340-02 U.S. Catholic Church and Public Issues

Jean Lim
U. S. Catholic Church and Public Issues THEO 340-02

Spring 2014
MWF 2:00 p.m. - 2:50 p.m. SMH 348
Instructor: Prof. Jean Lim
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Office Hours: MW 12:15 p.m. – 12:45 p.m., and by appointment

“...the responsibility to make choices in political life rests with each individual in light of a properly formed conscience.” (Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship par.7)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This core course offers a theological framework in which to analyze complex public issues confronting U.S. society. It is part of the Ethics/Religion and Society (E/RS) component of the core curriculum that promotes Xavier’s mission of enabling students to think critically about social issues in terms of human values and to develop a sense of compassionate solidarity. This course is an E/RS focus elective, a Diversity Curriculum Requirement course, a Peace Studies minor elective, and a Catholicism and Culture minor elective.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course fulfills one or more requirements of the core curriculum. The student will:

1. Apply general principles of Catholic Social Teaching to specific public issues.
2. Engage in a dialogue process of reflective listening in order to understand different opinions and articulate his or her own assumptions, values, insights and questions to others.
3. Evaluate proposed solutions to public issues in order to make her or his own informed political judgments in consideration of the common good.
4. Initiate or continue a life of political engagement which reflects his or her faith.

This course fulfills the following Core Curriculum Goals as defined in June 2012 by the Ad Hoc Core Curriculum Assessment Committee:

GOAL 1: Students will be effective communicators in writing and orally
1. Students will organize and express their ideas in writing and orally
2. Students will formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources
3. Students will utilize an effective writing process guided by audience, purpose, cultural context, and disciplinary standards

GOAL 2: Students will be critical thinkers
1. Students will analyze and interpret texts, images, objects, artifacts, and quantitative and qualitative data
2. Students will describe the historical, cultural, mythological, and social contexts of texts, works of art, and theories
3. Students will evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence
4. Students will discuss fundamental questions that arise from the human condition, such as questions about the grounds of morality, the essence of justice, the nature of reality, the possibility of certainty, the nature of beauty, or the reasonableness of religious faith
5. Students will evaluate the use of science and mathematics in society and everyday life in an informed manner
GOAL 3: Students will be creators of new knowledge and expression
1. Students will utilize their imagination and creativity, individually and collectively, to innovate and generate new perspectives to problems
3. Students will create, perform, and produce work that synthesizes technical execution and expressively communicates to its audience

GOAL 4: Students will be able to understand and appreciate the arts, humanities and science disciplines, and reflect on connections among these studies
1. Students will engage in critical, theological reflection by the method developed in Jesuit and Catholic practice, using human experience and religious traditions as resources to address issues or questions arising in today’s world
3. Students will think historically in order to understand the past on its own terms and to understand how societies have changed over time
6. Students will utilize mathematical and logical reasoning and the language of mathematics with its own symbols, syntax, and semantics.

GOAL 5: Students will be integrated individuals who articulate a coherent, ethical perspective on the world and their place in it
1. Students will recognize the societal, ethical and moral dimensions of discourse, art, information, science and technology
2. Students will relate their knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to their life experiences and the challenges confronting today’s world
3. Students will use information and resources responsibly in their communication and research
4. Students will utilize intellectual, moral, and spiritual tools and sensibilities to engage faithfully and responsively in the world for the promotion of peace, social justice, and ecological sustainability

GOAL 6: Students will be aware global citizens
1. Students will recognize relationships between diversity, inequality, and social, economic, and political power both in the United States and globally
2. Students will describe contributions made by individuals from diverse and/or underrepresented groups to local, national, and global communities
3. Students will consider perspectives of diverse groups when making decisions
4. Students will interact with sensitivity as members of society and as professionals with people who have ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are different from their own
5. Students will engage Catholic, ecumenical, cross-cultural, and inter-religious perspectives in reflecting upon contemporary issues of significance

