discussion thread	Actively participates in several discussions throughout the week
Quality of Participation	Does not address the discussion prompt or moves off topic	Addresses all aspects of the discussion prompt and demonstrates understanding of course content	Addresses all aspects of the discussion prompt and demonstrates synthesis of course content Responses serve to extend the discussion and foster reflection and analysis by other learners
Quality of feedback to others	Does not post follow up responses to others or posts simple responses that do not extend the discussion (e.g. "I agree.")	Feedback to others incorporates real-world examples, references to course readings/content, and is specific and meaningful	Feedback to others incorporates real-world examples, references to course readings/content, and is specific and meaningful. Feedback promotes analysis and reflection in others

Research process and paper

Students will research and write a 15 page paper on a topic of interest, **directly related to the course**. Students should determine their topic early in the semester and begin their research. Students will receive a schedule of specific research-related assignments and due dates.

Final Grade:

The final course grade will be based on the following

- on-line contribution to your small group (40%),
- your overall contribution to the learning experience of the intensive (30%),
- your final paper (30%).

REQUIRED TEXTS: AN INITIAL LISTING (PAY ATTENTION FOR UPDATES OF THIS LIST)

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!)

Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973/2000. (Please be sure to purchase the 15th anniversary edition with the new introduction by the author).

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.