

*Why the Church?*  
*Making the Case for Catholicism to Contemporary Young People*

Political Science 30705-01  
Spring Semester 2023

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*Description*

The subject of the course is Catholic apologetics for young adults. Studies show that young adults are leaving the Church in large numbers and that the ones who stay do not subscribe to Church teachings. The course begins with an examination of contemporary trends in the religious lives of young people, with a particular focus on Catholics. It proceeds to examine the major reasons why young people are leaving the Catholic Church and to engage students in arguments for and against the Church's positions on: the rationality of God, science, sex and marriage, the Church's role in historical injustices, and politics. In the final portion of the course, we will pivot to a "positive apologetics," look at the case for the Church through beauty and the witness of the saints, modes of engagement that are said to appeal to young adults in today's generation. The course concludes with the case for the resurrection of Jesus. Taught in the Political Science Department, the course considers the political dimension of each unit, corresponding to the politicized character of each of the disputed questions in the mind of contemporary young adults who are leaving the Church, as studies of opinion demonstrate.

The course will be taught with a range of students in mind: those who are confident in their Catholic faith and wish to learn how to persuade others; those who are unsure of their Catholic faith; those who are of a different Christian or religious faith and interested in learning about the Catholic faith; and those who are skeptical of the Catholic faith. All are welcome, and the course places a premium on vigorous and respectful debate.

A podcast on the course can be heard [here](#) (go to Episode 49).

*Core Learning Goals*

- Students will learn to formulate, evaluate, and communicate arguments for and against the teachings of the Catholic Church on a range of controversies over matters that are leading contemporary young adults to leave the Church.

- Students will learn how, in matters of apologetics, Catholic theology comes into conversation with a range of other disciplines, including political science, sociology, philosophy of science, history, and aesthetics.
- Students will gain a proficiency in argumentation through the *disputatio* paper

### *Readings*

All readings are hyperlinked in "Course Summary" below and from Calendar. The link takes you either to a website or to a file that is collected in a folder under the "files" tab.

### *Course Requirements*

1. Take-home midterm examination (25%)
2. *Disputatio* paper (25%)
3. Active participation in discussion section, including preparing short reading reports for ten sections (1.5% for each report, total 15%) and participating actively in discussion (5%). (Total discussion section grade 20%)
4. Final examination (30%)

### *Policies*

- Students are bound to the University's Honor Code on all assignments: <http://www.nd.edu/~hnr/code/index.htm>. Papers will be checked by Turnitin.com for plagiarism.
- Students are expected to attend lectures and discussion sections, at which attendance will be taken. Absences from lecture are excused for medical emergencies (verified by a note), death in the family, and involvement in a university-sanctioned activity such as athletics. Other situations are considered on a case-by-case basis. Every student receives one "grace" unexcused absence. More than one unexcused absence merits the reduction in the final grade by one point on a 100-point scale per unexcused absence.
- Late assignments will be penalized two points per day (on a scale of 0 to 100)
- The use of laptop computers, smart phones, and any other electronic device and eating are not permitted during lecture

## CLASS SESSIONS

### *Introduction*

(Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup>)

## UNIT ONE: YOUNG ADULTS AND APOLOGETICS

### *What Young Adult Catholics Believe*

(Monday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>)

#### Readings:

- Christian Smith et. al., *Young Catholic America*, 1-8, 264-273
- Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching*, 162-171

### *Why Young Adults Are Leaving the Church*

(Wednesday, January 25<sup>th</sup>)

#### Guest:

- Dr. Geoffrey Layman, University of Notre Dame

#### Readings:

- Bishop Robert Barron, “[Apologists, Catechists, Theologians, Wake Up!](#)”
- Michael Lipka, “[Why America’s ‘Nones’ Left Religion Behind](#)”
- Betsy Cooper et. al., “[Exodus: Why Americans are Leaving Religion – And Why They’re Unlikely to Come Back](#)”
- Jeffrey M. Jones, “[U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades](#)”
- Cox, Daniel, "Stop Blaming Young People For Leaving Religion.
- Campbell, David, Geoffrey Layman, and John C. Green, *Secular Surge*, pp. 1-21

### *What is the Church?*

(Monday, January 30<sup>th</sup>)

#### Readings:

- [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), secs. 748-896, found in Section II, Chapter Three, Article Nine

#### Supplemental Readings:

- Pope Benedict XVI, *Called to Communion*, 13-45, 133-65
- Lecture by Daniel Philpott, "[Saint John Henry Newman: The Book that Changed by Life.](#)"