GOAL 7 (E/RS): Students will be intellectually, morally and spiritually educated individuals capable of critical reflection on ethical and/or religious questions of social significance from the perspective of multiple disciplines with unique methods
2. Students will engage in critical, theological reflection on ethical and/or religious questions of social significance, using human experience and religious traditions as resources to address these questions
3. Students will critically read, write about, and reflect on ethical and/or religious issues of social significance through interpretation of literary texts
4. Students will reflect critically on ethical and/or religious questions of social significance through the method of another discipline or through a second course in philosophy, theology or literature
TEXTS


Articles on Blackboard, including the following course texts:


REQUIREMENTS

1. Class Attendance and Participation

   Students are expected to attend all classes. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Anyone arriving late should see the professor immediately after class in order to make sure that the attendance record is correct. Three late arrivals will count as one absence. Four unexcused absences will lower the class participation grade by 10 points. For each subsequent absence after four, the class participation grade will be lowered by 10 additional points. Absences can be excused for medical reasons only with proper documentation from a medical professional.

   Since we (myself included) can learn so much from the knowledge and experiences of each other, you are encouraged to actively contribute to class discussions and small group work. Showing respect for the opinions of others and attentive listening are corollaries of stating your own honest viewpoints. Attendance and participation will factor into the participation grade. Participation during class discussions and group work will be evaluated and recorded for each class.

   If there are lengthy notes to be used during an upcoming class, PowerPoint slides will be posted before class. Please check Blackboard documents on a regular basis before coming to class and bring the printout to class if you wish to facilitate maximum participation during class. Students are always responsible for taking additional notes on subjects not written in the PowerPoint slides.

2. Individual Presentation using Quantitative Literacy

   A student will create a short presentation of economic data in a graph or chart from an academic source on a specific topic and explain the quantitative data to the class. The student will also analyze whether or not the data supports the position of the USCCB on related topics. A detailed rubric will be distributed.
3. Group Presentation and Individual Position Paper

A student will choose from one of eight topics regarding a public issue in the United States and work with a group to report to the class on this issue regarding Catholic social teaching, the Democratic platform and the Republican platform. On this topic, the student will also write an individual 4-5 page paper reflecting on Catholic social teaching, party platforms, class dialogue and the student’s position on what should be done in public policy regarding the issue. A detailed rubric will be distributed.

All papers and presentations will be submitted using Blackboard before the class period on the due date stated on the rubric. There will be a Blackboard Assignment item to use for submission of the paper. The paper and presentation will be screened by Turnitin, a plagiarism prevention program. Theology department grading guidelines for written essays can be found in our course documents on Blackboard.

4. Exams

Two in-class exams will be administered. Each exam will include multiple choice questions and essay questions taken from student presentations, class dialogue, class lecture, speakers, videos and assigned readings. The exams are not cumulative. A study guide will be provided for each exam. Absence from an exam will be permitted only for a grave reason (e.g. medical emergency) and only at the discretion of the instructor. In the case of a real emergency, leave a message including your name and number as soon as possible.

Anyone who feels he/she may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability (e.g.: sensory, learning, psychological, medical, mobility) should contact me to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs as soon as possible. I rely on the Disability Services Office for assistance in verifying your eligibility for academic accommodations related to your disability. If you have not previously contacted Disability Services, I encourage you to do so at 513-745-3280 on the Fifth Floor of the Conaton Learning Commons, Room 514 or e-mail Cassandra Jones at jonesc20@xavier.edu, to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

If religious observance will cause a student to be absent from class or otherwise affect his or her ability to complete academic assignments, he or she must notify the instructor in advance and make necessary arrangements to complete the entire course.

