Term: Spring 2012  
Instructor: Mary P. Utzerath  
Course #: THEO 2320  
Section: 101  
Course Title: The Event and Meaning of Vatican II

Description:

October 11, 2012 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the opening day (October 11, 1962) of Vatican II which concluded on December 8, 1965. Much of the Catholic Church's life has been shaped and directed by the teaching and agenda of renewal of the Second Vatican Council. Yet, many lay Catholics know very little about the event and teachings of Vatican II. For example, what did Vatican II teach about God, about the Bible, about the pope, about the mission of the Church, about the Church's relationship with non-Catholic Christians and those who are not Christian, about Mary, about the liturgy, about how Catholics are called to live the Christian life, about human rights? Catholics with some knowledge of Vatican II are not unanimous in their views of the council. Debates continue about the significance of the changes and the nature of the renewal it called for. For example, did the council renew or destroy the liturgy? Did it bring the Catholic Church into dialogue with the world or did it capitulate to the world? If the council called for a greater lay role, why are so many lay people only marginally committed to their Catholic faith and church?

This course will consider the above questions in its approach to Vatican II as a historical event and as an event of meaning. Since events occur in history and have, therefore, a past, a present, and a future, this course will consist of three parts: Part 1 will look at what preceded Vatican II both in the Church and in world history; Part 2 will look at the council itself and examine its major teachings and documents; Part 3 will examine how the meaning of the council has been interpreted and received in the forty-five years since its conclusion.

The objectives of this course are four: first, to enable students to better articulate theologically and historically the event and meaning of Vatican II in terms of the content of the Catholic faith and how the Catholic Church understands itself in relation to other Christian, religious, and non-religious traditions and world views; second, to enable students to interpret the texts of Vatican II in historical and theological context; third, to enable students to recognize and articulate ways in which the meaning of the council continues to develop; and fourth, to help students to reflect on and articulate how Vatican II calls Christians to greater holiness and to the promotion of solidarity and justice for all of God’s people. Various means of assessment including class participation, quizzes, two exams, and written assignments will be used to measure how well students meet these objectives.