



**JOHN FELICE
ROME CENTER**

**THEO 266: Church and Global Culture
Syllabus**

John Felice Rome Center

Fall 2026

Tuesdays | 6:45-9:15pm

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 4:00-5:30pm
(by appointment)

Course Description

The primary objective of the course *Church and Global Culture* consists of exploring the connection between Christian churches, particularly within the Roman Catholic tradition, and contemporary Western culture, often referred to as the secular age. This course leads us into the experience of how the Church interacts with and influences modern societal issues through a functionalist approach to religion, examining its role and impact on the lives of believers as citizens. Key topics covered in this course include:

- 1) ***Globalization, Church, and International Politics***: Exploration of the Church's stance and involvement in global political matters, and its diplomatic relations.
- 2) ***Synodality and Exercise of Power in the Church***: An examination of how authority and governance are structured and practiced within the Church. A study of the principles and practices of synodality, emphasizing collective decision-making and communal discernment within the Church.
- 3) ***Culture of Love in Times of War***: Analysis of the Church's teachings and actions promoting love, peace, and reconciliation in periods of conflict.
- 4) ***Church and the Migration Crisis***: A look into the Church's perspective on migration issues, its support for migrants, and advocacy for humane treatment.
- 5) ***Church, Culture of Life, and the Environmental Crisis***: Discussion on the Church's views and initiatives regarding environmental stewardship and the care of our "common home" against a backdrop of climate change.
- 6) ***Church and Ethics in Media***: Examination of the Church's perspective on ethical standards in media, its influence on communication practices, and its role in promoting truthful and responsible journalism.

By focusing on the functionalist approach, the course emphasizes the Church's social and political responsibilities, highlighting how it affects the daily lives of believers and their roles as citizens.

(This syllabus is subject to change and changes will be announced accordingly to the class.)



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Learning Outcomes

Through these topics, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the Church's role in addressing and engaging with major global challenges in the contemporary secular era. In doing so, by the end of the course, students will be able to:

- 1) ***Understand the Interaction Between Church and Society***: Analyze the relationship between Christian churches, particularly the Catholic Church, and contemporary Western culture, with a focus on the secular age, especially as described by Charles Taylor.
- 2) ***Critically Evaluate Church Governance***: Critically assess the structures and practices of power and authority within the Church, including the principles of synodality and collective decision-making.
- 3) ***Examine the Church's Role in Promoting Peace***: From a functionalist approach to religion, understand the Church's teachings and actions in fostering a culture of love and reconciliation during times of conflict.
- 4) ***Develop Sensitivity to Ethical Issues***: Recognize the challenges associated with different positions with respect to contemporary ethical questions. Understand arguments from political sectors and appreciate the plurality in religious practices and beliefs.

Required Text / Materials (Provided on Sakai)

- Baldino, John. 2023. "The Catholic Church and Contemporary Issues of Dignity and Life," in *Charity in Truth* 1/1-4 (2023): 35-41.
- Baum, Gregory. 2010. "The Solidarity Movement in the Church," in *Compassion and Solidarity. The Church for Others*. House of Anansi Press.
- Campese, Gioacchino. 2016. "'You Are Close to the Church's Heart': Pope Francis and Migrants," in *Church in an Age of Global Migration*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Egeris, Jakob. 2021. "The Christian Identity of Diaconal Work in a Secular Age of Authenticity," in *Diaconia* 11/1 (open access).
- Faggioli, Massimo. 2024. "The Synod on Synodality (2021-2024) as an Institution. Historical-Theological Perspectives and Questions," in *Revista Teología* LXI/143 (2024): 77-96.
- McPherson, David. 2018. "Three Rival Versions of the Relationship of Religion to Modernity," in *Journal of Religion & Society, Supplement 17: Religion and Secularism* (2018): 11-31.
- Obama, Barack. "Call to Renewal Keynote Address (Washington, DC, June 28, 2006)," in *An American Story. The Speeches of Barack Obama*. ECW Press: 166-181.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1965. "The Socius and the Neighbor," in *History and Truth*. Northwestern University Press: 98-109.
- Taylor, Charles. 2012. "The Church Speaks – to Whom?," in *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the Rome Center mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, and in compliance with full-time student visa status, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy.

Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student and synonymous with academic success. Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Lateness or leaving class early will impact the course grade at the professor's discretion. All absences, including medical absences, will be treated the same, unless they are documented long-term conditions or emergencies. Such situations will be evaluated case-by-case by the Academic Affairs office.



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Once-a-week classes:

- After 1 absence, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 3 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).

Twice-a-week classes:

- After 2 absences, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 6 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).

Three-times-a week classes:

- After 2 absences, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 6 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).