5. Blackboard Work

Students are expected to complete the required reading prior to class and be ready to discuss it. There will be occasional Blackboard assignments to be completed prior to coming to class on the day the reading is due or on dialogue days.
EVALUATION

1. The grade will be determined as follows:

   Part I Blackboard online quizzes, discussion board postings and assignment 15%
   Part II and III dialogue impact postings 8%
   Individual Presentation using quantitative literacy 7%
   Public Issue Presentation 20%
   Public Issue Paper 15%
   Exam 1 Part II: 13%
   Exam 2 Part III: 12%
   Class participation: 10%

2. The grading scale for the theology department is:

   A    = 100-94
   A-   = 93-92
   B +  = 91-90
   B    = 89-87
   B -  = 86-84
   C+   = 83-82
   C    = 81-79
   C -  = 78-76
   D +  = 75-74
   D    = 73-71
   D -  = 70-68
   F    = 67 or below

For department policy on grading, see http://www.xavier.edu/theology/grading_policy.cfm.

4. Academic Honesty

This course will be conducted in accordance with Xavier University’s policy on academic honesty. In papers, presentations and assignments submitted for this course, both the ideas and wording must be the student’s own or must be clearly attributed to their proper sources using full citations. All electronic devices will be completely forbidden during exam days. If the instructor sees an electronic device during an exam day, the instructor will presume the student is using it to cheat and take appropriate measures.

Events of Interest

Jan. 7          113th Congress, 2nd Session convenes
Jan. 28         State of the Union Address
Jan. 29         E/RS Lecture Fr. Virgilio Elizondo 7 p.m. Conaton Board Room
Feb. 24         E/RS Lecture Dr. Stephen Long 7 p.m. Conaton Board Room
June           Spring General Assembly U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
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COURSE SCHEDULE

The topic of the day’s class, textbook or article reading due dates, assignment due dates, form due dates, and EXAM DATES are marked on the schedule. This syllabus is my best judgment for the course calendar but it may need adjustment as we work together during the semester.

M Jan 13   Course Introduction

W Jan 15   Presentation Rubric
Read: “A Big Heart Open to God” America (15 pages, Blackboard)
Download discussion form on America interview of Pope Francis from Blackboard and bring completed form to hand in as enter class

Part I: Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship

F Jan 17   Morality is based on reality
Read: Conscience in Conflict pp. ix-22
Read: Blog from XU Medical Students’ Trip to Guatemala (see Blackboard)
Blackboard discussion board posting on blog and morality due before class
Presentation choice form due in class

Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

W Jan 22   Discernment, Introduction of jigsaw cooperative learning exercise on gun violence
Read: Conscience in Conflict pp. 23-36
Read: Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship par. 1-8, 17-18 (Blackboard)
Read: “Uninformed Conscience” America (1 page, Blackboard)
Blackboard online quiz due before class
Signup deadline for jigsaw cooperative learning exercise on gun violence

F Jan 24   Core Themes of Catholic Social Teaching
Read: “The Place of the Poor in ‘The Joy of the Gospel’” America (5 pages, Blackboard)
Read: Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship par. 40-62 (Blackboard)
Read: The Catholic Vote Ch 1 pp. 1-19
Blackboard online quiz due before class

M Jan 27   The Common Good
Read: We Hold These Truths Ch 4 pp. 45-54 (not entire chapter)
Read: “Lord, Help Us to Treat You Well” from On God’s Side: What Religions Forgets and Politics Hasn’t Learned About Serving the Common Good - Wallis (22 pages, Blackboard)
Blackboard online quiz due before class
The Problem of Gun Violence - jigsaw cooperative learning exercise
Introduction of Quantitative Literacy (QL) Presentation
Blackboard assignment posted to gun violence group file exchange before class

Conscience and Authority, How Catholics Vote
Read: Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship par. 9-16, 19-39 (Blackboard)
Read: Conscience in Conflict pp. 37-45
Read: We Hold These Truths Ch 3 pp. 29-44
Blackboard discussion board posting on conscience and authority due before class
Signup deadline for QL Presentation

Doctrinal Assessment of Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Read: “Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious” CDF (8 pages, Blackboard)
Listen: “An American Nun Responds to Vatican Criticism” (39 minutes, Blackboard)
Listen: “Bishop Explains Vatican’s Criticism of U.S. Nuns” (47 minutes, Blackboard)
Blackboard discussion board posting on Doctrinal Assessment of LCWR