## *What is Apologetics?*

(Wednesday, February 1<sup>st</sup>)

### Readings:

- [Acts 17:22-34](#);
- [1 Peter 3:13-22](#)
- [Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium](#), § 110-134

### Supplemental Readings:

- [Notes on Apologetics and Newman by Professor Philpott.pdf](#)

## **UNIT TWO: GOD AND SCIENCE**

### *The New Atheists*

(Monday, February 6<sup>th</sup>)

#### Readings:

- Friedrich Nietzsche, “[The Madman](#)”
- Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, pp. 29-74
- Video: Conor Cunningham, [Why Study Atheism?](#)

### *Scientific Skepticism*

(Wednesday, February 8<sup>th</sup>)

#### Reading:

- Daniel Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea*, 17-23, 61-84.
- Alvin Plantinga, “Dennett’s Dangerous Idea, Part 1 and Part 2”
- Conor Cunningham, “[Did Darwin Kill God?](#)”

### *The Existence of God in Scripture and Tradition*

(Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup>)

#### Readings:

- [Wisdom 13: 1-9](#)
- [Romans 1: 20-21](#)
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I a. 2, q. 3
- [First Vatican Council, Canon 2:1-2:2](#)
- [Catechism of the Catholic Church, sec. 26-73](#)

#### Supplemental Readings:

- [Deus Caritas Est](#), nos. 1-15
- Peter Kreeft, “[The First Cause Argument](#)”

- *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Second Vatican Council), nos. 1-6
- *Fides et Ratio*, nos. 7-15

*Science, God, Morality and Politics*  
(Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup>)

Readings:

- Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell*, 278-307
- Christian Smith, “Does Naturalism Warrant a Moral Belief in Universal Benevolence and Human Rights?” pp. 292-317

Supplemental Reading:

- Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, pp. 281-308

*Taking on The New Atheists*  
(Monday, February 20<sup>th</sup>)

Guest:

- Dr. Brad Gregory, Dorothy G. Griffin Chair Department of History, Notre Dame

Reading:

- Brad Gregory, “Science vs. Religion”

### **UNIT THREE: SEX AND MARRIAGE**

*The Sexual Revolution*  
(Wednesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>)

Readings:

- Margaret A. Farley, *Just Love*, 207-244
- W. Bradford Wilcox and Lyman Stone, “[The Happiness Recession](#)”
- Bridget Burke Ravizza, “Selling Ourselves on the Marriage Market”

Supplemental Readings:

- Mark Regnerus, “[What the Pill has Wrought ... The Truth of the Catholic Teaching Begins to Register](#)”
- Mark Regnerus, “Cheap Sex and the Decline of Marriage”
- Austin Institute, [The Economics of Sex](#) (video)
- Eva Illouz, [Why Love Hurts](#) (video)
- Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, “[Notification on the Book, Just Love. A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics](#) by Sr. Margaret A. Farley, R.S.M.”

*Sex in the Eyes of the Church*  
(Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup>)

Readings

- USCCB, [“Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan,”](#) pp. 1-17, 29-60.

Supplemental Reading:

- Robert Barron, [The Theology of Marriage](#)
- [William Mattison, “A Transition: Actions, Practices, and Big-Picture Beliefs about the Way Things Are”](#)
- [Minority report on birth control](#)

**DISPUTATIO PAPER FIRST DEADLINE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24<sup>th</sup>**

*Same Sex Desires and Gender Discordance*  
(Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>)

Readings:

- [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), sec. 2357-2359
- Christopher Kaczor, *The Seven Big Myths About the Catholic Church*, 125-145.
- Stephen J. Pope, [“Same-Sex Marriage: Threat or Aspiration?”](#)
- [Eden Invitation website](#)
  - Who We Are > About Us (read and watch short video)
  - Who We Are > Four First Things
  - Why This Matters > Statistics
  - Why This Matters > Stories (Watch “Porch Series,” including Kristen, Andrew, and Raquel)

Supplemental Reading:

- Video: [Panel on Transgenderism](#), De Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture Fall Conference 2017, view Mary Ann Case (0:00-22:32) and Ryan Anderson (44:08-1:04:11), Pia de Solenni optional
- <https://www.prestonsprinkle.com/theology-in-the-raw/886-abigail-favale>

**\*\* MID-TERM Available on Canvas: Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 12:00 pm \*\***

*The Politics of Sexuality*  
(Monday, March 6<sup>th</sup>)

Guest: Dr. Abigail Favale

Readings:

