

THEO 266: Church and Global Cultures
Inclusion and Belonging

Summer 2026

Mon. and Wed., 2:00 PM – 5:20 PM

Location: TBA

Dr. Luca Badetti

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2-3 PM by appointment

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to ways in which the Christian churches, and primarily the Roman Catholic Church, understand and enact their identity in relation to the secular world of culture, economics, and politics, both nationally and globally.

This course will explore themes related to social justice, inclusion and belonging, including a focus on church engagement with disability culture. The course addresses the following:

- A theological analysis of the nature of the Church and its relationship to the world and global issues, with a particular focus on its approach towards the oppressed and marginalized. This will include real-life engagement examples from the international landscape.
- An interdisciplinary exploration of the concepts of multiculturalism, inclusion and belonging. This interdisciplinary contextualization can better inform our theological inquiry and ground it in social and cultural needs.
- An exploration of disability culture and the church's engagement with it.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course students should be able to:

- Analyze and interpret contrasting Christian understandings of the notion of original sin.
- Demonstrate knowledge, with attention to historical development, of the central texts, beliefs, ethical understandings, and practices of at least one religious tradition.
- Critically reflect on different cultural realities, global issues and concerns, and the Church's engagement with them.
- Learn about and reflect on disability culture, the church's engagement with it and the values of encounter and transformation.

Course Material

Assigned readings and other assigned material shall be posted and/or linked on the course's Sakai page.

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student. Any lateness or leaving class early will impact the final course grade.

Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Absence due to sickness or injury needs to be corroborated by a doctor's note. Students late to class twice will be credited with one

absence in accordance with the JFRC's Attendance policy. Three (3) absences will result in an automatic failure, "F". Travel does not constitute reason to miss class.

Assessment Components

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Participation | 20% |
| Self-assessment quiz | 20% |
| In-class presentations | 20% |
| Class reflections | 10% |
| Final exam | 30% |

Please find below more on the assessment components:

- Participation is demonstrated by good class attendance and active class participation.
- The self-assessment quiz is meant to help students self-assess their knowledge of the first part of the course.
- In-class presentations are meant to focus on specific assigned book content.
- Class reflections are written reflections based on lectures and assigned content to be shared in class, a contribution from the student to the wider class conversation.
- The final exam is the course's final overall assessment.

Further details on the quiz, the final exam, and the presentations will be shared with the class.

Grading

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

Academic Honesty

You are expected to respect copyright and intellectual property rights.

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

Remember to cite any sources that you use in your work. You can find info on citation styles here: <https://libguides.luc.edu/citing>

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor.

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Course Schedule

Session 1 (5/18): **What is the Church?**

Analyzing the Church through different models and frameworks

Read: Dulles, A. (2013) The use of models in ecclesiology (Ch. I), Models of the Church.

-Gleeson, B.J. (2008) Images, understandings, and models of the Church in history: An update.

-Optional: O'Collins, G. and Farrugia, M. (2015) "Basic Characteristics of Catholicism" in Catholicism: The Story of Catholic Christianity.

Session 2 (5/20): **Catholic social thought**

History and principles of Catholic social teaching

Read: Stabile, S. J. (2006) CST 101: Basic principles of Catholic Social Thought.

-Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004) Chs. 2, 3, 4, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

Session 3 (5/25): **What is Culture?**

An introduction to cultural identity, diversity, and multiculturalism

Read: Flowers, B., and Davidov, B. J. (2006) The virtue of multiculturalism: Personal transformation, character, and openness to the other.

-Giorgi, A. (2019) Mediatized Catholicism—Minority voices and religious authority in the digital sphere.

-Reginald, A. (2017) The Catholic Church's perspective of human dignity as the basis of dialogue with the secular world.

Session 4 (5/27): **Inclusion, belonging, and reconciliation**

Elements of an inclusive community culture

Read: Sachs, J. R. (1991) The individual in community (Ch. 3), The Christian Vision of Humanity.

-Frise, N. R. and McMinn, M. R. (2010) Forgiveness and reconciliation: The differing perspectives of psychologists and Christian theologians.

Class reflection #1 due

Session 5 (6/1): **Church engagement with the world**

Real-life examples of spirituality-informed social justice action across the globe

Read: Arabome, A. (2014) The sacrifice of Africa and the midwives of a new church and a new Africa.

-Gregory, D. L. (1999) Dorothy Day, workers' rights and Catholic authenticity.

-Maier, M. (2018) Do we still need reformers in the Church? The case of Oscar Romero.

Session 6 (6/3): **Ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue**

Dialogue engaging Christian denominations and other religious bodies

Read: Scerri, H. (2018) The concept of unity in the Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, and Reformed dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church.

- Illman, R. (2010) Plurality and peace: Inter-religious dialogue in a creative perspective.
- Samarakone, J. (2008) My adventure with inter-religious dialogue.

Self-assessment quiz during class

Session 7 (6/8): **The Church and the human rights landscape**

Human rights awareness and advocacy

Read: Boehrer, F. & Sullivan, K. (2002) Compassion and structural change as healing responses to social harms: An interview with Sister Helen Prejean

- De Volder. (2023) Pope Francis's contribution to Catholic thinking and acting on war and peace.
- Giordan, G. & Zrinščak, S. (2018) One pope, two churches: Refugees, human rights and religion in Croatia and Italy.

Class reflection #2 due

Session 8 (6/10): **Church and Disability Culture (part 1)**

Identity and values of disability culture

Read: Brown, S. E. (2002) What Is Disability Culture?

- McKenzie, J. A. (2013) Models of intellectual disability: towards a perspective of (poss)ability.
- McDonald, K. E., Keys, C. B., & Balcazar, F. E. (2007) Disability, race/ethnicity and gender: Themes of cultural oppression, acts of individual resistance.

-Begin preparing with your group your 6/17 in-class presentation based on assigned chapter of Yong, A. (2007) Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity.

Session 9 (6/15): **Church and Disability Culture (part 2)**

Disability and the Church: Theological reflection and practice

Read: Eiesland, N. (2002) Encountering the disabled God.

- Creamer, J. P. (2018) Dementia didn't rob me of my mom. It revealed her truest self.
- Living Fully Signatories (2016) Statement from Living Fully 2016: Disability, culture and faith – A celebration.
- Optional: Swinton, J. (2020) Disability, vocation, and prophetic witness.

Session 10 (6/17): **In-class presentations + In-class final exam**

The course syllabus is subject to change and changes will be announced accordingly to the class.