Part II: Public Issues: Economy, War & Peace, Healthcare, Beginning & End of Life

Introduction: Economy
Read: "'Man vs. Machine, A Jobless Recovery --- Companies Are Spending to Upgrade Factories but Hiring Lags; Robots Pump Out Sunny Delight " Wall Street Journal (2 pages, Blackboard)
Read: “Job Insecurity” America (2 pages, Blackboard)
Watch: “Wow! Budget Deal in Washington” CNN Money (2 minutes, Blackboard)
Read: “US Bishops Commend 'Modest Replacement to Sequestration’” USCCB (1 page, Blackboard)
Posting deadline for works cited entry for QL Presentation

Introduction: Economy continued
Read: The Catholic Vote pp. 47-51, 62-66
Read: Economic Excerpts from “Evangelii Gaudium” Pope Francis (Blackboard)
Read: “Labor Day Statement 2013” USCCB (2 pages, Blackboard)
Read: “Saving Subsidiarity” America (4 pages, Blackboard)

Student Presentation: Economy
Individual QL Presentations (see schedule on rubric)
Post PPT slide to Blackboard Group File Exchange before class

Individual QL Presentations (see schedule on rubric)
Post PPT slide to Blackboard Group File Exchange before class

Individual QL Presentations (see schedule on rubric)
Post PPT slide to Blackboard Group File Exchange before class

Individual QL Presentations, Introduction of dialogue process
Post PPT slide to Blackboard Group File Exchange before class
F Feb 21  
Dialogue: Economy  
Post impact point for group discussion to Blackboard discussion board

M Feb 24  
Introduction: War and peace  
Speaker: TBA  
Read: The Catholic Vote pp. 88-91  
Read: We Hold These Truths Ch 5 pp. 63-74  
Watch: “As Casualties Mount in Syria, Children Tend to the Wounded” ABC News (4 minutes, Blackboard)  
Read: “Letter to President Obama Regarding Syria” USCCB (1 page, Blackboard)  
Read: “Letter to NSA Advisor on Use of Drones” USCCB (2 pages, Blackboard)  
Read: “Bishop Pates’ Commends Secretary of State Kerry for Signing Arms Trade Treaty, Nuclear Negotiations with Iran” USCCB (1 page, Blackboard)  
Read: “Bring Them Home” America (1 page, Blackboard)

W Feb 26  
Student Presentation: War and peace

F Feb 28  
Dialogue: War and peace  
Post impact point for group discussion to Blackboard discussion board

Spring Break

M Mar 10  
Introduction: Healthcare  
Watch: Kaiser Health Reform Animation (9 minutes, Blackboard)  
Read: “What the Supreme Court’s Ruling Means for Consumers” Wall Street Journal (1 page, Blackboard)  
Read: “Young Adults and Low-Cost Health Insurance” U.S. News and World Report (2 pages, Blackboard)  
Read: “Ohio Medicaid Expansion” Cincinnati Enquirer (2 pages, Blackboard)  
Read: “Health-Reform Challenges: Boost Care, Manage Costs” Cincinnati Enquirer (3 pages, Blackboard)

W Mar 12  
Introduction: Healthcare continued  
Read: The Catholic Vote pp. 51-55  
Read: “January 26 Letter to Congress” USCCB (3 pages, Blackboard)  
Read: “Thousands of Catholic sisters support health care reform” National Catholic Reporter (1 page, Blackboard)  
Read: “HHS Ruling Still Requires Action In Congress, By Courts” USCCB (1 page, Blackboard)  
Read: “Final Statement of the Catholic Health Association” National Catholic Reporter (1 page, Blackboard)

F Mar 14  
Student Presentation: Healthcare

M Mar 17  
Dialogue: Healthcare  
Post impact point for group discussion to Blackboard discussion board
**W Mar 19**
Introduction: Beginning and end of life
In class view address by Sr. Helen Prejean - death penalty
Read: The Catholic Vote pp. 84-88
Read: “America’s Retreat from the Death Penalty” New York Times (2 pages, Blackboard)