- Girgis, Sherif, “Making Sense Out of Marriage,” 290-303

- John Corvino, “Same-Sex Marriage and the Definitional Objection,” 277-289

*Courtyard of the Gentiles I*

(Wednesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>)

**\*\* MID-TERM Due to be uploaded on Canvas: Friday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 pm \*\***

**UNIT FOUR: HISTORY**

*The Church and the History of Evil*

(Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup>)

Readings:

- James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword*, pp. 3-12, 475-478, 523-535

**\*\* SPRING BREAK \*\***

*The Case For the Church’s Positive Influence on History*

(Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>)

Readings:

- Rodney Stark, *Bearing False Witness*, pp. 1-35

Supplemental Reading:

- [Nostra Aetate](#): Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions
- [We Remember](#): A Reflection on the Shoah

*Ecclesiastical Repair*

(Monday, March 27<sup>th</sup>)

Readings:

- Accattoli, Luigi, *When A Pope Asks For Forgiveness*, xv-xxiv, 3-8, 55-79
- Daniel Philpott, [“Why the Church Needs a Eucharistic Response to the Sex Abuse Scandals”](#)

**UNIT FIVE: POLITICS**

*What Is the Church’s Politics?*

(Wednesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>)

Readings:

- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, entire
- [Uganda: The Challenge of Forgiveness \(Video\)](#)

*Race and Inclusion*

(Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>)

Guest: Mr. Alfred Turnipseed

Readings:

- DeNicola Center for Ethics and Culture, [“Racism is a Life Issue”](#) (Video)
- Tim Keller, [“The Fading of Forgiveness: Tracing the Disappearance of the Thing We Need Most”](#)
- Duke Kwon and Greg Thompson, [“The Case For Reparations”](#)
- Daniel Philpott, [“A Catholic Approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Notre Dame”](#)

*The Consistent Life Ethic*

(Wednesday, April 5<sup>th</sup>)

Readings:

- *Evangelium Vitae*, § 1-4, 11-28, 52-77

**UNIT SIX: THE APOLOGETICS OF WITNESS**

*Introduction to Beauty and the Evidence of the Saints*

(Wednesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>)

Readings:

- Robert Barron, [“Barron Muses on Evangelization, Bob Dylan, and the Infield Fly Rule”](#)
- Robert Barron, [“Evangelizing Through Beauty”](#)
- [Calvin, Institutes, Ch. XX, 21-27.pdf](#)
- [Hitchens, Missionary Position, 51-71\\_.pdf](#)

Supplemental Reading:

- Pope Benedict XVI, [“The Feeling of Things, The Contemplation of Beauty”](#)
- Hans Urs Balthasar, [“Revelation and the Beautiful,”](#) 95-126, esp. 112-126
- Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone is Credible*, 51-60
- Pope Benedict, [“Meeting With Artists”](#)
- John Paul II, [“Letter to Artists”](#)

*Are There Saints in Politics?*

(Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup>)



Reading:

- Niccolò Machiavelli, [\*The Prince\*](#), Chapter XV-XVIII
- Pope John Paul II, [\*Christifidelis Laici\*](#), § 15- 17, 36-39
- Gerard Wegemer, *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*, pp. 48-60, 105-108, 149-156, 210-224

*The Argument from Beauty*  
(Wednesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>)

Readings:

- Paul Senz, ["How Beauty Draw Us to God"](#)
- Francis X. Maier, ["Why We Hunger for Beauty."](#)

**DISPUTATIO PAPER SECOND DEADLINE MONDAY, APRIL 21<sup>st</sup>**

*The Political Witness of Franz Jaegerstaetter*  
(Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup>)

Film:

*A Hidden Life* (Hesburgh Library Reserves Page)

**UNIT SEVEN: RESURRECTION**

*Resurrection: Did it Really Happen?*  
(Wednesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>)

Readings:

- Bart Ehrman, ["The Case Against the Resurrection"](#)
- Gary Habermas, ["The Minimal Facts Approach to the Resurrection"](#)
- Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus*, 173-191
- [Tish Harrison Warren, "Why It Matters That Jesus Really Did Rise From the Dead."](#)
- New American Bible: [John 20:1-18](#)
- New American Bible: [1 Corinthians 15](#)

Supplemental Reading

- Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth, Part Two*, 241-277

*Resurrection: Conversion*  
(Monday, May 1<sup>st</sup>)

Film:

- *Risen* (Hesburgh Library Reserves Page)

*Courtyard of the Gentiles II*  
(Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>)

**\*\* Final Examination: Tuesday, May 9, 4:15 pm – 6:15 pm\*\***