Assessment Components

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Participation | 20% |
| Midterm Exam | 20% |
| Service-Learning Project—Presentation | 20% |
| Service-Learning Project—Paper | 20% |
| Final Exam | 20% |

| Rubrics - Participation | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Attendance | Preparation (Quizzes) | Respectful and Active Participation |
| 5% | 5% | 5% |

| Rubrics - Service Learning Project | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <i>Presentation as a Small Group in Class</i> | | | |
| The presentation is on time | The Presentation Exhibits an Expert Voice | The Presenter Interacts Pedagogically with the Audience | The Presentation Entails Secondary Reflection on the Meaning of the Experience |
| 3.5% | 3.5% | 3.5% | 3.5% |



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| <i>Individual Experience Report</i> | | | |
|--|--|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Personal Description of the Experience | Description of the Social Context and the Social Problem | Critical thinking | Bibliographical resources |
| 5.25% | 5.25% | 5.25% | 5.25% |

Participation: Demonstrated by good class attendance and timely completion of assignments. Active class participation and contribution are important. Participation entails both actively listening and sharing in the working groups. Some quizzes are included in the final score.

Midterm Exam and Final Exam: Serves as the course’s final assessment, evaluating the comprehensive understanding and integration of the course material. This exam will test students’ grasp of the key themes and their ability to critically engage with the course content.

Service-Learning Project and Paper: To be coordinated with the professor. It is an educational approach that involves learning through direct experience and practical engagement in activities benefiting society, particularly at the intersection of Church and the contemporary world’s margins. Students immerse themselves in real-world experiences, such as volunteering or community service, and then engage in shared reflection in the classroom. This process enables students to not only apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts but also to critically reflect on their experiences, deepening their understanding of societal issues and fostering personal and social growth. The students will write a final paper on this experience, between 2,000 and 2,500 words.

Please note: This is an Engaged Learning course, approved for the Service-Learning category, satisfying the Loyola University Chicago Engaged Learning requirement. All students must complete the Service-Learning experience and related assignments in order to successfully pass this course.

Grading

- 94-100: A
- 90-93: A-
- 87-89: B+
- 84-86: B
- 80-83: B-
- 77-79: C+
- 74-76: C
- 70-73: C-
- 67-69: D+
- 60-66: D
- 59 or lower: F

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are unacceptable at the the Rome Center and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago’s guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola’s standards here: <https://catalog.luc.edu/academic-standards-regulations/undergraduate/>. You are responsible to comply with the LUC University Catalog.



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Late or Missed Assignments & Exam Policy

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. *As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.*

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) requiring academic accommodations should contact the Academic Affairs office at the John Felice Rome Center during the first week of classes.

Statement on Title IX

The Rome Center follows Loyola's [Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, Retaliation](#) and will comply with those as indicated and instructed.

Course Schedule

Friday Class Days:

Monday, TBD

Week One | *September 1* | Presentation of the course program | Secularization Process | Define the Service-Learning groups

Week Two | *September 8* | The Second Vatican Council | Discussion of the text "Accommodation, Fortification, or Conversion?", followed by a debate on the role of religion in society and its significance as a human dimension.

Week Three | *September 15* | **First Quiz** | The Social Doctrine of the Church | Analysis of Pope Leo' Perspective on Social Catholicism | Debate on the Digital Revolution and the Role of the Church in the Digital Age

Week Three | *September 18* | Exploration of the text "The Ecological Spirituality of Teilhard," accompanied by discussions of videos on Laudato Si' | Debate on Ecological Spirituality in a Time of Climate Urgency

Week Four | *September 22* | **Guest Speaker: Nathalie Becquart** – Discussion on the Synodal Process and the Role of Women in the Church

Week Five | *September 29* | Discussion of one text: "Call to Renewal Keynote Address," through a debate on whether a politician should be religiously neutral | Debate on the Importance and Limits of Religion in the Public Sphere and Politics

Week Seven | *October 6* | **Midterm Exam**

Week Eight | *October 20* | Midterm Exam Corrections | Eastern Spiritualities and Their Growing Influence in Secular Societies | Byung Chul-Han and the Spiritual Dimension of the Human Being



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Week Nine | *November 3* | **Guest Speaker: Paul Mueller, The Vatican Observatory** – Debate on Faith and Science: Conflict or Complementarity?

Week Ten | *November 10* | **Second Quiz** | **Presentations of volunteer experiences** | Charlie Hebdo (2015) and the Debate on the Limits of Freedom of Expression and Religious Freedom in the Public Sphere

Week Eleven | *November 17* | Discussion of the text “‘You Are Close to the Church’s Heart’: Pope Francis and Migrants,” accompanied by a debate on migration | **Guest Speaker: Sister Maria José Rey Merodio**, Fondazione Astalli

Week Twelve | *November 24* | **Presentation of volunteer experiences** | Discussion of the text “Hannah Arendt and Moral Evil: Connecting the Radical and the Banal” | The Church During the Holocaust: A documentary

Week Thirteen | *December 1* | Visit to the Rooms of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Jesuits: A Paradigm of Preaching in the Global World

Week Fourteen | *December 8* | **Presentation of volunteer experiences** | **Final Exam**