**F Mar 21**
Introduction: Beginning and end of life continued
Read: We Hold These Truths Ch 6 pp. 75-89
Read: “The Art of the Possible” America (1 page, Blackboard)
Read: “Abortion Absolutists” America (1 page, Blackboard)
Read: “When ‘life support’ is really ‘death support’” CNN Health (4 pages, Blackboard)

**M Mar 24**
Student Presentation: Beginning and end of life

**W Mar 26**
Dialogue: Beginning and end of life
Student questions on review material for test
Post impact point for group discussion to Blackboard discussion board

**F Mar 28**
EXAM 1 on Part II

**Part III: Public Issues: Immigration, Environment, Education & Family, Race & Ethnicity**

**M Mar 31**
Introduction: Immigration
Read: The Catholic Vote pp. 77-80
Watch: “Help (Not) Wanted” Rock Center MSNBC (15 minutes, Blackboard)
Watch: “Pres. Obama meeting with business leaders on comprehensive immigration reform” CBS News (3 minutes, Blackboard)
Read: “Pope’s Homily at Mass in Lampedusa” Vatican (1 page, Blackboard)
Read: “Letter to Speaker of the House Boehner on Comprehensive Immigration Reform” USCCB (1 page, Blackboard)
Read: “Network’s Nuns on the Bus- Meeting Fear and Hope in our Nation” Network Connections (2 pages, Blackboard)

**W Apr 2**
Introduction: Immigration continued
Speaker: TBA
Watch: “Undocumented Immigrants Line Up for New Chance” ABC (5 minutes, Blackboard)
Read: “Gifts from Boxes Filled with Darkness” Network Connections (2 pages, Blackboard)

**F Apr 4**
Student Presentation: Immigration

**M Apr 7**
Dialogue: Immigration
Post impact point for group discussion to Blackboard discussion board

**W Apr 9**
Introduction: Environment
Read: The Catholic Vote pp. 80-84
Watch: “Pope on World Environment Day” Catholic News Service (2 minutes, Blackboard)
Read: “Climate Change: A Life Issue” Gropp, America (1 page, Blackboard)
Read: “Obama Calls for Carbon Cuts at Power Plants” Associated Press (3 pages, Blackboard)
Read: “Support EPA Mercury and Air Toxics Standards” USCCB (1 page, Blackboard)
F Apr 11  Student Presentation: Environment

M Apr 14  Dialogue: Environment

W Apr 16  Introduction: Education and Family
Speaker: Xavier LGBT Alliance
Read: The Catholic Vote pp. 55-62
Read: Pope Francis Excerpts on Homosexuality (1 page, Blackboard)
Read: “Supreme Court Decisions on Marriage: ‘Tragic Day for Marriage and our Nation,’ State U.S. Bishops” USCCB (2 pages, Blackboard)
Read: “Paid Sick Leave Backgrounder” USCCB (1 page, Blackboard)
Read: "Shanghai teens top international education ranking, OECD says” CNN (3 pages, Blackboard)
Watch: “Catholics on Student Loans” Catholic News Service (3 minutes, Blackboard)

Easter Holiday

W Apr 23  Student Presentation: Education and Family

F Apr 25  Dialogue: Education and Family

M Apr 28  Introduction: Race and ethnicity
Speaker: TBA
Read: The Catholic Vote pp. 73-76
Read: “Interruptions” from Hope Sings, So Beautiful- Pramuk (16 pages, Blackboard)
Read: “Statement on the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom” USCCB (1 page, Blackboard)
Read: “When profiling is ‘reasonable,’ injustice becomes excusable” Massingale (2 pages, Blackboard)

W Apr 30  Student Presentation: Race and ethnicity

F May 2  Dialogue: Race and ethnicity
Student questions on review material for test
Course Evaluations

W May 7  EXAM 2 on Part III  2:00 p.m. – 3:50 p.m.